



Annual Report: Year Three

(October 2013 - September 2014)

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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 Three Quarterly Summary

QUARTER ONE

- Five requests for assistance
- One new active TA partnership
- Nine site visits and 23 virtual TA events
- Published three newsletters
- Attended six networking events
- Presented paper at University Council for Educational Administration conference
- Annual Visioning Summit
- Annual External Evaluation Report
- Year Two Evaluation Report

QUARTER THREE

- Two requests for assistance
- One new active TA partnership
- One TA partnership closed
- Six site visits and 16 virtual TA events
- Published three newsletters and two podcasts
- Hosted 2014 State Equity Leaders Summit
- Hosted 2014 EquiLearn Focus Session: Equitable Distribution of Effective Teachers
- Guest-facilitated three learning experiences
- Semi-Annual Visioning Summit
- Annual Progress Report (524b) to USDOE

Oct - Dec 2013

Jan - Mar 2014

Apr - Jun 2014

Jul - Sept 2014

QUARTER TWO

- Two requests for assistance
- Three new active TA partnerships
- Three TA partnerships closed
- Nine site visits and 13 virtual TA events
- Published one brief and two newsletters
- Hosted one webinar
- Guest-facilitated one learning experience
- Attended 11 networking events
- Added five resources to Equity Library
- Year Two Annual Report

QUARTER FOUR

- Fifteen requests for assistance
- One TA partnership closed
- One TA consultation
- Four site visits and six virtual TA events
- Published two newsletters
- Hosted Fall 2014 Equity Leaders Institute: Ensuring Civil Rights Through Cross-Agency Partnerships
- Guest-facilitated two learning experiences
- Relational Database Completed

October 2012

December 2012

March 2013

June 2013

September 2013

Year Three



Introduction

Great Lakes Equity Center is one of ten regional Equity Assistance Centers (EAC) funded 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, and 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 (TA) 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.

Great Lakes Equity Center (Center) was established on October 1, 2011 by Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) faculty 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 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.

Goals and Outcomes

The Center addresses a range of equity issues by providing assistance that promotes the understanding of equity and use of viable, research- and practice-based, context-driven solutions. The following four goals guide every aspect of the Center's endeavors:

- **Goal 1.** Engage in on-demand TA through sustained partnerships, short-term consultations, and professional learning events with local and state educational agencies
- **Goal 2.** Provide universally available TA through the identification of existing and development of new research- and practice-based educational equity tools and resources
- **Goal 3.** Enhance TA by developing and maintaining a comprehensive system for networking and disseminating information about Center efforts in order to leverage resources and become visible to potential clients
- **Goal 4.** Engage in practice-informed, collaborative inquiry and continuous improvement to ensure that the Center's TA efforts to assist Region V states are effective and appropriate

By supporting organizational learning and improvement in Region V schools and districts, the Center hopes to realize outcomes in four primary arenas: practitioner knowledge, 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 policy and practice in order to foster safe, inclusive, and equitable educational systems and, in turn, positive educational outcomes for historically marginalized students.

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 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, 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.

To facilitate and stimulate this type of transformative system reform and renewal across a six-state region, the Center implemented a tiered service delivery framework. The framework includes four tiers of support activities that increase in intensity from the first to fourth tier, 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

Partners may engage the Center at any tier of support, as needs change, systems evolve, and the Center's capacity varies, service provision may progress or regress up and down the tiers.

With a diverse staff of 11, 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 Three (October 2013 – September 2014), with a particular emphasis on the last two quarters, as well as projected areas for continued growth in Year Four.



Summary

Year Three: Oct 2013 - Sep 2014

During the 2013-14 cycle, i.e., Year Three, the Center refined established processes and routines, and continued to provide robust service to Region V educational agencies. As in previous years, the Center enjoyed a positive reputation, as evidenced by overwhelmingly positive survey feedback, and experienced consistent growth in TA relationships. Specifically, the Center received and processed 24 new requests for assistance during this reporting cycle. Technical assistance partnerships continued with consistency as the Center balanced cultivating new partnerships with the sustenance of established relationships. Moreover, Center staff continued the work of regularly producing and disseminating tools and resources, offering an array of learning experiences, and engaging in collaborative opportunities with Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network partners.

Several factors challenged the Center's growth, rhythms, and routines. Including, primarily, turnover in key personnel, and substantive changes to the funding structure for EACs. More specifically, late in the year, the federal government made the significant decision to provide a two-year extension to current EACs instead of hosting another competitive bid. While these contexts held significance for the work on a number of levels, the Center maintained its momentum in service provision. The subsequent sections of this report describe key activities, accomplishments, and future directions for the 2013-14 reporting cycle; data are organized and presented around each of the Center's four primary goals.



Technical Assistance and Professional Learning

Goal One

Engage in on-demand technical assistance through sustained partnerships, short-term consultations, and professional learning events with local and state educational agencies in Region V

- Collaboratively design and provide on-demand, context driven TA to regional clients based on comprehensive needs assessments and ongoing consultation and practitioner feedback
- Support partners in strengthening [existing] and building new networks to support systemic equity work
- Design and provide a variety of online platforms for delivering virtual TA
- Plan, coordinate, and host professional learning TA opportunities

Topic Specific Technical Assistance (Tier Two)

Topic Specific technical assistance is provided to partners seeking short-term, targeted support. Service provision in this domain may include the delivery of customized tools and resources, referrals to organizations, and/or short-term consultations. This year the Center provided topic-specific TA services to eight organizations across four of its six states including, five local and one intermediate school district, as well as the DoJ and a Comprehensive Center in service to two local educational agencies (LEAs) and one state educational agency (SEA).

Professional Learning Experiences (Tier Three) - Overview

Based on common requests for support across clients and annual needs sensing efforts, the Center provides intensive topical TA in the form of professional learning (PL) experiences that bring together regional stakeholders to address relevant equity issues. Upon request from clients, the Center provides TA in the form of facilitating customized PL experiences. In addition, the Center designs and hosts four distinct types of learning experiences:

- EquiLearn Webinars
- EquiLearn Focus Sessions
- Equity Leaders Institutes
- Annual State Equity Leaders' Summits

During Year Three, the Center hosted four regional PL experiences and guest facilitated six PL experiences for clients, reaching nearly 300 individuals overall. Furthermore, the Center maintained an online social networking platform for supporting 11 virtual TA learning communities. What follows is a detailed overview of each of the learning experiences hosted or facilitated by Center staff members during this reporting cycle.

PL Experiences: Equi-Learn Webinar

Equi-Learn Webinars are brief (one to two hour) interactive web-based seminars that are open to the general public. In Year Three the Center offered one webinar on January 14, 2014, Equity in the Common Core Era, attended by 27 individuals.

PL Experiences: Equi-Learn Focus Session

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 Three the Equi-Learn Focus Session, offered on May 16, 2014, addressed the distribution of effective teachers and brought together eight partners from three school districts. The first half of the day was a structured learning experience during which participants learned with and from one another about critical issues related to the distribution of effective teachers. Then, for the second half of the day, each of the three teams received intensive

TA consultation and support from Center staff members related to the specific contexts of their district.

PL Experiences: Equity Leader Institute

The most intensive type of learning experience offered by the Center is the Equity Leader Institute (Institute). Typically, Institutes are dynamic two-day, residential learning experiences to which participants apply to attend that delve deeply into issues of educational equity. However, in Year Three the Center departed from the traditional Institute format and partnered with several other agencies to offer a conference-style Institute. Representatives from the IUPUI School of Education, Indiana Civil Rights Commission, and Department of Justice, Community Relations Service served on the Fall 2014 Institute planning committee. On September 15 – 16, 2014 the Center hosted its third annual Institute, *Ensuring Civil Rights in Education through Cross-Agency Partnerships*.

The Fall 2014 Institute provided participants with a variety of experiences including: two keynote addresses by attorneys from the Department of Justice and USDOE Office for Civil Rights; two plenary sessions and 12 topical break-out sessions facilitated by scholars in the fields of education, civil rights, and equity; and an evening reception with a film screening. Attendance of the Fall 2014 Institute was slightly higher (n= 43) than attendance at previous Institutes

PL Experiences: State Equity Leaders' Summit

State Equity Leaders' Summits are intensive one-day opportunities intended to connect and build collaborative relationships between state department leaders across Region V. In Year Three, the Center hosted its second Annual State Equity Leaders' Summit on April 28, 2014. The summit included four topical round table discussions, as well as a five-person panel discussion related to the School to Prison Pipeline. Each table discussion was moderated by invited practitioners and scholars with expertise related to the discussion topic. Discussion topics included: Student Outcomes for English Learners and Immigrants, Student Outcomes in Special Education, Assessing and Supporting Educational Leaders, and Implications of College and Career Readiness Standards and Assessment. The second annual summit served and connected 15 equity-oriented leaders from four of the six Region V states; Illinois and Ohio were unable to send representatives to the summit.

PL Experiences: External Experiences

In addition to the four learning experiences designed, coordinated, and hosted by the Center, staff members were invited to serve as guest facilitators to six external learning experiences hosted by other organizations. External PL experiences facilitated by Center staff members included events such as the USDOE's National Association of State Title I Directors Annual Meeting, Indiana Girls Collaborative Project Annual Conference, and a webinar for Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training and Support. Between these six learning experiences, the Center reached more than 200 stakeholders.

Technical Assistance Partnerships (Tier Four)

Technical Assistance (TA) partnerships are sustained relationships focused on systemic improvement initiatives and are characterized by a written agreement. These systemic partnerships are the Center's most intensive type of relationship, services may include the provision of targeted distance and on-site support, co-construction of learning experiences, consultations, provision and customization of resources, as well as collaborative inquiry cycles and systemic strategic planning. The Center engaged in 15 TA partnerships this year with at least one partnership in each of its six states. Notably, three of the Center's partnerships stemmed from referrals by the Department of Justice (DoJ). Figure 1 provides an overview of the distribution of the Center's TA Partnerships by status at the end of this reporting cycle. It is worth noting that although just over a third of potential partnerships did not result in formal relationships, each received supports and resources from the Center.

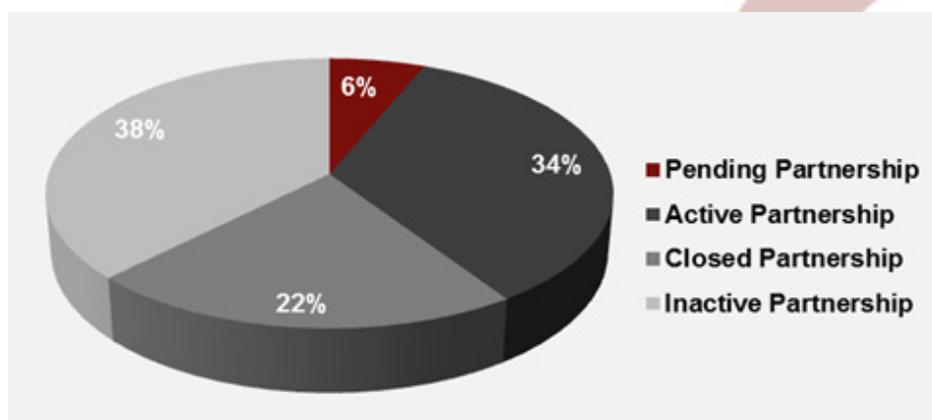


Figure 1. Distribution of Great Lakes Equity Center Tier Four Technical Assistance Partnerships (n=32) by partnership status at the end of September 2014

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the Center has had active partnerships in each of its Region V states, with particularly strong representation in Indiana and Michigan.

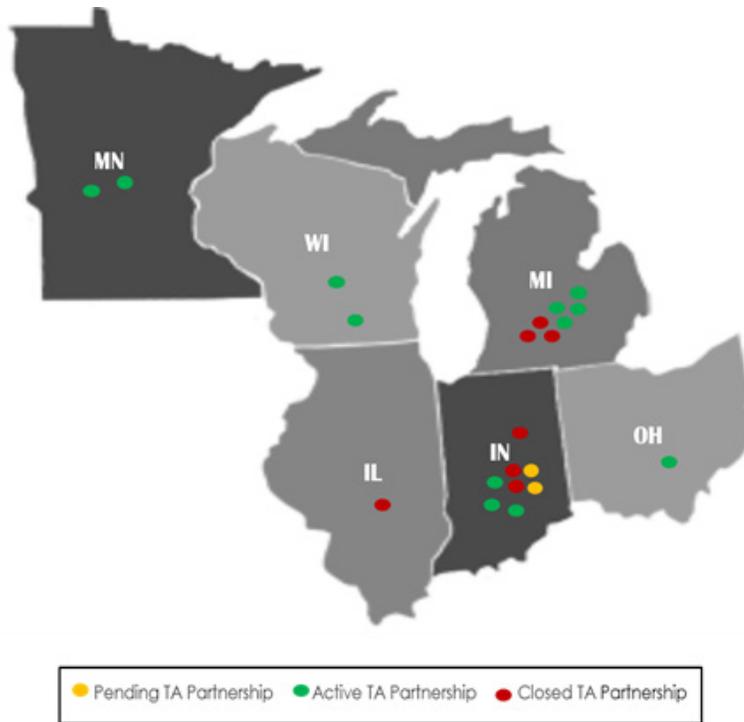


Figure 2. Geographic distribution of Great Lakes Equity Center’s technical assistance partnerships at the end of Year Three (October 2013-September 2014)

Each TA partnership is unique and based on a set of collaboratively constructed goals and objectives articulated in a Memorandum of Understanding. The topics of support range from closing achievement gaps to addressing issues of school safety and climate. The majority of the 15 partnerships the Center engaged in this year (73%, n=11) related to ensuring students of different race, sex, and national origin have equitable opportunities for high-quality instruction. The remaining four partnerships related to eliminating, reducing, or preventing harassment, conflict, and school violence; two of those partnerships also addressed issues related equitable opportunities for high-quality instruction.

During Year Three Center staff members conducted a total of 21 visits to 12 sites; 58 distance TA events were provided to 13 sites; and 56 resources, tools, and products were delivered in association with the Center’s 15 active TA partnerships. Moreover, teams from five partnerships visited the Center on seven separate occasions for on-site intensive support.

Future Directions

Service provision related to existing and new TA partnerships and consultations will continue to advance and proceed through Year Four. The Center will host at least four professional learning experiences in Year Four. Another new horizon the Center is eager to meet in the next year is the offering of its first online course.

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Show a people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again. And, that is what they become...Power is not just the ability to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.

–Chimamanda Adichie





Equity Tools and Products

Goal Two

Provide universally available technical assistance through the identification of existing and development of new research- and practice-based educational equity tools and resources

- 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
- Review and select extant products that provide content and technical guidance for policies and practices ensuring equity for ALL students

Technical Assistance Resources

The Center generates, harvests, and distributes TA products and resources that address a variety of equity topics identified through common requests for support across clients, as well Center annual needs sensing activities. These resources are accessible universally via the Center's various online platforms including the Center's website and e-Learning Labs. The Center develops and disseminates three types of TA publications:

- **Monthly newsletters (Equity Dispatch)**
- **Bi-Annual Stakeholder briefs (Equity by Design)**
- **Podcast series' (Equity by Design)**
- **Periodic eBulletins (Equity Now!)**

During this reporting cycle the Center disseminated a total of 18 publications, 10 newsletters, two podcast episodes, two Stakeholder Briefs, and four eBulletins. Newsletter and e-bulletin topics ranged from creating equitable learning environments to the power of language to a five-part series addressing the “state of education” for different traditionally marginalized student groups. Podcasts were developed to compliment and operationalize content from the briefs; the two topics addressed by those publications included, using peer-mediated learning to advance equity and developing critical consciousness through professional learning.

Engagement levels of subscribers with Center authored publications are presented in Figure 3. Open rates describe the percentage of individuals who opened an email message containing a Center publication. Click-through rates describe the percentage of individuals who opened an email containing a Center publication and clicked on at least one link within the message. As the data in Figure 3 reveal, across all publication types, the average open and click-through rate were 34% and 38%, respectively. Moreover, the data suggest that briefs resulted in the highest level of subscriber engagement.

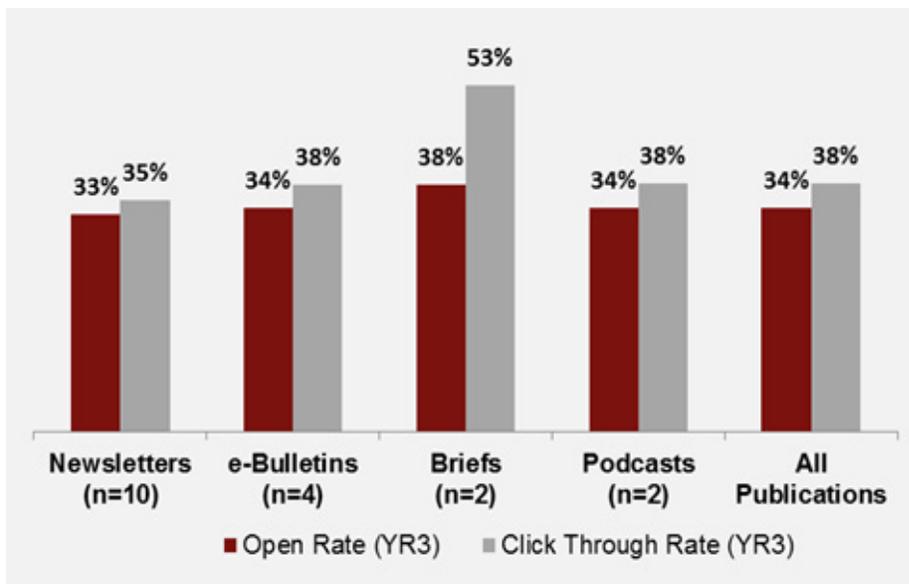


Figure 3. Subscriber engagement with Great Lakes Equity Center publications for Year Three (October 2013-September 2014), overall and by publication type

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

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. The library custodian regularly gathers and evaluates resources for potential posting in the library. For inclusion in the library, products must adhere to established criteria and quality indicators including being: strongly aligned with the Center's mission and values, well-written and organized, and connected to recent and relevant research. At the beginning of Year Three, the online library contained nearly 450 resources. Given the robustness of the library and in an effort to focus resources and efforts on the growing demand for partnerships, the Center curtailed harvesting new resources for the library on a weekly basis. Rather, as resources were cultivated in association with Center partnerships and work, they were vetted and added to the Equity Library. During Year Three, nearly 30 additional resources were published to the Equity Library. Information about Equity Library usage is reported in the next section, Goal 3.

Equity Tools and Resources

A variety of tools including worksheets, questionnaires, and checklists for planning are generated in association with field-based partnership work. 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 other systems engaged in similar work. A number of tools and resources emerged through the provision of service and were posted to the Center's website and e-Learning Labs, an online system for sharing multimedia content and information with PL communities. During this reporting period two webinars, five presentations, and a variety of equity resources developed in the provision of TA were posted to the Center's online platforms. Moreover, a formalized process for vetting and validating Center authored equity resources was developed during this reporting cycle.

Future Directions

In Year Four, the Center will continue to regularly develop and harvest publications and resources related to educational equity. The Center will also resume publishing resources to the online Equity Library, and anticipates disseminating its first Equity Tool Kit.



Networking and Dissemination

Goal Three

Enhance TA by developing and maintaining a comprehensive system for networking and disseminating information about Center efforts in order to leverage resources and become visible to potential clients

- 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
- Leverage technical assistance resources available to clients through collaboration with other government agencies, including OCR and DOJ

Network Development for Technical Assistance

In order to expand the Center's capacity to reach and serve the many educational agencies in its six-state region, the Center has implemented a comprehensive networking and dissemination plan. The plan is designed to increase the Center's visibility, grow its network by reaching new audiences, and disseminate TA supports in response to expressed technical assistance needs. The Center's plan includes a diversified and innovative technology infrastructure including a variety of online systems and platforms such as the website, e-learning labs, social media sites, and direct email service. Another facet of the plan is to increase the Center's capacity to provide TA to the region by leveraging collaborative

partnerships with U.S. Department of Education agencies, Technical Assistance Dissemination centers, and other regional agencies. This section summarizes efforts and accomplishments in establishing a network for technical assistance and the extent to which those efforts have been successful in 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 and is central to providing Tier One services. 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 4, more than 2,700 the website a total of 5,768 times, and automated analytics documented a total nearly 6,000 visits and more than 19,500 page views by more than 2,700 unique visitors¹. While the number of unique “visitors” and overall pageviews increased slightly during this reporting cycle as compared to the previous year, the total number of visits declined somewhat.

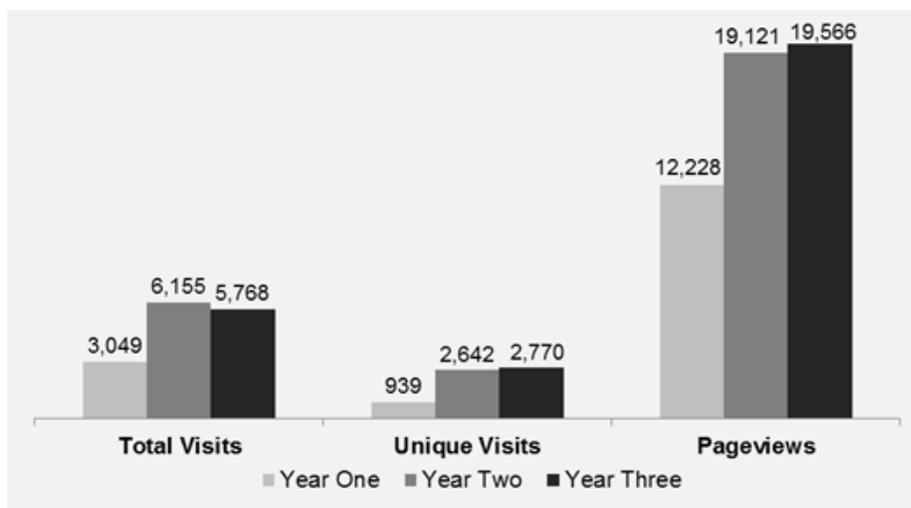


Figure 4. Great Lakes Equity Center website visitation trends by year (October 2011 – September 2014)

¹Google tracks the number of unique IP addresses (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 Three spanned 56 countries and 48 states. Almost all (97%) of the visits to the Center’s website came from within the United States, the majority (81%) of which originated from Region V with a majority from Indiana (56%) (see Figure 5). These data are consistent with the previous two years.

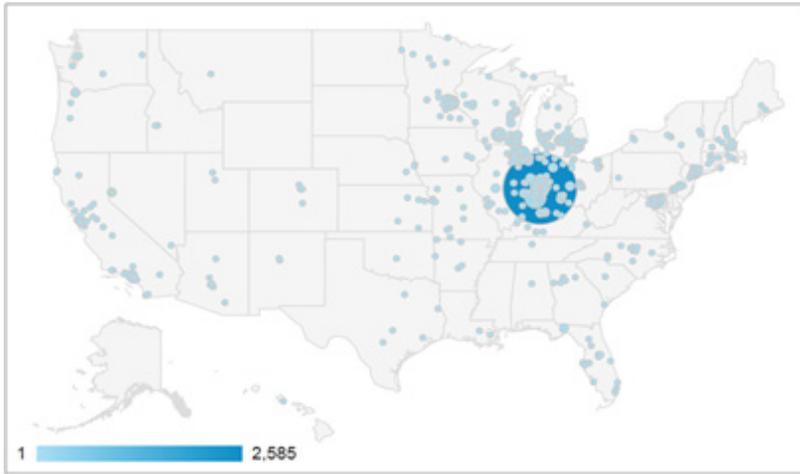


Figure 5. Geographic Distribution of Guests to the Great Lakes Equity Center Website for Year Three (October 2013 – September 2014)

Equity Library

The Equity Library is a virtual database housed on the Center’s website through which publicly available tools and resources are disseminated. In Year Three, 15% of all website page views related to the Equity Library (over 3000 views). Moreover, a total of 184 different resources were downloaded from the library 346 times. In addition, nearly two thirds of the resources were downloaded only once, and nearly a quarter were downloaded three or more times each (see Figure 6).

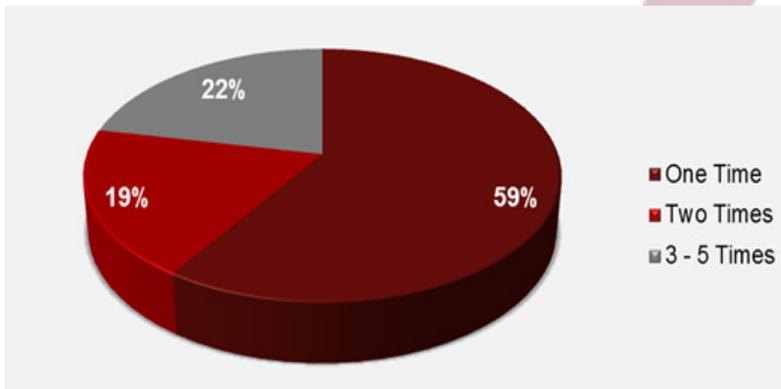


Figure 6. Frequency of downloads for unique resources accessed on Great Lakes Equity Center’s online Equity Library (Oct 2013-Sept 2014)

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. For this reporting period, 99 Tweets and 116 posts to Facebook were made, and the Center received 93 new Page Likes (total= 233) and 40 new Twitter followers (total= 88). In addition to maintaining and growing the aforementioned platforms, during this reporting period the Center established a YouTube channel for posting recordings of events and podcasts.

Collaborative Partnerships

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 and boards. During this reporting cycle, the Center hosted three networking events, including welcoming a delegation of representatives from Moi University in Kenya. Moreover, Center staff members participated in eight committees and boards within Region V including Chicago Public Schools' Thought Partner's Advisory Committee, Indiana Disproportionality Committee, the Great Lakes Comprehensive Center Advisory Board, and the North Central Collaborative. In addition the Center has collaborated with the DoJ and the Office for Civil Rights in the provision of TA services. Center staff members also attended, presented and participated in 37 networking events and professional conferences, including the American Education Research Association conference, and held two Center advisory board meetings. All professional conference presentations were of Center-facilitated research with TA partners.

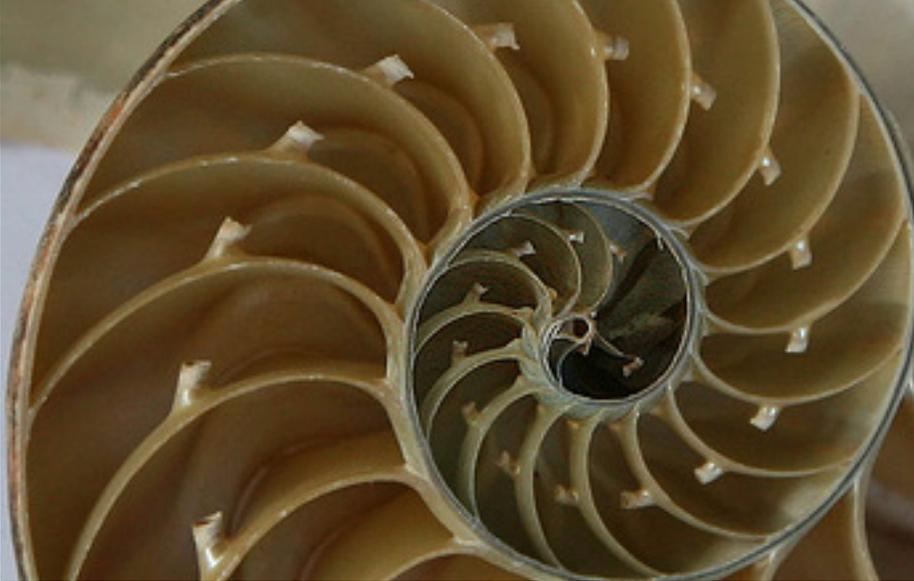
During Year Three the Center revised the way it categorizes its contacts to better understand which constituents are most invested in the Center's services. Hence, moving forward, an individual will count as a contact only if that individual has engaged in one of the four tiers of service provision, either as a collaborator or a participant. Using this revised definition of "contact", the Center closed its third year out with 954 unique contacts, 250 of whom were made during this reporting cycle. Nearly 50% of the Center's contacts were publications subscribers, and

the number of publications subscribers grew by 138 to 462 this year. Approximately 249 (27%) of the Center's contacts were associated with a TA case or consultation, and almost 211 (23%) attended a Center hosted learning experience. Many of the Center's contacts (16%) had engaged with more than one Center experience or tier of service. Center contacts represent a diversity of district and state administrators, teachers, parents, technical assistance professionals, higher education professionals and so on from 33 unique states.

Future Directions

Moving forward, the Center will focus efforts on expanding its reach and presence beyond Indiana, particularly to Ohio and Illinois. Moreover, as the Center's contact list continues to grow, Center leadership would like to see a significant increase in the number of contacts made each year, and more specifically contacts related to Tier One services. Efforts in Year Four will focus on cultivating strategies to better leverage existing and employ new strategies to realize these outreach goals.





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

- Conduct scholarly research activities and produce professional publications associated with the Center's service provision model and partnerships
- Engage in formative evaluation, quality assurance, and professional learning activities to continuously improve the quality and efficacy of the Centers work, as well as internal operational efficiencies
- Develop, maintain, and manage comprehensive data collection and management systems such that data are readily available for use to inform the Center's work
- Engage in summative evaluation activities to evidence and demonstrate the quality, efficacy, and impacts of the Center's work

Continual Improvement in the Provision of Technical Assistance

This goal area relates to the Center's efforts to continuously monitor, evaluate and improve TA service provision, and to contribute to an expanding body of knowledge and practice related to the provision of equity-oriented TA. Center staff members regularly engage in research to inform product development and TA service delivery, as well as scholarly research related its TA service delivery. Data and findings about each project objective are generated as part of this project objective; data related to this objective area are primarily counts of instruments produced and qualitative descriptions of the research designs and methods used to collect, analyze, and make meaning of data.

Continuous Improvement Planning

This reporting cycle began with the development of a plan and agreement for conducting data collection activities for the year, including the development of a detailed agreement and scope of work for the Center's External Evaluation consultant. Additionally, a comprehensive plan and templates for embedding evaluation and monitoring activities in all TA service provision was advanced, as well as an annual partner survey process, and a routinized process for generating standard data summaries at monthly and bi-annual intervals. Finally, work on a relational, online database was completed.

Continuous Improvement: Data-Informed Decision Making

Key data collection activities for Year Three included the development of State Data Profiles for each of the Center's six states, harvesting of monthly metrics, administration of questionnaires following professional learning experiences, observing and reviewing documentation of service provision, conducting annual partner interviews, and administering an annual partner questionnaire. Center staff members are actively involved in determining research and evaluation questions, plans, and in collecting, analyzing, and reviewing data. For example, each staff member is responsible for harvesting monthly metrics that are directly related to their work area.

In order to deliver and discuss findings in a timely manner to inform and shape TA service provision, data were analyzed and summarized iteratively and formally in bi-annual progress reports. Also, iterative metric and Post-Session Questionnaire data summaries were prepared throughout the year to provide just in time feedback to service providers. In addition to data summaries, four data presentations were prepared to support conversations about TA service provision. Finally, to review and discuss implications of the data on broad strategic directions for the Center's work and to ensure that all staff members are involved in that process, two half-day Visioning Summits were convened during Year Three. Eight staff meetings and internal learning experiences, including quarterly TA partnership "case conferences", were also held to build shared understanding of the Center's mission, philosophy, and work.

In addition to technical reports, this year Center staff members authored five papers that they presented at two national research conferences, and published

a total of four scholarly peer-reviewed publications, with another in press. Finally, this year one of the Center's graduate students successfully defended a dissertation that was grounded in a Center TA partnership.

Future Directions

In the coming year, the Center will continue to refine and streamline data collection and information cycles, as well as overall continual improvement processes. Specifically, the focus of the Center's leadership will be on continuing to integrate Continuous Improvement strategies in every aspect of the work such that the service delivery and continuous improvement processes are a unified effort. Several specific strategies include developing and applying quality control criteria and holding quarterly continuous improvement meetings in addition to the visioning summits.



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