



Annual Report: Year Two

(October 2012 - September 2013)

Camille Warren



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
IUPEE

IMPACT:

Educate, Engage, Empower — For Equity

Transformative oppression
Equitable Race Education
disproportionality Social Justice Policy Systemic Diversity
Collaborative Inquiry prejudice Civil Rights
Sexual Orientation Culturally Responsive
harassment **Inclusive** Culture Research
Desegregation marginalized System
English Language Learners Context-Driven Diversity
hate crimes **Technical Assistance** Practitioners
Students **Safe** discrimination
bullying **Professional Learning** Gender

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Timeline

Year Two

QUARTER ONE

- Three requests for assistance
- Four new active cases
- Four site visits & 16 virtual TA events
- Published first Podcast & three newsletters
- Hosted first webinar (*Educational Equity*)
- Added 24 resources to Equity Library
- Submitted Year One Evaluation Report
- Annual needs sensing
- Welcomed two new staff members
- Office renovation complete

QUARTER THREE

- Three new active TA Cases
- 14 site visits and 28 virtual TA events
- Published one brief and three newsletters
- Hosted two-part STEM webinar (*STEM Needs All Children*)
- Hosted two onsite professional learning events
- Presented papers at two professional conferences
- Added 28 resources to online equity library
- Bi-Annual Center Visioning Summit

Oct - Dec 2012

Jan - Mar 2013

Apr - Jun 2013

Jul - Sept 2013

QUARTER TWO

- Six requests for assistance
- One new active case
- One active case closed
- Two site visits and 18 virtual TA events
- Published two newsletters
- Hosted first two on-site professional learning experiences
- Added 45 resources to Equity Library
- Team Visioning meeting

QUARTER FOUR

- Three requests for assistance
- One TA Consultation
- 15 virtual TA events
- Published one brief and three newsletters
- Hosted one on-site professional learning event
- Invited guest at three Region V professional learning events
- Added 72 resources to online equity library
- Grant Monitoring Visit
- External Evaluator Annual Site Visit

October 2012

December 2012

March 2013

June 2013

September 2013

Year Two



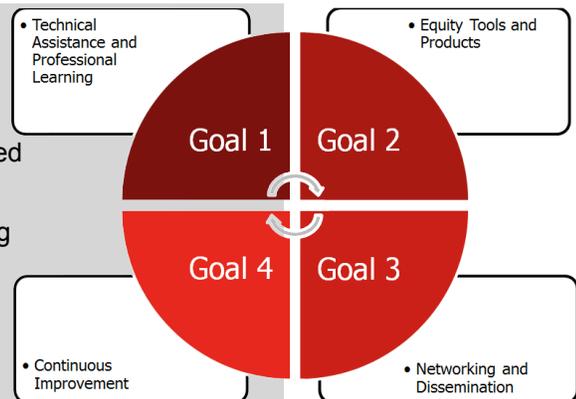
Introduction

The Great Lakes Equity Center is one of ten regional Equity Assistance Centers (EAC) funded by a \$2.2 million grant awarded by the Department of Education (DOE) under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. EACs were established to address the unique problems occasioned by desegregation within the public education system, particularly to facilitate the resolution of civil rights conflicts and promote social justice.

Each EAC serves as a resource to the public educational agencies (e.g., schools and districts) in its assigned region, the Office of Civil Rights, and the Department of Justice. Upon request, the centers provide technical assistance and support to state and local educational agencies in the areas of civil rights, equity, and school reform to address and prevent discrimination, exclusion, or denial of opportunity on the basis of race, sex, and national origin.

The Great Lakes Equity Center (Center) serves the six states comprising Region V: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The mission of the Center is to ensure equity in student access to and participation in high-quality, research-based education by expanding states' and school systems' capacity to provide robust, effective opportunities to learn for all students, regardless of and responsive to race, sex, and national origin, and to reduce disparities in educational outcomes among and between groups. The Center's work is guided by and organized around the following four goals:

- **Goal 1.** Provide on-demand, context-driven technical assistance and professional learning to school districts, public schools and state educational agencies in the Region V states.
- **Goal 2.** Identify existing and develop new research- and practice-based educational equity tools and resources (products).
- **Goal 3.** Develop and maintain a comprehensive system for networking and disseminating information related to the Center's work.
- **Goal 4.** Engage in practice-informed, collaborative inquiry and continuous improvement to ensure that the Center's efforts to assist Region V states are effective and appropriate as they relate to educational equity.



The Center was established on October 1, 2011 by Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis' (IUPUI) Dr. Kathleen King Thorius (Principal Investigator), Dr. Brendan Maxcy, and Dr. Thu Suong Nguyen (Co-Principal Investigators), and is guided by an Advisory Board composed of practitioners, state and district leaders, teacher educators, and scholars in the fields of education and law. The Center addresses a range of equity issues by providing assistance that promotes the understanding of equity and use of viable, research-based, and context-driven solutions. Central to this effort is the inclusion and involvement of all key stakeholders within the systems engaged in change, including families, community members, administrators, policy makers, practitioners, and students.

By supporting organizational learning and improvement in Region V schools and districts, the Center hopes to realize outcomes in four primary arenas: practitioner skill and ability, policy, practice, and student outcomes. More specifically, the Center strives to strengthen practitioners' capacity to be culturally responsive, and facilitate the transformation of systemic policy and practice in order to foster safer, more inclusive, and equitable educational systems and, in turn, increase positive educational outcomes for traditionally underserved and/or marginalized students. What follows is a summary of the Center's stance on educational equity, the tenets of which ground every facet of the Center's work.

SAMPLE TARGETED OUTCOMES

- Increase in development of culturally responsive and inclusive policies
- Increase in knowledge and implementation of culturally responsive and inclusive practices
- Improved school environments
- Decrease gaps in student educational outcomes among and between groups

Transformative Technical Assistance

The Center's approach to technical assistance is grounded in the understanding that equitable educational systems facilitate student excellence in academic endeavors by valuing and using students' culture, language, heritage, gender and experiences to facilitate and inform their learning and development, and by providing access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources (Gay, 2000; Klingner et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In order to be transformative, the Center believes the work of educational equity must move beyond superficial diversity awareness and cultural proficiency trainings (Gorski, 2011) and attend explicitly to long-standing disparities in opportunities to learn for students of racially, ethnically, linguistically and economically diverse backgrounds, as well as on the basis of gender and dis/ability (Battey, Kafai, Nixon, & Kao, 2007; Tan & Barton, 2008).

In addition, the Center believes efforts must facilitate the creation of educational systems that acknowledge groups' histories of access and participation, dismantle deficit thinking about students, families, and communities, and respond to needs in ways that respect the values, language, and experiences of diverse groups. These foci of equity and learning propel the Center's endeavors to facilitate and stimulate system reform and renewal.

To address and realize these aspects of transformative technical assistance across a large, six-state region, the Center developed a tiered service delivery model. The model includes four tiers of support activities, as follows:

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- **TIER FOUR - SYSTEMIC EQUITY PARTNERSHIPS** – Sustained partnerships with systems engaged in transformative systemic improvement via customization of tools, resources, and services
 - **TIER THREE: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & NETWORK DEVELOPMENT** – Stand-alone learning experiences designed and facilitated by Center staff members
 - **TIER TWO: TOPIC SPECIFIC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** – Short-term consultations, customization of tools, and support activities to address discrete equity issues
 - **TIER ONE: RESOURCE DISSEMINATION** – Tools, publications, digital media, data, etc. made available to broad, public audiences

With a diverse staff of 15, representing more than 100 years combined experience in educational reform initiatives the Great Lakes Equity Center is well positioned to facilitate transformative systems change in Region V. This report summarizes the Center's activities and accomplishments during Year Two (October 2012 – September 2013), with a particular emphasis on the last two quarters, as well as projected areas for continued growth in Year Three.





Summary

Year Two: Oct 2012 - Sep 2013

The first two quarters of Year Two proved to be a time of substantial growth for the Center and saw the delivery of the Center's first set of on-site professional learning experiences, as well as a considerable expansion in service provision via new TA cases (see Year Two Semi-Annual Report for details). During the last two quarters of Year Two, the Center continued to nurture and expand the considerable progress made during the first two quarters. The small but seasoned team challenged the limits of the Center's capacity by exploring and employing innovative strategies to realize the charge of serving a six state region robustly.

During the final quarters of Year Two, the team continued to produce and disseminate publications with a steady tempo that reflected the rhythms of a maturing organization. Moreover, service provision on the Center's seven TA cases continued, and three new cases were added to the portfolio. The Center continued to offer learning experiences and expanded the offerings by adding several new options to the menu described herein. In addition to developments in service provision, the final quarters of Year Two ushered in several "firsts" for the Center including a monitoring visit from the Center's grant officers and the presentation of papers at two professional conferences.

Rounding out its second year strongly, the Center entered the third and final year of its first grant cycle strongly positioned and poised to realize lasting impacts in Region V. As the Center's grant officers noted, the Center has developed a strong identity and sense of "self" with a clear understanding what the work of the Center is and what it is not. This report summarizes the Center's growth during its second year with a particular emphasis on the final two quarters. The report is organized by the Center's four primary goals; each section opens with a brief description of the goal area being addressed then, progresses through key activities and achievements, and concludes with a summary of future directions. Given the natural intersection of the Center's four goal areas, distinctions about work that falls into multiple goal areas are noted as appropriate.



Technical Assistance and Professional Learning

Goal One

Provide on-demand, context-driven technical assistance and professional learning to school districts, public schools and state educational agencies in the Region V states.

- Collaboratively design and provide on-site TA and PL based on comprehensive needs assessments, ongoing consultation, and feedback from the client.
- Support partner districts in strengthening and building new networks to support systemic equity work.
- Design and provide a variety of online platforms (e.g., Podcasts, Webinars and Video Conferencing) for delivering virtual TA and PL.
- Plan, coordinate, and host PL opportunities for stakeholders and clients.

The Center's approach to service provision is based on an organizational learning theory that situates learning in practice-based experiences, wherein innovations are informed and shaped by the learning community's unique context. Thus, understanding the local setting empowers stakeholders to identify and leverage assets and resources, as well as potential barriers within the system. Using research-grounded content and providing guidance aimed at stimulating critical inquiry about the status quo, effective tools, and practices are developed in and by the community of practice; the Center facilitates the inquiry by introducing these tools into systems.

Requests for Assistance

As noted previously, the Center provides services across four tiers of supports in response to identified needs in Region V and specific requests for assistance. Requests for assistance originate from many sources, including referrals by the Department of Justice (DoJ) or Office for Civil Rights (OCR), Center outreach efforts, and by partners conducting research and finding the Center on their own. Requests may be submitted

from the Center’s website via an online form, via phone, on in person. In Quarters Three and Four of Year Two, the Center received 3 new requests for assistance, bringing the total number of requests to 12 for the year; combined with the 23 requests received in Year One, the Center received a grand total of 35 requests for assistance overall (see Figure 1).

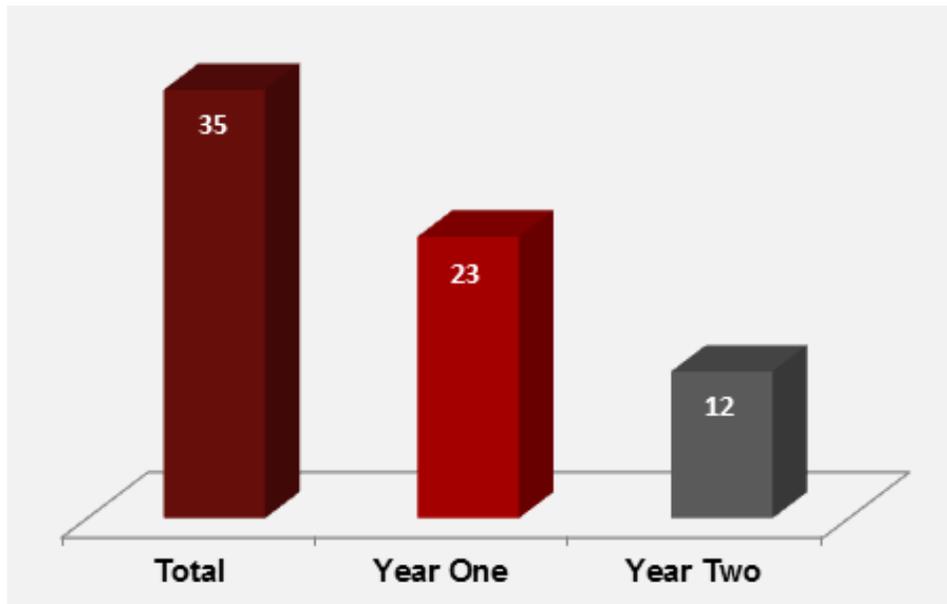


Figure 1. Distribution of all requests for assistance (counts) submitted to Great Lakes Equity Center (October 2011 – September 2013)

Technical Assistance Consultations and Cases

Short-term consultations are provided for straightforward, topic-specific requests for assistance. Technical assistance consultations do not result in the development of a formal Memorandum of Understanding or Service Agreement, but rather consist of providing answers to specific questions or recommendations regarding a particular course of action, the provision of resources and tools, and referrals to other organizations (i.e., Tier 1 and 2 activities).

Requests for assistance that result in the co-construction of a Memorandum of Understanding or Service Agreement are called TA cases. TA cases are systemic partnerships that involve multiple stakeholders; they may be short- or long-term partnerships. These systemic partnerships are the Center’s most intensive type of relationship and include the provision of targeted distance and on-site support, co-construction of learning experiences, consultations, provision and customization of resources, as well as critical, collaborative inquiry cycles and systems planning (i.e., Tier 1 to 4 activities).

Technical Assistance cases are initially classified as “potential cases” until negotiations for a formal written agreement proceed, at which time the case becomes a “pending case”. Once an agreement has been signed by all required parties and service provision begins, the case becomes “active”. If a potential or pending case does not progress to the development of a formal written agreement, that case becomes “inactive”, and an active case is considered “closed” when the case ends.

Of the 35 requests for assistance received by the Center, almost two thirds (61%) resulted in formal, active relationships; by the end of Year Two just over a quarter of the requests received resulted in short-term consultations (n= 9), while more than a third had become active TA cases (n=13), see Figure 2. In Year Two the Center more than tripled its active TA caseload by onboarding nine new active TA cases (three in Quarters 3 and 4 alone). One active case was closed in Year Two, so the Center ended its second year with ten active TA cases and four more in the early stages of partnership development.

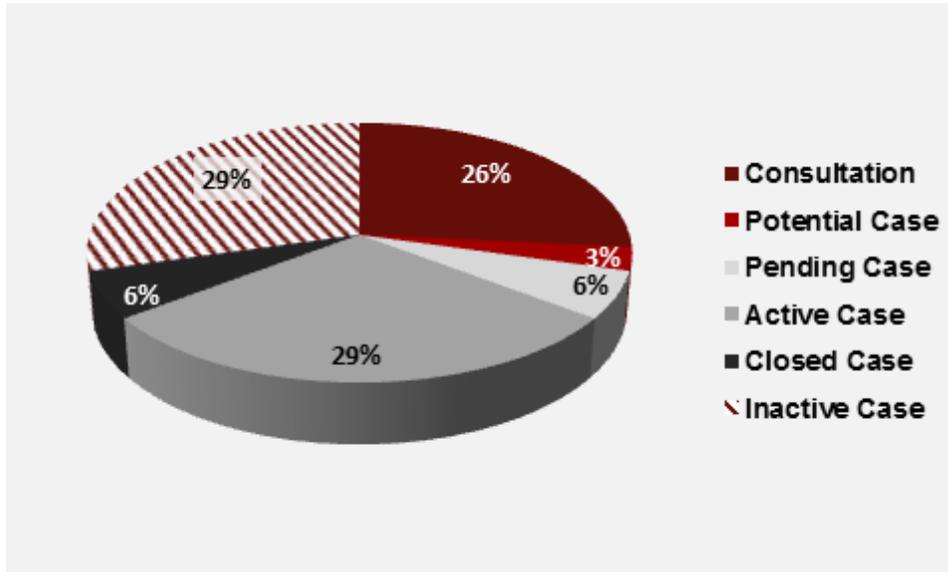


Figure 2. Distribution of requests for assistance received by Great Lakes Equity Center (n=35) by status at the end of September 2013

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As demonstrated in Figure 3 (next page), the Center has strong representation across Region V with active cases in each of its regional states and deep roots in Indiana where the Center is located. Of the ten active cases, eight are with school districts and two with state departments of education; four of the district level cases originated from DoJ or OCR referrals.

“ Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.
 —Nelson Mandela

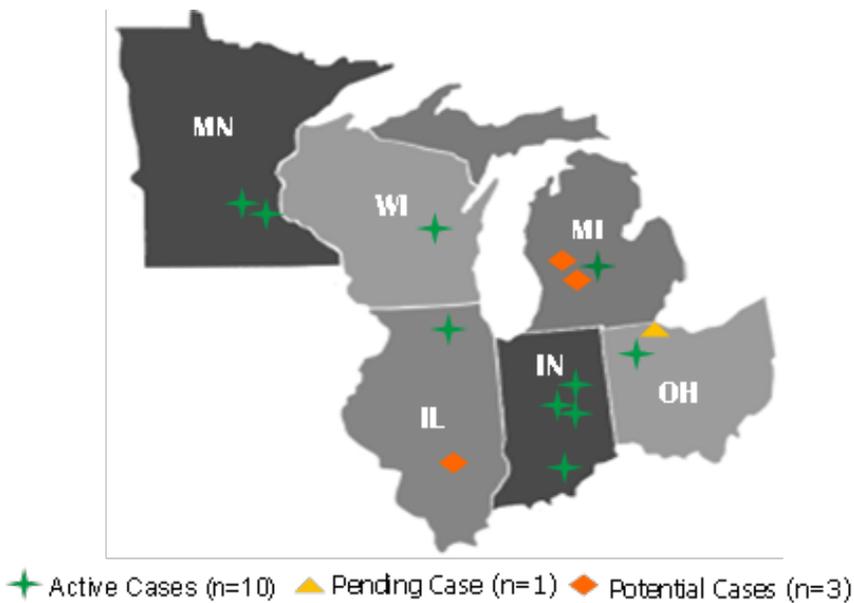


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of Great Lakes Equity Center’s active technical assistance cases at the end of Year Two (October 2012 – September 2013)

Each TA case is unique and based on a set of co-constructed objectives and outcomes that are articulated in the Memorandum of Understanding. Topics of support range from closing achievement gaps to addressing issues of school safety and climate. As the Center’s portfolio of cases expanded, activity related to the cases likewise intensified considerably during quarters three and four of Year Two. More specifically, by the end of Year Two Center staff members conducted a total of 22 site visits, 84 distance TA events, and delivered 54 products in association with its active TA cases. Site visits included facilitating strategic planning with a focus on equity at the district and state department level, engaging in needs sensing activities, and providing targeted focused professional learning experiences. Products created as part of field work are related to the ongoing and present needs of the field; those are then honed and polished as technical assistance products for redistribution to future sites and cases as equity tools (see Goal Two).

Professional Learning Experiences

In addition to the professional learning experiences that are embedded in technical assistance consultations and cases, Center staff members also design and facilitate stand-alone professional learning experiences to address a variety of assessed needs across Region V. These professional learning experiences may be sponsored and hosted by the Center, or Center staff members may be invited as guest facilitators to events hosted by other organizations. Professional learning experiences are designed to support stakeholders across Region V in addressing equity issues in their local contexts by providing targeted, topic-specific activities. Center staff members take on the role of facilitator in guiding participants through experiences that prompt reflection on practice and careful consideration of current research and promising practice.

By the end of Year Two the Center had developed four types of learning experiences: Equi-Learn Webinars, Equi-Learn Focus Sessions, Equity Leaders Institutes, and Annual State Equity Leaders' Summits. During its second year, the Center offered seven learning experiences across the four types of experiences (see Figure 4). A total of 118 individuals attended the learning experiences, with 19 individuals attending two or more each. Attendance at each experience ranged from eight to 40 participants. Participants represented a broad array of roles and positions including parents, community members, teachers, district administrators, state administrators, higher education faculty members, researchers and others. District and State administrators were the most abundant participant in Center learning experiences.

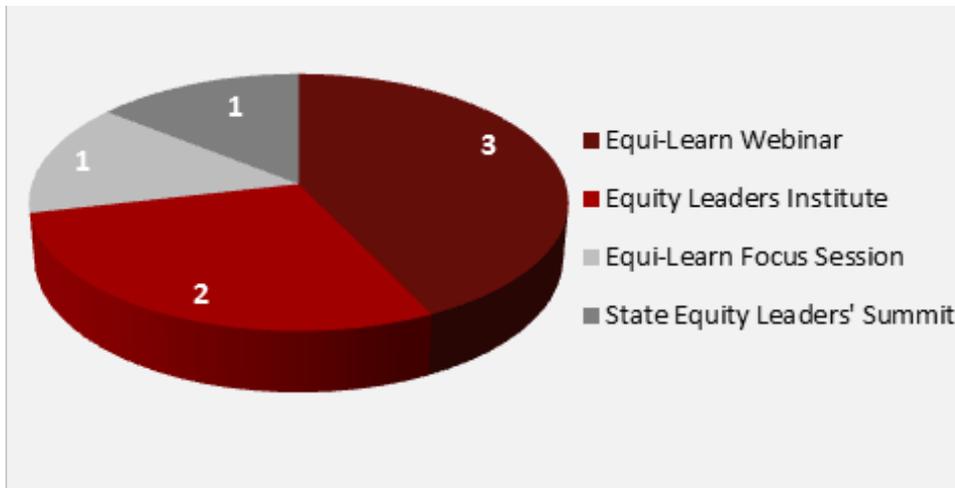


Figure 4. Proportion of professional learning experiences (counts), by type, hosted by Great Lakes Equity Center in Year Two (October 2012 – September 2013)

PL Experiences: Equi-Learn Webinars

Equi-Learn Webinars are brief (one to two hour) interactive web-based seminars; in Year Two, three webinars were offered in November 2012 and May 2013. A two-part webinar series co-designed with colleagues from the STEM Education Research Institute (SERI), addressed the fundamental principles of educational equity and equity considerations for Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) instruction. A total of 35 individuals attended the three webinars, with nine individuals attending more than one.

PL Experiences: Equi-Learn Focus Sessions

Equi-Learn Focus Sessions are one-day intensive learning experiences that address a targeted problem of practice or issue, and offer participants the opportunity to connect with other role-alike or role-complimentary stakeholders across Region V. In Year Two the Equi-Learn Focus Session, offered in May 2013, addressed bullying and harassment and brought together eight partners from four of the Center's partner school districts. The first half of the day was a structured learning experience during which participants learned with and from one another about bullying and harassment. Then, for the second half of the day, each of the three teams received intensive TA consultation and support related to their specific TA case.

PL Experiences: Equity Leader Institutes

The most intensive learning experiences offered by the Center are Equity Leader Institutes (Institute). The Institutes are two-day, residential learning experiences that address and delve deeply into issues of educational equity. Participants must apply and be accepted to attend the Institutes. In Year Two, two Institutes were offered. The first Institute, Advancing Educational Equity, was hosted in February 2013 and served 36 participants from five of the six Region V states. The second Institute, Using Data for Social Justice in Education (September 2013), filled up so quickly and received such interest that the Center raised the participant cap from 35 to 40 individuals, and had to begin a waitlist. The 40 participants included representatives from all six Region V states, as well as two individuals from California.



Participants share thinking about the question, "What is equity?" at the February 2013 Institute.



Participants engage in team work during the Equi-Learn Focus Session: Bullying and Harassment (March 2013)

PL Experiences: State Equity Leaders' Summit

The inaugural Annual State Equity Leaders' Summit was offered one day before the first Institute and emerged as a result of the Center's regional needs-sensing activities. During interviews with key state department representatives across Region V, it was evident that the representatives were eager to connect with their counterparts in other states. Based on their feedback about topics that were of particular interest to them, the first summit included six topical, concurrent round table sessions. Each table session was moderated by invited scholars with particular expertise related to the table topic. Topics included: Disproportionality and Special Education, Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Communities and Families, and Leading Equity-oriented Change at the State Level, among others. The first summit served and connected 13 state department leaders from five of the six Region V states.

PL Experiences: e-Learning Lab

Another professional learning innovation the Center launched in Year Two was the e-Learning Lab. The e-Learning Lab is an online social networking and learning platform designed to cultivate, nurture, and support emergent Communities of Practice. Following each learning experience hosted by the Center an e-Learning Lab is created and all content from the experience is uploaded to the Lab; participants are then given login information to access those materials and connect with fellow participants. Via this platform, participants can access materials from experiences they attended, connect with colleagues who attended the same learning experiences, receive support from Center

staff members, and engage in continuing learning experiences. The e-Learning Lab is hosted by LibGuides, an online content management system and free service provided by the Indiana University library.

PL Experiences: External Experiences

In addition to the seven intensive learning experiences designed, coordinated, and hosted by the Center, staff members were invited as guest facilitators to four external learning experiences hosted by other organizations, including: Ohio's Statewide Education Conference: Race to the Top, Michigan's Department of Education Special Populations Conference, Minnesota's American Indian Education Summit, and Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative policy review session. Between these four learning experiences, the Center reached more than 1,000 stakeholders across Region V.

Future Directions

Service provision related to existing and new TA cases and consultations will continue to advance and proceed through the end of Year Three. The Center will also host at least six additional professional learning experiences throughout Year Three. Another new horizon the Center is eager to meet in the next year is the offering of the Center's first online course; the anticipated launch date for the online course is fall 2014.

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It does not take a majority to prevail ... but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men.

–Samuel Adams



Equity Tools and Products

Goal Two

Identify existing and develop new research- and practice-based educational equity tools and resources (products).

- Design and develop products that build knowledge and increase understanding of the Center's work and equity.
- Design and develop products that assess and address equity needs to facilitate the implementation of more equitable and inclusive practices.
- Develop and apply a set of criteria for reviewing and selecting extant products that adhere to best practices in supporting positive outcomes for ALL students.

The Center is committed to keeping educators, families, and community members up-to-date with the most current information related to creating safe, inclusive, and equitable learning communities. In addition to developing several publications and equity tools, Center staff regularly harvest and re-distribute high-quality, research- and practice-based products developed by other agencies. Resources and information are disseminated via an array of platforms including an email marketing service and a custom-designed online Equity Library.

Center Publications

Four types of publications are produced by the Center to meet a continuum of diverse learning needs. Publications include:

- **Monthly newsletters (Equity Dispatch)**
- **Periodic e-bulletins (Equity Now!)**
- **Bi-annual practitioner briefs (Equity by Design)**
- **Podcast series**

The Center's publications are sent to individuals who subscribe and are also archived on the Center's website. Center publications are written or produced by experienced

practitioners and top researchers in the fields of educational leadership, special education, and educational equity. The publication process involves theme and content selection, the development the content, an extensive editing process, and finally, dissemination of the publication.

During Quarters Three and Four of Year Two, the Center published six newsletters, four e-bulletins, and two briefs. Topics included examining high-stakes testing through an equity lens, equity in STEM, and peer-mediated learning, among others. The Center also released its first podcast episode titled, Critical Reflections on Policy; each podcast in this first series corresponds to a Stakeholder Brief.

Online Equity Library

In addition to original publications, the Center curates a searchable online library of copyright free equity resources and tools harvested from the field. On a weekly basis the library custodian gathers and evaluates resources for potential posting in the library. For inclusion in the library, products must adhere to basic quality criteria including: strongly aligned with the Center’s mission and values, well-written and organized, and connected to recent and relevant research.¹

In the final two quarters of Year Two a total of 107 resources were harvested and 79 published to the Equity Library. Hence, a total of 317 research-based digital resources were harvested from field-based work and research, and 188 were added to the Equity Library after careful review by the staff in Year Two – bringing the total number of resources in the library to 471 (see Table 1).to the hiring of a GA who was assigned the task of overseeing the Equity Library

Table 1. Resources harvested and posted to the Great Lakes Equity Center online Equity Library overall and by year

	HARVESTED	POSTED
Year One	339	283
Year Two	317	188
TOTAL	656	471

Equity Tools

A variety of tools are generated in association with field-based case work, from worksheets, surveys and checklists for planning, and the associated reports of data produced by using those tools as discussion starters, to data reports from outside the case sites used to set contexts for reflection and further inquiry. The natural evolution of such tools is that they arise in response to a local need and then may be added to a growing list of transferrable, reusable tools for others in similar phases of development. As the tools make their way along the Center’s production process, they are reviewed and validated before being turned into reusable tools.

As the Center entered its second year, a need for articulating a process for vetting and validating equity tools became apparent. A number of tools have emerged through the provision service and have been identified for further vetting or validation before being

¹ Information about Equity Library usage is reported in the next section, Goal 3.

publicly disseminated. One tool in particular, the Policy Equity Analysis Tool (PEAT), was identified for further study as it was used by teams in a state department of education in association with a TA Case. Data gathered were used to revise and refine the tool; the tool is currently going through editing. Many other tools have emerged in association with TA cases and PL experiences; these tools have been made available to case partners and PL experience participants via the e-Learning Lab. Moving forward, a selection of these tools (n=10) have been identified to go through the validation and publication process defined in Year Two, and will be made publicly available on the Center's website.

Future Directions

The Center is on track to continue to regularly develop and harvest equity-related publications and resources. In Year Three, the Center projects to publish at least 10 newsletters and two briefs. Moreover, two equity tools developed in conjunction with TA cases will be published.

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The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.

–Marian Wright Edelman





Networking and Dissemination

Goal Three

Develop and maintain a comprehensive system for networking and disseminating information related to the Center's work.

- Design, develop and maintain a communications and technology infrastructure for the Center.
- Design, develop and maintain a clearinghouse of resources including an online searchable library of tools, resources and links to other organizations.
- Develop and maintain a strong network of other TA providers, educators, community and professional organizations, and families engaged in equity work.

The Center's products are primarily web-based and requests for service are contingent upon high visibility within Region V. Hence, the nature of the Center's work necessitates a sophisticated online networking and dissemination plan as well as a diversified and innovative technology infrastructure to support both outreach and service. The Center's plan includes a variety of systems, strategies, and platforms intended to increase the Center's visibility, grow its network by reaching new audiences, and disseminate its work. The plan addresses three fundamental objectives:

- 1) Establish a strong online presence (website and social media);
- 2) Utilize proactive and creative promotional strategies including, electronic and hard copy materials (e-marketing, email campaigns and brochures);
- 3) Offer and participate in networking events and opportunities

The strategies and platforms utilized by the Center often concurrently address both arenas of networking and dissemination and continue to emerge and evolve as the

the Center's needs change. The Center's dissemination strategies include the website, which contains an online library of equity resources, social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, marketing via direct email dissemination of equity news, traditional print media promotional materials, and networking events. This section summarizes efforts and accomplishments in networking and dissemination and evaluates the extent to which these efforts have been successful in increasing the Center's visibility and engagement with stakeholders.

This section of the report summarizes efforts and accomplishments related networking and dissemination including the extent to which these efforts have been successful related to increasing the Center's visibility and engagement with stakeholders.

Center Website

The Great Lakes Equity Center website is an axial tool for disseminating and communicating the Center's work. The site provides basic information about the Center and offers potential affiliates the opportunity to submit a request for assistance, contact the Center, subscribe to the Center's publications, and to download resources from the Equity Library as well as the archive of Center publications.

As demonstrated in Figure 5, by the end of Year Two the number of unique visitors² to the website nearly tripled as compared with Year One, and accordingly, the total number of visits also more than doubled. With a total of nearly 2,700 individuals visiting the website a total of 6,155 times in Year Two, automated analytics documented a total of more than 19,000 page views and over 400 product downloads from the Center's website. The most commonly viewed page after the homepage was professional learning experiences pages, which was visited by 20% of the visits.

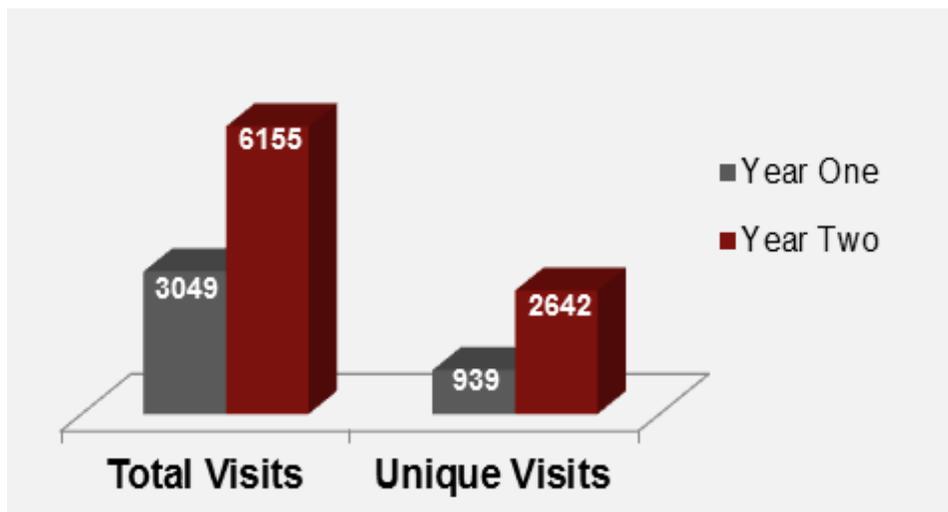


Figure 5. Great Lakes Equity Center website visitation trends by year (October 2011 – September 2013)

² Google tracks the number of unique machines (i.e., not people) used to visit the website. Hence, counts for unique visitors may count individuals who visit the site from different machines multiple times.

Distribution of Visitors

The geographic distribution of visitors to the Center’s website during Year Two spanned 47 countries and 49 states. Almost all (98%) of the visits to the Center’s website came from within the United States, the majority (80%) of which originated from Region V with a majority coming from the Center’s “home” state of Indiana (56%) (see Figure 6).

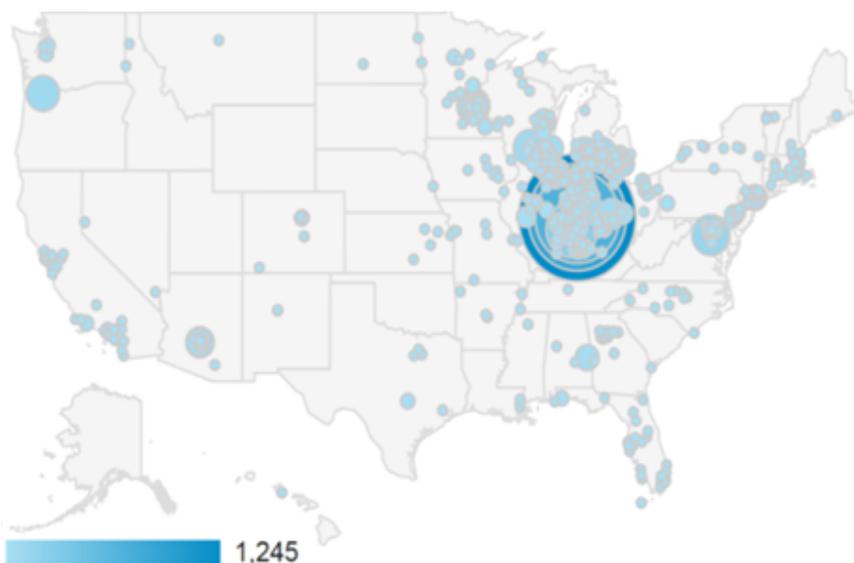


Figure 6. Geographic Distribution of Guests to the Great Lakes Equity Center Website for Year Two (October 2012 – September 2013)

Equity Library

The Equity Library is a virtual database housed on the Center’s website through which high-quality, research- and practice-based tools and resources are disseminated (see Goal Two). In Year Two, 16% of all website page views related to the Equity Library (nearly 1000 views), the third most popular destination on the website. Moreover, a total of 267 different resources were downloaded from the library 304 times, these metrics were more than double the Year One figures.

Publication Dissemination

Center-authored subscription-based publications (e.g. Newsletters and E-Blasts) are disseminated via direct email, with an extensive tracking system that measures receipt and engagement with e-publications. Efforts to enlist new publication subscribers includes, providing a sign-up sheet at every event in which Center staff members participate, an online sign-up form posted on the Center’s website, and sending emails to Center affiliates inviting them to subscribe. The average open rate³ across all publications disseminated in Year Two was 30% and ranged from 26 to 36%. Using the metric of total opens, the number E-Marketing “messages delivered” was nearly 900 Newsletters and over 600 E-Blasts. These messages reached an audience that increased by 196 subscribers, from 206 to 325 at the end of Year Two.

³ Open rate refers to the percent of subscribers who actually opened the email message containing the publication.

Social Media (Facebook and Twitter)

In addition to dissemination via the website, the Center uses Facebook and Twitter accounts to provide timely news and announcements and to connect with other individuals and organizations engaged in similar work. Center staff members made regular posts to Twitter and Facebook. While the number of followers and postings are small, these alternative channels allow “re-tweeting” and “liking” as forms of first derivative dissemination.

Networking and Stakeholder Events

Another important way the Center stays connected, contributes to a larger community of research and practice, and builds its network is by hosting, contributing to, and participating in professional conferences, stakeholder meetings, and committees. During this reporting cycle, Center staff members continued to engage regularly in three committees and councils, and were invited to join seven more including: a collaborative of federally funded technical assistance and dissemination centers serving states in the Midwestern region (North Central Collaborative), as state advisory panel on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and on a “Thought Partners Advisory Board” for Chicago Public Schools; Chicago Public School District is the 4th largest district in the United States serving nearly half a million students. Center staff members participated in 26 stakeholder and networking events. Networking and stakeholder events included experiences like hosting two forum calls to connect State Equity Leaders, attending a North Central Collaborative face to face meeting and the annual Leveraging Conference for federally funded technical assistance and dissemination centers, and finally hosting lunch and learns with two other sister Centers housed Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis.

SAMPLED COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS

- Chicago Public Schools: Thought Partners Advisory Committee
- Center for Parent Information and Resources Advisory Group
- North Central Collaborative

Because of the Center’s networking and outreach efforts, it closed Year Two with at least 1,300 unique contacts. Nearly a quarter of those contacts were publications subscribers, approximately one third were associated with a TA case or consultation, and almost a tenth attended a Center hosted learning experience. Center contacts represent a diversity of district and state administrators, teachers, parents, technical assistance professionals, higher education professionals and so on from more than 37 states.

Future Directions

To support ongoing outreach, networking and dissemination efforts, the Center will hire a new coordinator to lead those efforts in Year Three. The new Networking and Dissemination Coordinator will review and refine the Center’s networking and dissemination plan and strategies with a focus on messaging and brand identity.



Research and Evaluation

Goal Four

Engage in practice-informed, collaborative inquiry and continuous improvement to ensure that the Center’s efforts to assist Region V states are effective and appropriate as they relate to educational equity.

- Design and implement an annual evaluation plan that concurrently measures key features of the Center’s processes and outcomes.
- Utilize evaluation data and findings to continually inform and improve the Center’s work including the refinement of products and services.

The Center’s embedded efforts to continuously monitor and improve its work through research- and practice-based decision making is aimed to produce organizational learning and to engage the staff and external collaborators in scholarly research that contributes to the broader knowledge and research base on equity in education. Utilizing a mixed methods approach to data collection and inviting all stakeholders to analyze and discuss the data as the work emerges are key characteristics of the Center’s efforts in this domain. Most of the activities to meet Goal Four are internally focused on ongoing evaluation, using data, and engaging an ever widening circle of stakeholders in providing input to the Center’s work.

The inquiry model adopted is inclusive, participatory, and incorporates both internal and external components to ensure the Center’s work is valid, relevant, and high-quality. The continuous improvement efforts address and are guided by a set of primary evaluation questions. The questions focus concurrently on measuring Center processes and outcomes. Process measures relate to what the Center does and the quality of that work. More specifically, process measures examine how productive the Center is, factors affecting productivity, and quality, relevance and accessibility of and client satisfaction with products and services (Q1-4). Outcomes measures focus on the extent to which the Center’s work produces the desired changes in awareness, knowledge, attitudes, practice, policy, and conditions as outlined in the Center’s logic model (Q5).

PRIMARY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- **Q1.** To what extent do Center staff accomplish internal tasks, benchmarks and targeted timelines?
- **Q2.** How accessible and useful are the Center's products and services to clients?
- **Q3.** To what extent is there alignment between identified equity assistance needs in Region V and the Center's work (i.e., relevance)?
- **Q4.** What is the quality of the products and services provided by the Center?
- **Q5.** In what ways does the Center's work result in transformative change toward educational equity related to: people, policies, and practice?

The primary activities and accomplishments for this goal area relate to the development of data collection and reporting systems, methods, and tools, as well as the generation of data and research that supported and informed the Center's work. The data and findings generated about each goal area are reported previously in the respective goal's section of this report. However, the global methods and strategies for generating those data are here reported.

Data Collection Activities and Data Management

Data collection activities are embedded into the life and operations of the Center and carried out by key personnel and participants. This practice ensures that primary data are gathered by and from those closest to events and contexts and interpreted across time and participants. Suitable, sufficiently reliable and valid instruments are utilized to accommodate the Center's unique data collection needs. Data are also gathered from a variety of automated sources. Table 2 (page 21) summarizes how and what data are collected to answer each of the five primary evaluation questions.

During Year Two, data collection activities became more systematic and routinized, beginning early with conducting annual needs sensing activities. These needs sensing activities included preparing a state data profile for each of the six states in Region V, as well as conducting interviews with eight Region V state administrators, among other activities. In addition to needs sensing activities, the regular harvesting of monthly metrics from automated analytics (e.g., Google Analytics), logs, and records was ongoing throughout the year. Researchers observed all seven of the professional learning experiences hosted by the Center, in addition to selected field experiences associated with TA partnerships. Feedback from participants in PL experiences facilitated by Center staff members were regularly collected via a Post-Session Questionnaire. And, finally, annual surveys were conducted late in the spring of 2013 to collect feedback from TA partners and publications subscribers about the Center's products and services. All of the data associated with these activities were analyzed and summarized in comprehensive data summaries.

To facilitate the management of the Center's expanding archive of data the design and development of an online relational database began early in Year Two. Center staff members worked closely with a consultant from Indiana University Research Database Complex throughout Year Two to develop an online Oracle database. The Center anticipates launching Phase One the database in early spring of 2014.

Table 2. Great Lakes Equity Center Data Collection Efforts by Primary Evaluation

MEASURE	GOAL	DATA SOURCES	PRODUCTS
Q1. To what extent do Center staff accomplish internal tasks, benchmarks and targeted timelines?			
Count of Active and Pending Technical Assistance Cases	1	Technical Assistance Case Log	Monthly Metrics Bi-Annual and Annual Reports
Count of Professional Learning Experiences Offered, by Type and Date	1	Professional Learning Event Log	
Count of Publications Produced, by Type and Delivery Date	2	Document Reviews E-Marketing Analytics	
Count of Equity Tools Produced, by Type	2	Technical Assistance Activity Log	
Count of Stakeholder and Networking Events, by Type and Date	3	Stakeholder Event Log	
Count of Evaluation Products Produced and Delivery Date (listed in last column of this table)	4	Evaluation Matrix	Bi-Annual and Annual Reports
Q2. How accessible and useful are the Center's products and services to clients?			
Count of website visits and visitors	3	Google Analytics	Monthly Metrics Bi-Annual and Annual Reports
Count of product downloads from website and online Equity Library	3	Google Analytics	
Count of Center Contacts, Disaggregated by Type of Contact and Location	3	Contact Log	
E-mail Open and Click Rate	3	E-Marketing Analytics	
Count of Facebook Page Likes and Twitter Followers	3	Automated Analytics	
Q3. To what extent is there alignment between identified equity assistance needs in Region V and the Center's work (i.e., relevance)?			
Client stated needs	1	Focus Group and Partner Interviews Intake Interview	Interview Protocols Client Questionnaire Data Summaries
Demonstrated Regional Needs	1	Annual Equity Summit State Data Reviews Regional Resource Mapping Field Notes	Needs Assessment Plan Needs Assessment Report State Data Sheets
Percent of Clients Reporting Products and Services Met Relevant Need	1, 2	Publication Questionnaire Annual Partner Surveys Partner Interviews	Interview Protocols Client Questionnaires Data Summaries Bi-Annual and Annual Reports
Q4. What is the quality of the products and services provided by the Center?			
Client perceptions of quality	1, 2	Post-Session Questionnaire Publication Questionnaire Annual Partner Surveys Partner Interviews	Interview Protocols Client Questionnaires Data Summaries Bi-Annual and Annual Reports
Staff perceptions of quality	1, 2	Staff Field Notes Product Reviews	Observation Protocols Data Summaries Bi-Annual and Annual Reports
Expert perceptions of quality	1, 2	Document and Artifact Reviews	Expert Feedback Summary
Q5. In what ways does the Center's work result in transformative change toward educational equity related to: people, policies, and practice?			
Demonstrated Changes in Policies, Practices, Skills, Environments	1	Document and Product Reviews Observations & Field Notes Summative Partner Surveys	Data Summaries Bi-Annual and Annual Reports

Continuous Improvement: Strategic Data Use

A number of structures have been established to facilitate the use of data for project management, organizational learning, decision making, and short and long term strategic planning. For example, each year the Center's leadership engages in annual strategic planning that subsequently informs monthly project management; data from work plans, the Center's logic model, and needs sensing informs that process. Also, bi-annual visioning summits are hosted each year to process, examine, and use data in ongoing strategic planning and big-picture decision making; two visioning summits were hosted in Year Two. In addition, a number of reports and presentations are prepared at regular intervals to provide overviews of the Center's progress and demonstrate accountability. Formal reports include: public facing semi-annual and annual progress reports, and annual performance and evaluation reports. Early in Year Two, the Year One Evaluation Report was delivered to the United States Department of Education, and early in the fourth quarter, the Year Two Performance Report was delivered. Moreover, formative data summaries and reports are prepared internally to support Center staff members in reflecting on data. During Year Two, in addition to data summaries, a comprehensive formative report about the Center's first Equity Leaders Institute was prepared to inform the development of future Institutes.

Late in the fourth quarter of Year Two, the Center experienced an "inaugural" milestone accomplishment as it hosted its grant officers for a grant monitoring visit. The two-day visit included a number of discussions and reviews of Center accomplishments and data. Following closely on the heels of the grant monitoring visit, the Center's External Evaluator closed out Year Two with the annual External Evaluation Site Visit and report. Both monitoring events were successful and yielded robust data that will inform ongoing strategic planning.

Practice-Informed Scholarly Research

In addition to research conducted in the design and development of products and presentation materials, formal research activities were conducted in association with several of the Center's active TA partnerships. Stemming from that research, professional papers were presented at two professional conferences, the Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment's (CREA) inaugural conference and the University Council for Educational Administration's 2013 annual conference. To support ongoing scholarly research endeavors a revised study proposal was prepared, submitted, and approved by the Indiana University Institutional Review Board. The revised study proposal will cover all research conducted by Center staff members in association with TA partnerships and service provision and will allow for broader data collection activities.

Future Directions

As the Center moves into the final year of its first grant cycle, research and evaluation efforts will support continued reporting and accountability measures. Data collection and reporting routines will be solidified and refined in preparation for another funding round. Early in the Spring of 2014, Phase I of the relational database will be launched. The Year Two Evaluation report will be submitted to USDOE, along with two more progress reports throughout Year Three. Center staff will continue to conduct research activities related to TA partnerships and service provision, and share information related to those activities more broadly via publications.

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