



# Annual Report: Year Four

*(October 2014 - September 2015)*

Camille Warren



**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
IUPUI

# 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 Four Quarterly Summary

### QUARTER ONE

- 10 requests for assistance
- Three new active TA partnership
- One TA partnership closed
- One site visits and 20 virtual TA events
- Hosted Quarter One Webinar
- Published two newsletters
- Added 30 resources to Equity Library
- 2015 Visioning Summit
- Year Three Evaluation Report
- Year Three Annual Report

### QUARTER THREE

- 14 requests for assistance
- Eight site visits and 12 virtual TA events
- Hosted 2015 State Equity Leaders Summit
- Hosted 2015 EquiLearn Focus Session
- Hosted Quarter Three Webinar
- Published four newsletters and two briefs
- Disseminated five equity tools
- Added 23 resources to Equity Library
- Quarterly Continuous Improvement Report and Meeting
- Administered Annual Partner Survey

Oct - Dec 2014

Jan - Mar 2015

Apr - Jun 2015

Jul - Sept 2015

### QUARTER TWO

- 11 requests for assistance
- One new active TA partnerships
- Six site visits and 14 virtual TA events
- Hosted Quarter Two Webinar
- Published three newsletters
- Added 22 resources to Equity Library
- Quarterly Continuous Improvement Report and Meeting
- Winter 2015 Advisory Board Meeting

### QUARTER FOUR

- 10 requests for assistance
- Three new active TA partnerships
- One TA partnership closed
- Two site visits and 16 virtual TA events
- Hosted Quarter Four Webinar
- Hosted 2015 Equity Leaders Institute
- Published three newsletters
- Added 91 resources to Equity Library
- Summer 2015 Advisory Board Meeting
- 2015 Progress Report (524b) to USDOE

October 2014

December 2014

March 2015

June 2015

September 2015

Year Four



# 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 Four: Oct 2014 - Sep 2015

During the 2014-15 cycle, i.e., Year Four, 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 45 new requests for assistance during this reporting cycle (see Figure 1). 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.

## 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, or in person. Requests for assistance increased from 24 in Year Three to 45 in Year Four; across all four years, the Center has received and processed a

grand total of 107 requests for assistance (see Figure 1).

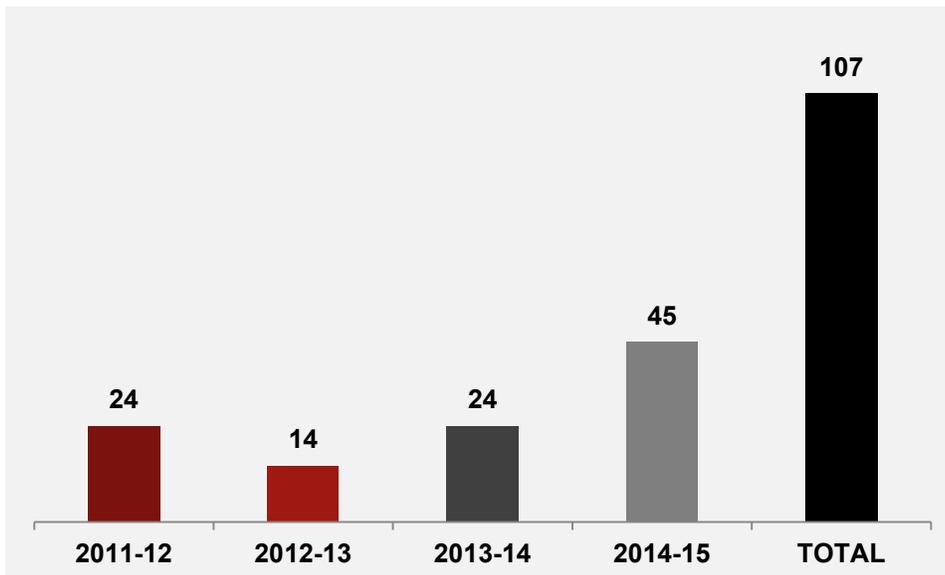


Figure 1. Distribution of all requests for assistance (counts) submitted to Great Lakes Equity Center (October 2011 – September 2015)

## Maintaining Momentum in Dynamic Contexts

Several factors challenged the Center’s growth, rhythms, and routines. Including, primarily, hiring of new key personnel, and substantive changes to the funding structure for EACs. More specifically, early in Year Four the Center welcomed a new Assistant Director for Technical Assistance and a Professional Learning and Continuous Improvement Coordinator. In addition to new professional staff, the Center also welcomed a new Advisory board with four out of seven new board members. Finally, the Center is situated within the School of Education at Indiana University Purdue University, and enjoys the benefit of having graduate assistants serve as support staff. However, relying on graduate assistants (GAs) as a primary staffing source also means that the Center experiences some anticipated turn over in staff at regular intervals. Hence, late in Year Four the Center spent some time onboarding an entirely new cohort of GAs.

In addition to shifts and changes in key personnel and support staff, late in the previous year, the federal government made the significant decision to provide a two-year extension to current EACs as an alternative to hosting another competitive bid. While these contexts held significance for the work on a number of levels, the Center staff maintained momentum in service provision, as described in the subsequent sections of this report.



# 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 12 organizations across six states, four of which were Region V states. Moreover, one of the Center's principal investigators provided targeted support to 45 emerging principals enrolled in the Urban Principalship Program at IUPUI related to the Center's equity oriented strategic planning process. All of the Year Four consultations related to support for ensuring equitable access to high-quality learning environments

## 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. Specifically, the Center offers four distinct types of learning experiences:

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

In addition to Center-hosted events, upon request from clients, the Center provides TA in the form of facilitating customized PL experiences.

During Year Four, the Center hosted seven regional PL experiences attended by 117 unique participants from each of the six Region V states and beyond; 12 individuals attended more than one event this year. Participants represented a broad array of roles and positions including parents, community members, teachers, district administrators, state administrators, higher education faculty members, and researchers. District and State administrators were the most abundant type of participant in Center learning experiences. 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 Webinars

EquiLearn Webinars are interactive, hour-long online seminars that are open to the general public. In Year Four the Center offered four webinar episodes, one per quarter, related to the theme of Ensuring Civil Rights in Education.

### PL Experiences: Equi-Learn Focus Session

EquiLearn Focus Sessions are intensive, one-day 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 Four the EquiLearn Focus Session, offered on May

15, 2015, addressed reframing educator’s discipline dialogue to ensure safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environments. A total of ten individuals from four of the Center’s TA Partnerships attended the event. The first half of the day was a structured learning experience during which participants learned with and from one another about how to use and reframe traditional discipline data to support practices that shift the focus from students as problems to systemic inequities. Then, for the second half of the day, each of the four teams received intensive TA consultation and support related to the specific contexts of their systems.

### PL Experiences: 2015 Equity Leader Institute

The most intensive type of learning experience offered by the Center is the annual Equity Leader Institute (Institute). Institutes are dynamic two-day, residential learning experiences to which participants apply to attend that delve deeply into issues of educational equity. On September 14 and 15, 2015 the Center hosted its fourth annual Institute, Equitable Distribution of Effective Educators. The 2015 Institute welcomed 37 participants from five of the Center’s six regional states; Illinois was the only state that did not have a representative at the 2015 Institute. The Center welcomed guest presentations from the Director of Indiana Urban Schools Association, Dr. Hardy Murphy, and from Dr. Monica Young and Dr. Jessica Williams from the Equitable Access Support Network.

In Year Four, the Center returned to its traditional format for the Institutes after testing out a new format in Year Three that did not realize as positive ratings or impacts as in years past. The Fall 2015 Institute provided participants with an intensive set of in-depth learning experiences related to the equitable distribution of effective educators that were designed to cultivate an intimate learning community. The Institute addressed the following four key objectives:

- Expand understanding of educator effectiveness beyond traditional definitions and models
- Examine the importance of developing collaborative partnerships across school communities to leverage resources and ensure the recruitment, distribution, and retention of effective educators
- Discuss how systems and processes can promote and constrain efforts toward equitable distribution of effective educators

- Engage in initial planning efforts toward ensuring all students receive highly-effective educators

Early in Year Five, the Center will bring these participants back together for a virtual experience to further strengthen the growing community of practice; during that experience, colleagues from the Center for Great Teachers and Leaders will showcase new tools and resources to support practitioners in the implementation of their Educator Equity Plans.

### PL Experiences: State Equity Leaders' Summit

State Equity Leaders' Summits are intensive one-day opportunities intended to connect and build collaborative relationships between equity leaders across Region V. In Year Four the Center hosted its fourth Annual State Equity Leaders' Summit on April 27, 2015. The fourth annual summit served and connected 13 equity-oriented leaders from one state department, two school districts, three technical assistance and dissemination centers, and two universities. The summit included in-depth, open round-table discussions related to defining educator effectiveness, workforce diversity, and supporting local educational agencies in ensuring the equitable distribution of effective practitioners. The 2015 Summit also included an inter-disciplinary panel discussion related to bolstering the diversity and effectiveness of the teaching workforce. In addition, a keynote address was provided by Dr. Robert Stonehill from American Institutes for Research; and, a discussion of how the Equitable Access Support Network could support the ongoing work of the State Educator Equity plans was provided by Dr. Monica Young.

### 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 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 18 TA partnerships this year with at least one partnership in each of its six states.

The Center began the year with 11 active TA partnerships continued from Year Three, and added seven more throughout the year (total n=18). Notably, four of the Center's partnerships stemmed from referrals by the Department of Justice (DoJ). Figure 2 provides an overview of the distribution of all of the Center's TA Partnerships (n=44) to date 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 (i.e., Inactive), each received supports and resources from the Center. The Center is committed to providing service to every partner who submits a request for support, in accordance with the Center's model for service provision, capacity, and available resources.

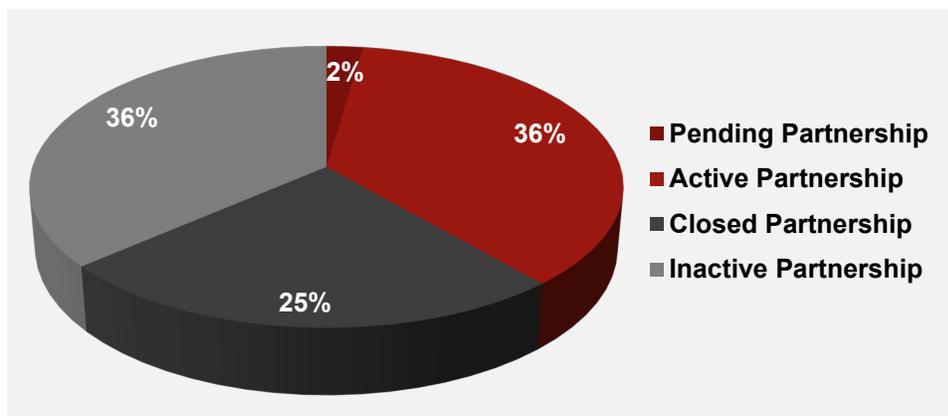


Figure 2. Distribution of Great Lakes Equity Center Tier Four Technical Assistance Partnerships (n=44) by partnership status at the end of September 2015

As demonstrated in Figure 3, the Center has had active partnerships in each of its Region V states, with particularly strong representation in Indiana and Michigan.

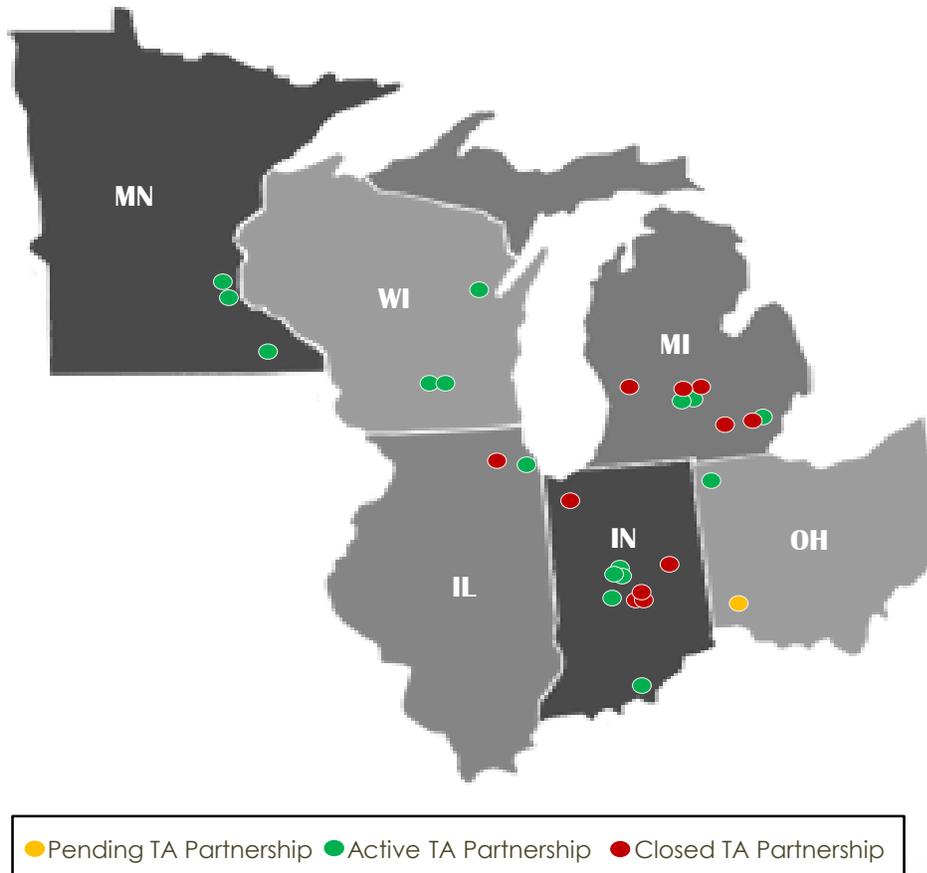


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of Great Lakes Equity Center’s technical assistance partnerships at the end of September 2015

Each TA partnership is unique and based on a set of objectives and outcomes that are co-constructed by the Center and the partnering agency and 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 18 partnerships the Center engaged in this year (78%, n=14) 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.

During Year Four a total of 17 visits either to partners or partners coming to the Center occurred across ten partnerships; 62 distance TA events were provided to

15 sites; and 79 resources, tools, and products were delivered in association with the Center's 18 active TA partnerships.

### Future Directions

Service provision related to existing and new TA partnerships and consultations will continue to advance and proceed through Year Five. The Center will host seven professional learning experiences in Year Five including: four quarterly webinars; 2016 EquiLearn Focus Session; 2016 State Equity Leaders' Summit; and 2016 Equity Leaders Institute. In Year Five, all of the Center's activities and events will be organized around an annual, and related quarterly, themes to ensure alignment across activities and events and with the USDOE priorities.

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**Education leads to enlightenment. Enlightenment opens the way to empathy. Empathy foreshadows reform.**

*–Derrick Bell*





# 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)**
- **Stakeholder briefs (Equity by Design)**
- **Podcast Episodes (Equity by Design)**

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.

During this reporting cycle the Center disseminated a total of 14 publications, 12 newsletters, and two Stakeholder Briefs. Newsletter topics ranged from cultivating legal literacy regarding students' and families' civil rights, to how to apply principles and practices from universal design for learning, to centering students and appreciating difference in the classroom. The two topics addressed by the stakeholder briefs were: Foregrounding Equity in Definitions of "High-Quality" Educators; and Equity Considerations for Historically Underserved Populations.

The engagement levels of subscribers with Center authored publications are presented in Figure 4. 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 4 reveal, across all publication types, the average open and click-through rate were 24% and 10%, respectively. Moreover, the data suggest that briefs resulted in the highest level of subscriber engagement.

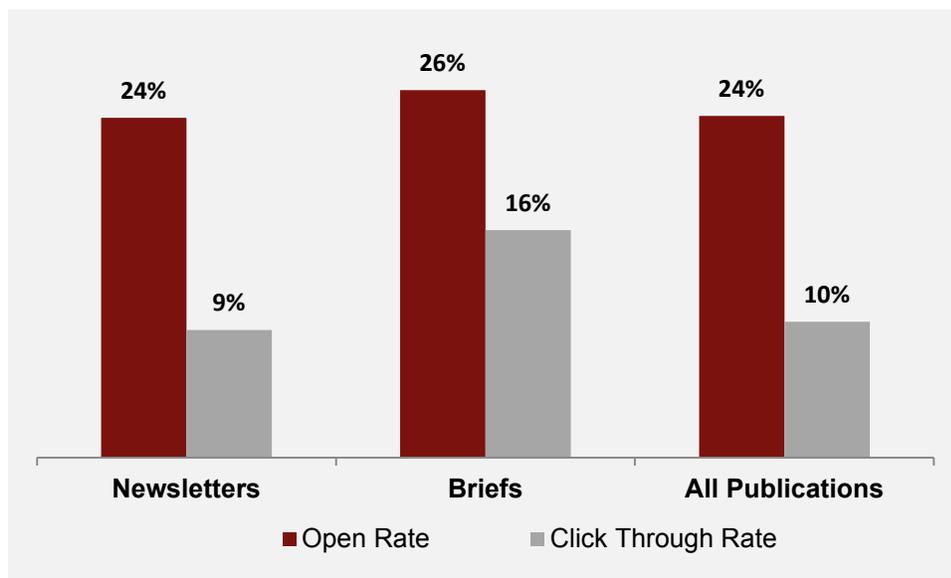


Figure 4. Subscriber engagement with Great Lakes Equity Center publications for Year Four (October 2014-September 2015), overall and by publication type

## Equity Tools and Resources

In addition to publications, a number of tools and presentations are developed in association with service provision to educational agencies. To expand that work and increase accessibility to a broader audience, select resources are posted to the Center's website and e-Learning Forums, an online system for sharing multimedia content and information with PL communities. During this reporting period four webinars, five presentations, and five Equity Tools developed in the provision of TA were published via the Center's online platforms.

## 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. Library custodians regularly gather and evaluate 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 Four, the online library contained nearly 500 resources. Throughout Year Four, 166 additional resources were published to the Equity Library. Information about Equity Library usage is reported in the next section, Goal 3.

## Future Directions

In Year Five, the Center will continue to regularly develop and harvest publications and resources related to educational equity. The Center will also disseminate its first interactive toolkit in Year Five.





# 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-Forum, social media sites, and direct email promotional 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 and 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 Center’s 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 5, during this reporting cycle more than 3,400 individuals visited the website a total of 6,487 times, and automated analytics documented a total of more than 20,297 page views. Overall, the total number of visits, unique visits and pageviews all increased in Year Four compared to all other years.

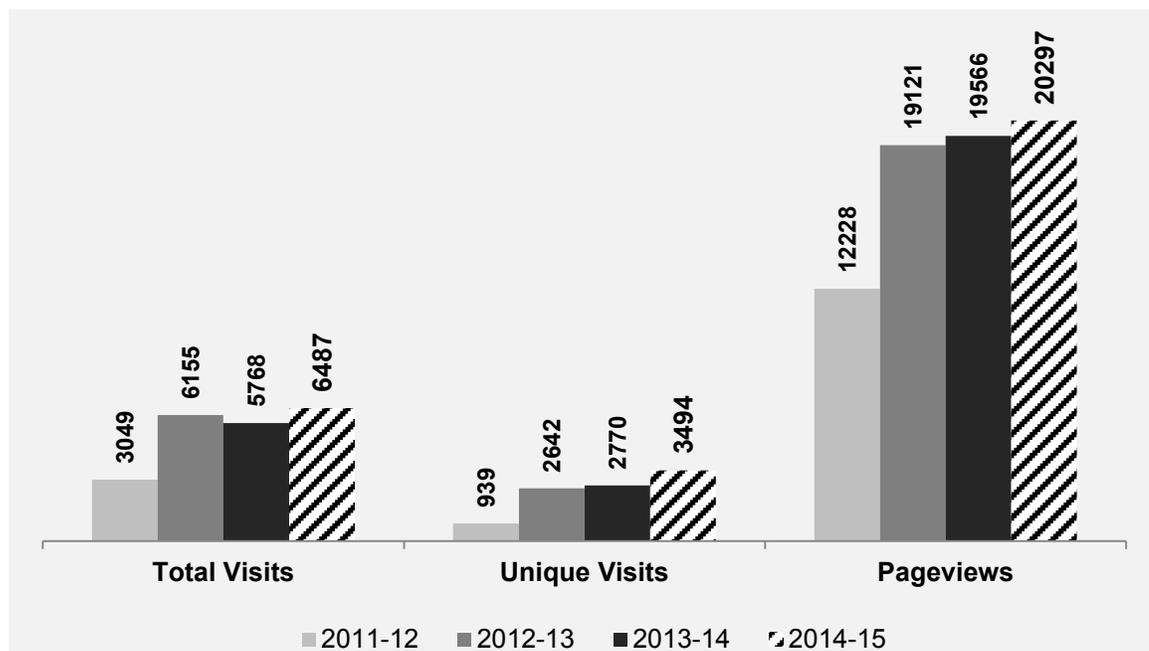


Figure 5. Great Lakes Equity Center website visitation trends by year (October 2011 – September 2015)

### Distribution of Visitors

The geographic distribution of visitors to the Center’s website during Year Four spanned 78 countries/ territories and 50 states in the United States (see Figure

6). Most (90%) of the visits to the Center’s website came from within the United States, more specifically most (72%) originated from Region V with a majority from Indiana (52%). These data are consistent with the previous three years.



Figure 6. Geographic Distribution of Guests to the Great Lakes Equity Center Website for Year Three (October 2014 – September 2015)

### Equity Library

The Equity Library is a virtual database housed on the Center’s website through which publicly available research- and practice-based tools and resources are disseminated. In Year Four, a total of 235 different resources were downloaded from the library 550 times, as Figure 7 reveals, these metrics represent steady growth in use of the equity library.

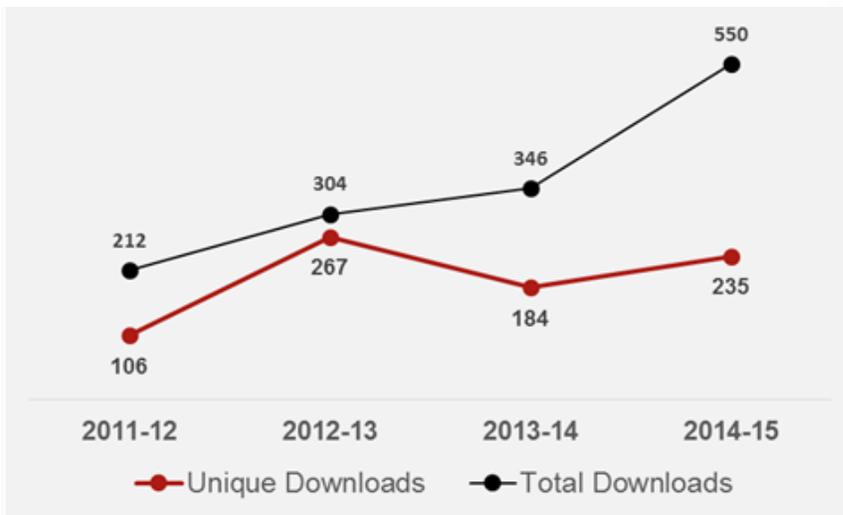


Figure 7. Frequency of downloads for unique resources accessed on Great Lakes Equity Center’s online Equity Library (Oct 2013-Sept 2014)

## Social Media (Facebook and Twitter)

In addition to dissemination via the website, the Center uses social media accounts, e.g., Facebook and Twitter, to provide timely news, announcements, and to connect with other individuals and organizations engaged in similar work. In Year Four part of the role of the new TA Coordinator was to devote time to increasing the Center's presence in social media and growing that audience. Center staff members made regular posts to Twitter and Facebook. For this reporting period, 234 Tweets and 233 posts to Facebook were made, and the Center received 4521 new Page Likes (total= 4629) and 241 new Twitter followers (total= 309). In addition, during this reporting cycle, the Center posted three videos to its new YouTube channel. These metrics herald substantive growth in the Center's presence on social media sites.

## 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, Center staff members served on nine national and regional committees and boards, including: Chicago Public Schools' Thought Partner's Advisory Committee, Indiana Disproportionality Committee, the Great Lakes Comprehensive Center and Midwest Comprehensive Centers' Advisory Board, the National School Climate Center's Civil Rights Initiative, and the Center for Parent Information Resources Advisory Board. In addition the Center has collaborated extensively with the Department of Justice, Office for Civil Rights, and the Equity Access Support Network in the provision of TA services. Center staff members also attended, presented and participated in 13 networking events and professional conferences, including the American Education Research Association conference, and held two Center advisory board meetings.

During Year Four the Center added approximately 300 new individuals to its contact list. Nearly 55% of the Center's contacts were current or former publications subscribers; the number of publications subscribers grew by 214 to 503 this year. Approximately 36% of the Center's contacts were associated with a TA case or consultation, and almost 26% attended at least one Center hosted learning experience within the past four years. Many of the Center's contacts (20%) 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.

## Future Directions

Moving forward, the Center will focus efforts on reaching more classroom practitioners. In Year Five, all efforts across the four tiers of support and all four goal areas will relate to attending to practitioners in schools and classrooms. The Center's annual and quarterly theme selection reflect an increased focus on issues for educators and classroom practitioners.

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**No matter what happens in a child's home, no matter what other social and economic factors may impede a child, there's no question in my mind that a first-rate school can transform almost everything.**

*–Jonathan Kozol*





# 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. This year saw the development of a comprehensive Region V data catalogue that houses comprehensive data sets for each of the Center's six states. Data for the Region V data catalogue were gleaned from the National Center for Educational Statistics, US Census, and state department of education's websites.

### Continuous Improvement: Data-Informed Decision Making

Key data collection activities for Year Four included 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 are analyzed and summarized iteratively. Regular data summaries were prepared throughout the year to provide just in time feedback to service providers. In Year Four more than 35 data summaries were prepared to inform decision making. In addition to data summaries, six technical, progress, and evaluation reports were prepared to demonstrate transparent accountability. In addition to technical reports, this year Center staff members authored and published a total of three scholarly peer-reviewed publications related to the Center's work.

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 continuous improvement meetings and one annual visioning

summit were convened during Year Four. Eight staff meetings and internal learning experiences were also held.

### **Future Directions**

In the coming year, as the Center winds down its first grant cycle, the leadership team will continue to refine and streamline data collection and information cycles, as well as overall continual improvement processes.



# References

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# Personnel

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## Principal Investigators

Kathleen King Thorius, *Principal Investigator*  
Thu Suong Thi Nguyen, *Co-Principal Investigator*  
Brendan Maxcy, *Co-Principal Investigator*

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## Operational Leadership

Seena Skelton, *Project Director*  
Tiffany Kyser, *Assistant Director*  
Camille Warren, *Assistant Director*

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## Staff

David Gibson, <i>External Evaluator</i>	Robin Jackson, <i>Graduate Assistant</i>
Adrienne Wharton, <i>Office Manager</i>	Tammera Moore, <i>Graduate Assistant</i>
Nickie Coomer, <i>Graduate Assistant</i>	Rod Whiteman, <i>Graduate Assistant</i>
Gayle Cosby, <i>Graduate Assistant</i>	

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## Project Officer

Phavy Cunningham, *Project Officer*  
Joy Medley, *Project Officer*  
*U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education*

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## Advisory Board

Bersheril Bailey, *American Institutes for Research*  
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Amanda Sullivan, *University of Minnesota-Minneapolis*  
Frederico Waitoller, *University of Illinois-Chicago*