



Equity Dispatch

Volume 1, Issue 1

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Ensuring All Students Succeed, Equity at the School Level



"Transformative change toward equity means persistent systemic change that disrupts and dismantles historical legacies of normative assumptions, beliefs, and practices about individual characteristics and cultural identities that marginalize and disenfranchise people and groups of people."

- Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center



Did You Know

Equity-Focused TA Promotes Systemic Shifts in Education Systems

Educators across the country are grappling with ways to redress the persistent inequities in our education systems. “Not since the US Civil Rights Movement has there been such urgency and mobilization to address inequities at the intersections of race, national origin, sex, and religion.” (Thorius, Skelton, & Warren, 2016, p. 1). The current reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), once again renews educators’ motivation towards creating effective solutions to address the disparities in student outcomes. With its foundational theme of equity, ESSA provides educators a renewed opportunity to shift conversations related to the educational outcomes of diverse students from “closing achievement gaps” to improving educational equity for all students (Zardoya, 2017).

Schools are complex systems; redressing problematic biases institutionalized in school cultures, policies, structures and practices requires systemic and multi-faceted solutions. State and local education agencies often find support for increasing their capacity to address inequities and implement equitable strategies from technical assistance centers (TACs) (Bell, 2012). TACs assist local and state education agencies by sharing information about research and practice based strategies, and providing guidance on policies that affect teaching and praxis in schools (Kozleski & Artiles, 2004). In addition, TACs assist state, district, and school leaders by increasing their knowledge of federal and state level policies and the impact on the educational experiences of all students (Chen et. al, 2014).

Equity-focused technical assistance enables educators to shift systems in ways that redistribute resources and decision-making power, as well as demonstrate a recognition and valuing of differences as reflected in perspectives, practices, curricula, school cultures, and climate (Kozleski & Waitoller, 2010).



Why It Matters

A Need for Capacity Building for Promoting Equitable Practices

Transformative change towards equity comes by paying attention to the people—the beliefs, dispositions, behaviors and competencies of individuals within an organization, as well as the social systems and structures in which they exist (Gass, 2010). Education leaders have expressed a desire for assistance to increase their capacity to confront and to create sustainable remedies to institutional biases (Zardoya, 2017). This includes actions that signals an ideology that students of color are inferior to their white classmates [in addition to other deficit viewpoints associated with dis/ability, sex, gender and socio-economic background] (Zardoya,

2017).

Traditional approaches to technical assistance (TA), often rely on top down theories; this positions external consultants as experts that will come into a system and fix problems by providing professional development targeted towards increasing educators' technical skills (i.e. practices related to the implementation of a specific program). Equity-focused TA goes beyond a reliance solely on technical domains of professional learning, and instead engages educators in examining classroom, school, district and agency cultures, as well as the power dynamics within systems that are marginalizing individuals within the system (Mulligan & Kozleski 2009). Equity-focused TA leverages the experiences, perspectives, and knowledges of the people within systems, with particular emphasis on the perspectives of historically underserved individuals. The central aim of equity-focused TA is to disrupt and dismantle historical legacies of normative assumptions, beliefs, and practices about individual characteristics and cultural identities that marginalize and disenfranchise people and groups of people (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2012). With the ultimate goal of capacity building, equity-focused TA centralizes expanding an organization's capacity to address issues of inequities. Equity-focused TA does this by using critical collaborative inquiry to foster a space for stakeholders to collaborate and dialogue about ways in which racism, sexism and other inequities are playing out in school environments, preventing equitable outcomes.



For Equity Now

Leverage Your System's Assets by
Partnering with the MAP EAC

Education systems that are able to leverage their assets to better address current and emergent issues related to ensuring all students have consistent access to highly effective and responsive learning opportunities, are more likely to sustain equitable outcomes for all students. Equity Assistance Centers (EACs) can be instrumental in assisting educational systems in advancing their capacity to create equity-oriented solutions and sustainable equity-oriented practices.

Funded by the United States Department of Education under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, EACs provide technical assistance and professional learning experiences, upon request, in the areas of race, sex, national origin, and religion, to public school districts and other responsible governmental agencies to promote equitable education opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP EAC) at IU School of Education at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, is one of four regional Equity Assistance Centers providing equity-focused technical assistance resources to educational systems. The center serves state and local education agencies in 13 states including Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Consultants and staff members at the MAP EAC are highly skilled, scholar-practitioners with over 30-combined years of experience in educational equity and educational improvement initiatives.

The MAP EAC offers a [continuum of services](#), ranging from universally accessible tools and resources, to various topic specific learning networks, and the provision of individualized, consultative services for state and local education agencies interested in receiving customized supports for systemic change efforts. The MAP EAC's service delivery framework enables the center to customize services to the needs of each requesting state or local education agency. The center provides a variety of technical assistance resources across many topics and focus areas as well including but not limited to:

- Legal requirements related to nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, and religion.
- Professional learning opportunities designed to develop educators' skills in employing culturally responsive practices such as, identification of race and sex bias in instructional materials.
- Information regarding effective methods of redressing special educational problems occasioned by desegregation.
- Tools, resources and professional development on methods to combat issues such as harassment and bullying.
- Facilitation support in equity-oriented strategic planning and equity-focused school improvement efforts.
- Strategies for promoting racial and socio-economic integration.

(IUSM Newsroom, 2016).

Educational systems that intentionally focus efforts on addressing systemic inequities, and leveraging both internal and external assets, can realize equitable learning outcomes for all students. Through the provision of equity-focused TA, the MAP EAC can assist in expanding your organization's capacity to provide robust, effective opportunities to learn for all students, regardless of and responsive to race, sex, national origin, religion, as well as income, eliminating inequities among and between student groups (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2016).

To learn more about the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center, please view this brief [video](#).

Meet the Authors

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Recommended citation: Skelton, S.M., Coomer, M.N., Jackson, R.G., Kyser, T.S., & Thorius, K.A.K. (2017). Ensuring all students succeed, equity at the school level. *Equity Dispatch*. Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center (MAP EAC). Retrieved from: [Link](#)

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