



# Equity Dispatch

Maximizing School Improvement  
Efforts through Technical  
Assistance

October 2014



## **IMPACT:** Educate, Engage, Empower - for Equity

*(Click each word to navigate sections)*

*Technical Assistance is "the provision of quality content [tools] and/or process expertise via a responsive, continuous, and external system to assist clients and their organization to change or improve for the better"*

~ Trohanis

## Meet the Authors

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## Technical Assistance Centers

### Rapid Policy Changes and the Tides in Public education

Disparities in access to, participation in, and outcomes of public education are deeply embedded in U.S. society and history (Casey, 2014). Whether educated “separately but equally” under Plessy vs. Ferguson or excluded from public education altogether, inadequate and segregated educational opportunities for students of color, students with disabilities, and students born outside the U.S. spurred landmark civil rights Supreme Court decisions like *Brown vs. Board of Education*, and legislation such as, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Fireside, 2004; Orfield et al., 1997). While such policies and laws required public schools open their doors to all students regardless of race, gender, national origin, and dis/ability, in many cases, the provision of high-quality educational opportunities for all students remained elusive (Bell, 2012). One of the strategies employed by the U.S. government to aid in states’ adoption of federal policy requiring all students be educated equally under the law was the development of technical assistance centers (Blasé, 2009).

The mission of technical assistance centers (TACs) is to support school districts by training teachers and administrators on equitable strategies and methods in learning environments (Bell, 2012). TACs assist local and state entities by providing access to research, sharing research-based strategies, and offering expert opinions on policies that affect teaching and praxis in schools (Kozleski & Artiles, 2004). In addition, TACs assist school leaders and districts by heightening their awareness and understanding of federal and state level policies and the impact on the educational experiences of all students. Technical Assistance centers historically used top-down/ bottom-up theories to frame their work (Kozleski & Artiles., 2004). Top-down refers to the relationship the centers have with federal offices. TACs’ relationship with federal offices includes funding sources, adoptions of policy and the implementation of federal policies into district or school policies (Blasé, 2009; Kozleski, 2004). While the bottom-up theory reflects the relationship centers built with the teacher, administrators who have a grassroots position. TACs that blend the two methods foster a space for collaboration and dialogue. Today, TACs act as bridges between schools and federal legislation in order to help achieve equitable standards, on behalf of students, in an



In this special issue of the *Equity Dispatch* we would like to spotlight our team of Graduate assistants (GA). Graduate assistants at the Great Lakes Equity Center contribute greatly to the development of the products and resources provided by the Center including conducting research, writing, collecting and analyzing data and content design. They are a tremendous asset to the Center! Please meet ....

#### Shitao (Kitty) Chen, M.S.

Shitao (Kitty) Chen is a third year doctoral student in School Psychology Program at Indiana University Bloomington. As an Asian international student, she wants to learn from the center and advocate for educational equity and culturally responsive instruction for Asian students, who used to be treated improperly due to various stereotypes people have to that population. “Working in the center has been an amazing learning and growing experience for me”, Kitty once said about her experience at the Center

#### Juhanna Rogers, M.S.

Juhanna Rogers is a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education program at Indiana University. As a critical race scholar,

inclusive manner.

## Desegregation Assistance Centers and the History of EACs

In 1964, the United States Federal Government approved funding to support 27 Desegregation Assistance Centers (DACs) to assist public school districts with desegregation efforts (Bell, 2012). This action was, in part, a response to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, asserting racially separate public schools unconstitutional. As a result, Desegregation Orders were declared for school district across the country (Orfield et al., 1997). DACs provided training and technical assistance to school boards and other responsible governmental agencies responsible for the preparation, adoption, and implementation of plans for the desegregation of public schools (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/272.1>).

The desegregation of schools did not eliminate racial stratification within the American education system. In fact, desegregating schools created disproportional representation of Black and other racial minority youth in special education programs, alternative programs, as well as other disparate treatment which often marginalized these students and their families; as a result the responsibilities of DACs expanded (Bell, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Today, these centers are referred to as Equity Assistance Centers (EACs). EACs specifically are charged with providing technical assistance and professional development, at the request of schools, districts, school boards and other responsible governmental agencies in order to ensure educational equity and promote equal educational opportunities (Equity Assistance Center.org).

## The Great Lakes Equity Center

The Great Lakes Equity Center is one of ten regional Equity Assistance Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide technical assistance, resources, and professional learning opportunities related to equity, civil rights, and systemic school reform throughout the six-state region of **Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin**. The mission of the Great Lakes Equity Center is to ensure equity in student access to and participation in high quality, research-based education by expanding states' and school systems' in the Center's service region. The Center works to minimize the discriminatory activities in public education systems such as harassment, segregation, and denial of language services by providing opportunities to enhance the teaching and learning outcomes of all students, regardless of and responsive to a student's race, sex, or national origin,

Juhanna finds significant reward in working for the Equity Center because it enhances her role as an advocate and mother for her son. In her role at the Center, she witnesses how research and policy are translated into action in a wide network. About working at the Center, Juhanna has said, "On a day to day basis, I witness how the staff and faculty, people who believe in social justice, culturally responsive teaching, and equity, aim to challenge, interrupt, and inform the practices of education leaders across the Great Lake region".

## Jamie Le Sesne, B.S.

Jamie is a third year Ed.S. student in Special Education. Along with her student teaching experience in Auckland, New Zealand, she also taught preschool for 5 years and worked with orphans with serve disabilities in Ukraine during summers. Jamie has been working in the center for half a year; she enjoys the collaborative working environment and learned a lot from the work she was involved in. Jamie said, "The center has helped me expand my notion of equity for students with disabilities. One thing that stands out to me as being influential in my work outside of the center is the notion of 'Critical Collaborative Inquiry', especially when addressing systemic injustices or issues."

## Sara Bangert, M.Ed.

Sara Bangert is currently a doctoral student in Urban Education Studies at Indiana University-Indianapolis. Sara has over fifteen years of experience in public education, serving

religion, and ability status (<http://glec.education.iupui.edu/>).

The Great Lakes Equity Center utilizes a four-tiered service delivery framework to provide a continuum of technical assistance services to the center's region. This framework allows educators' and community members' access to resources and consultation services on various topics related to educational equity. The center's website serves as a repository of high quality, content rich center developed products and tools that educators can use to advance equity in their everyday practice. The website also hosts the center's Equity Library which houses several hundred vetted copyright free materials downloadable to library visitors at no cost. In addition to print or electronic professional learning resources, the Center provides short-term, topic specific technical assistance and long-term consultation and professional learning services for school systems interested in customized technical assistance, designed to facilitate transformative systemic improvement towards equity.

### **Requesting Assistance from the Great Lakes Equity Center**

Transformative change towards educational equity requires coordinated efforts that build capacity and nurture ongoing professional learning alongside policy and practice analysis supported by cutting edge tools (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Friere, 1970). This work is institutionalized and scaled up through a distributive model of organizational change in which effective practices are systematically disseminated through school networks (Blasé, 2009). The Great Lakes Equity Center offers on-demand, context-driven technical assistance and professional learning that focus on building educators' capacity to address existing and emergent challenges to equitable practices. Individuals interested receiving assistance from the Great Lakes Equity Center can submit a request for assistance form accessed via the center's website, call the center directly, send an email to a center staff member, or make a request in person by visiting the center's office.

**Back to Top**

# Engage

students in various roles. In her role at the Center, Sara will be responsible for assisting in context-driven technical assistance and professional learning, as well as, supporting continuous improvement activities. Having taught students from culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds, Sara is interested in ways that students' culture and language enrich their learning experiences. She believes her work at the Center will deepen her understanding of equity-based issues in public education.

### **Rod Whiteman, B.S.**

Rod Whiteman is a Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Policy Studies at Indiana University. Rod has a variety of research interests, which include critical policy analysis, investigation of schools as social organizations, formation of professional identity within schools, and methods and practice of education research. As a new member of the Great Lakes Equity Center, Rod is applying his experience in program evaluation and research methods to assist the continuous improvement of the Center's work. He also applies his research in critical policy analysis to promote participatory decision-making in schools, helping to democratize schools and surface traditionally marginalized voices.

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## Upcoming Regional Events



## Technical Assistance and Dissemination Projects

<http://url.ie/up7n>

The technical assistance and dissemination projects are funded by the U.S. Department of Education to support the implementation of national laws related to the elementary and secondary public education of students. There are four different types of organizations included in this large system, with various intended audiences and focus areas. The four types of organizations include are the: Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network, Comprehensive Centers, Regional Labs, and Equity Assistance Centers.

The [Technical Assistance & Dissemination Network](http://url.ie/up7u) (<http://url.ie/up7u>) is the largest network and includes 40 centers across the country, primarily focused on providing support to states and local education systems to improve outcomes for children with disabilities, including parent technical assistance and information centers. The [Comprehensive Center Network](http://url.ie/up7o) (<http://url.ie/up7o>) includes 15 funded regional centers and 7 national content centers. Their intention is to help state education agencies build capacity for implementing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The [Regional Educational Laboratories](http://url.ie/up7r) (<http://url.ie/up7r>) are focused on education research, data analysis, dissemination and training. There are 10 regional labs located in the U.S.; with the goal of supporting education systems to improve school environments through using the best research and proven practice. The 10 [Equity Assistance Centers](http://url.ie/up7p) (EAC) (<http://url.ie/up7p>) are funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to provide assistance to public state and local education agencies for the purpose of promoting equal educational opportunities in the areas of race, gender, and national origin. To find a center around your area or know more about the centers, please click [here](http://url.ie/up7n) (<http://url.ie/up7n>).

## Illinois

November 6, 2014  
Program Evaluation for  
1:1 Instructional Models  
in K-12 Education  
Galena, IL

## Indiana

November 14, 2014  
State Advisory Council  
on Education of Students  
with Disabilities (SAC)  
Indianapolis, IN

## Michigan

November 6-9, 2014  
Michigan Association of  
School Boards (MASB)  
Annual Leadership  
Conference Grand  
Rapids, MI

## Minnesota

October 25, 2014  
MN-NAME Equity  
Conference  
Plymouth, MN

## Ohio

October 30-31, 2014  
Skills USA Ohio Fall  
Leadership Conference  
Columbus, OH

## Wisconsin

# Empower



## Something to Read!

*Great Lakes Equity Center Semi-Annual Report: Year Three*

The Great Lakes Equity Center resolutely continued to pursue its mission while sustaining momentum from previous years as it entered the third year of its first funding cycle. This is a semi-annual report for year three provides information about the progress the center has made in year in four primary goal areas: Technical Assistance and Professional Learning, Equity Tools and Products, Networking and Dissemination, Research and Evaluation.

Key activities and achievements are addressed. The report also mentioned future directions for each goal area.

<http://url.ie/up8u>

## Something to Watch!

**What is the National Center on Intensive Intervention?**

<http://url.ie/up8z>



National Center on Intensive Intervention is a great example to explain the type of supports that are provided by a Technical Assistance center. This center focuses on providing supports for students with disabilities who need individualized interventions. To learn more about this center and its work, please click [here](#).



## Something to Use!

**Education Advocacy Tool Kit**

This tool kit is designed especially for parents of Latino/a students who need support in understanding Education system in the U.S. In the tool kit, you can find advocacy tools (e.g. communication tools, writing a constituent letter, making a constituent phone call, etc.) and talking points in advancing quality and expanding opportunities for high school students. In addition, fact sheets of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are provided to assist parents in understanding this policy and additional resources are available in this comprehensive tool kit.

<http://url.ie/up8v>

**Back to Top**

## **References**

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### **Disclaimer:**

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