



# Semi-Annual Report: Year Three

*(October 2013 - March 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: Quarters One and Two

### 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
- Hosted Semi-Annual Visioning Summit
- Annual External Evaluation Report
- Year Two Evaluation Report

Oct - Dec 2012

Jan - Mar 2013

Apr - Jun 2013

Jul - Sept 2013

### 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

October 2012

December 2012

March 2013

June 2013

September 2013

# Year Three



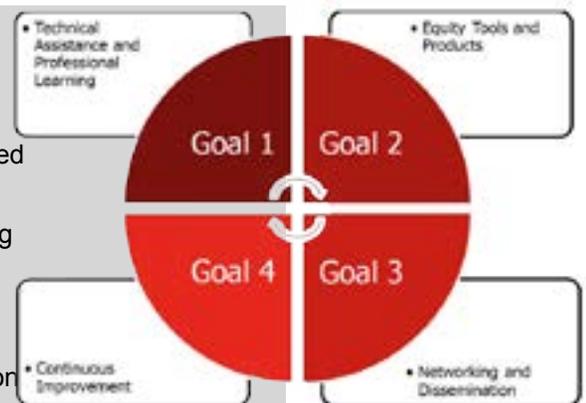
# Introduction

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

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

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

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



The 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 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. Central to this effort is the inclusion and involvement of all key stakeholders within the systems engaged in change, including families, community members, administrators, policy makers, practitioners, and students.

By supporting organizational learning and improvement in Region V schools and districts, the Center hopes to realize outcomes in four primary arenas: practitioner 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 underserved, marginalized students. What follows is a summary of the Center's stance on transformative technical assistance for educational equity, the tenets of which ground every facet of the Center's work.

### **SAMPLE TARGETED OUTCOMES**

- Policies that reflect educational equity principles: access, representation, and meaningful participation
- Increase in knowledge and implementation of culturally responsive and inclusive practices
- Improvements in school culture and climate
- Decrease in opportunity gaps among and between groups

### **Transformative Technical Assistance**

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

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

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

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- **TIER FOUR - SYSTEMIC EQUITY PARTNERSHIPS** – Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) detailing customized, co-constructed outcomes, provision of custom-made and adapted resources, tools, and distance and on-site consultations and professional learning experiences
  - **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** – broad campaigns of universal availability to raise awareness and provide the region with data, analysis and interpretation of research-based practices

With a diverse staff of 15, representing more than 100 years combined experience in educational reform initiatives the Great Lakes Equity Center is well positioned to facilitate transformative systems change in Region V. This report summarizes the Center's activities and accomplishments during Quarter One and Two of Year Three (October 2013 – March 2014), as well as projected areas for continued growth in the final two quarters of Year Three.





# Summary

## Year Three: Quarters One and Two Summary

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The Center resolutely continued to pursue its mission while sustaining momentum from previous years as it entered the third year of its first funding cycle. The team maintained the tempo of service provision established during Years One and Two, and welcomed four new staff members to support a robust body of work, with particular focus on outreach. Seasoned staff members continued to produce and disseminate publications and offer an array of learning experiences, reflecting the rhythms of a maturing organization. Moreover, the Center's technical assistance services continued with consistency as it balanced cultivating new partnerships with the sustenance of relationships in fully matured partnerships. During the first half of Year Three, the Center received seven new requests for assistance at scale and signed agreements for four new partnerships while concluding work and signing off on three completed partnerships such that the Center's docket of partnerships remained in relative stasis.

Details regarding progress within each of the Center's four goal areas are presented below. Each section of this report addresses a single goal area beginning with a brief description of the goal, followed by a summary of key activities and achievements, and concluding with details about future directions.



# Technical Assistance and Professional Learning

## Goal One

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

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

Great Lakes Equity Center’s approach to technical assistance and professional learning is based on an organizational learning theory that situates learning in practice-based experiences wherein innovations are informed and shaped by the learning communities’ unique contexts. Thus, empowering stakeholders to identify and leverage assets and resources, as well as potential barriers within the system. Using content grounded in research and providing guidance aimed at stimulating critical inquiry about the “status quo”, tools and practices are developed in and by the community of practice; the Center facilitates the inquiry by introducing tools and resources into the system.

### Requests for Assistance

As noted previously, the Center provides services across four tiers of supports in response to requests for assistance and identified needs in Region V. 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. In Quarters One and Two of Year Three, the Center received a total of seven new requests for assistance bringing the cumulative total of requests for support to 45 since the founding of the Center (see Figure 1)

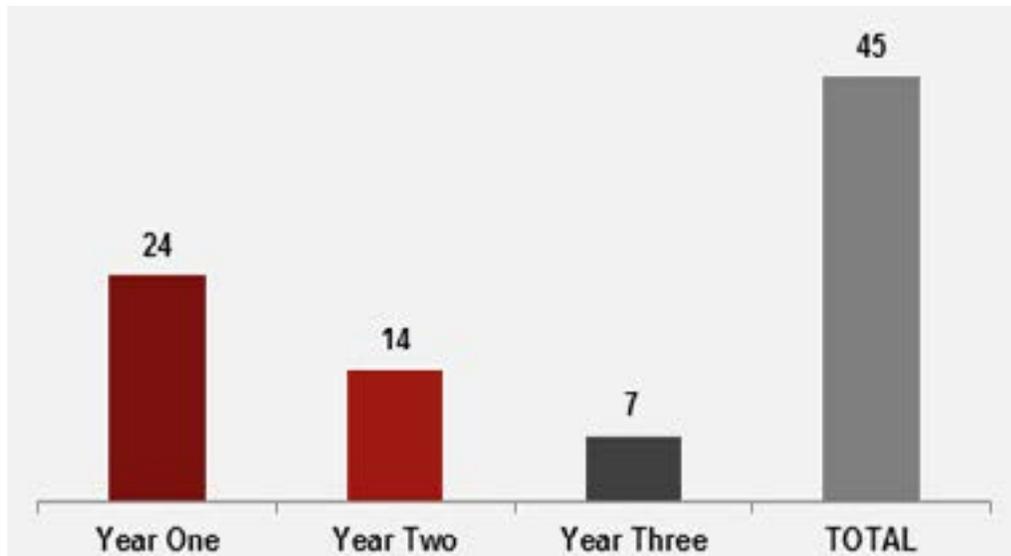


Figure 1. Distribution of all requests for assistance received by Great Lakes Equity Center, by Year, at the end of March 2014

## Technical Assistance Consultations and Partnerships

Consultations do not result in the development of formal written Memoranda of Understanding or Service Agreements, but rather consist of providing answers to specific questions or recommendations regarding a particular course of action, the provision of resources and tools, and referrals to other organizations (i.e., Tier 1 and 2 activities). Consultations are provided for requests for assistance that are fairly straightforward and basic.

Requests for assistance that result in the co-construction of a written Memorandum of Understanding or Service Agreement are called TA partnerships. TA partnerships are systemic and often involve multiple stakeholders; service provision may be characterized by short- or long-term partnerships. Short-term partnerships consist of targeted topic-specific technical assistance. Long-term partnerships are sustained over multiple months or years and focus on transformative systemic improvements. These systemic partnerships are the Center’s most intensive type of relationship and include the provision of targeted distance and on-site support, co-construction of learning experiences, consultations, provision and customization of resources, as well as critical, collaborative inquiry cycles and systems planning (i.e., Tier One to Four activities).

Technical Assistance partnerships are initially classified as “potential” until negotiations for a formal written agreement begin, at which time the partnership becomes a “pending”. Once an agreement has been signed by all requisite parties and service provision begins, the partnership becomes “active”. If a potential or pending partnership does not progress to the development of a formal written agreement, that partnership

becomes “inactive”, and an active partnership is considered “closed” when the terms in the written agreement are met.

Of the 45 requests for assistance received by the Center over the past two and a half years, almost two thirds (66%) resulted in formal, active relationships, as demonstrated in Figure 2. By the end of the Second Quarter of Year Three almost a third of the requests received resulted in short-term consultations (n= 12), while nearly a third had become active TA partnerships (n=17). During the first half of Year Three the Center on-boarded four new TA partnerships, one in Quarter One and three in Quarter Two. In addition, three active partnerships were closed during Quarter Two. Hence, the Center ended the first half of Year Three with eleven active TA partnerships and two more in the early stages of partnership development. Of the 11 active partnerships, eight are with school districts and three are with state departments of education. Moreover, three of the district level partnerships originated from DoJ or OCR referrals.

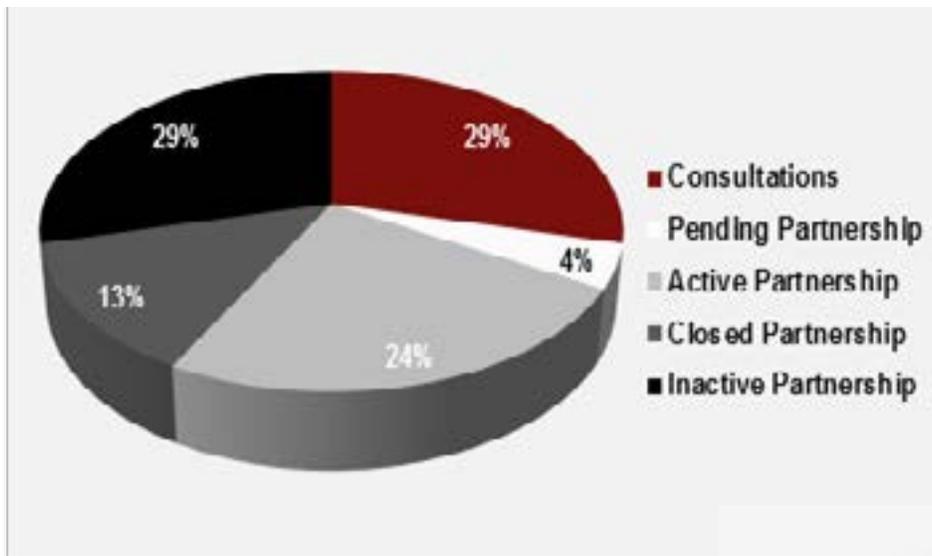


Figure 2. Distribution of requests for assistance received by Great Lakes Equity Center (n=45) by status at the end of March 2014<sup>1</sup>

Each partnership is unique and based on a set of co-constructed objectives and outcomes that are articulated in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Center and the partnering agency. Topics of support range from closing achievement gaps to addressing issues of school safety and climate. Within the first six months of Year Three Center staff members conducted a total of 18 site visits, 36 distance TA events, and delivered 33 products in association with its active TA partnerships (see Figure 3). Site visits included facilitating strategic planning with a focus on equity at the district and state department level, engaging in needs sensing activities, and providing targeted focused professional learning experiences. Products and resources are generated to support partnering agencies based on assessed ongoing and present needs; selected products are further honed and polished for broader distribution as Equity Tools (see Goal Two).

<sup>1</sup> **Consultation:** Short-term relationships involving consultations and provision of resources, no MOU; **Potential Partnership:** Request for assistance has been classified as a TA Partnership, but no negotiations for service have begun; **Pending Partnership:** Negotiations for a formal MOU have begun and are in progress; **Active Partnership:** MOU has been finalized and signed by all parties, service provision has begun; **Closed Partnership:** All requirements in an MOU have been met and agreement has been closed [NOTE: MOUs can be renewed to keep a partnership active]; **Inactive Partnership:** Either a potential or pending partnership that did not result in the development of a written agreement, or all of the requirements for an MOU for an Active Partnership were not accomplished.

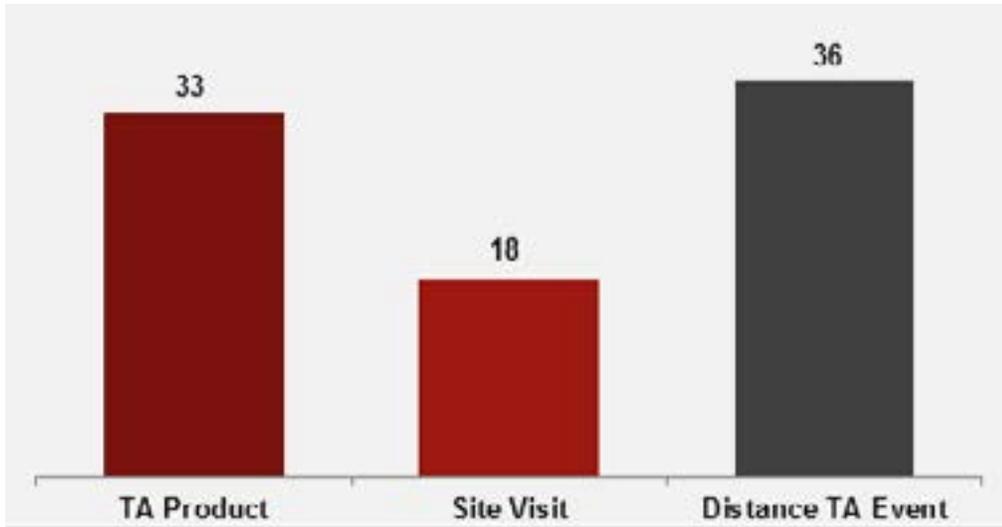


Figure 3. Great Lakes Equity Center technical assistance partnership activity for Year Three, Quarters One and Two (Oct 2013 - Mar 2014)

With active partnerships in each of the six states in Region V, the Center has strong representation across its region (see Figure 4). By virtue of its geographical location and staff members' local networks, the Center has strong roots in its home state of Indiana. In addition to the extensive and developing network in Indiana, it is important to note that the Center continues to foster and cultivate relationships within each of its region's states, most notably in Michigan and Wisconsin. To support outreach efforts within Region V, the Center hired a Networking and Dissemination Coordinator during the first half of Year Three (see Goal Three for details). As more individuals across the region have become familiar with the Center's mission and work, the Center's reach has expanded and will continue to extend in the future.

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The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

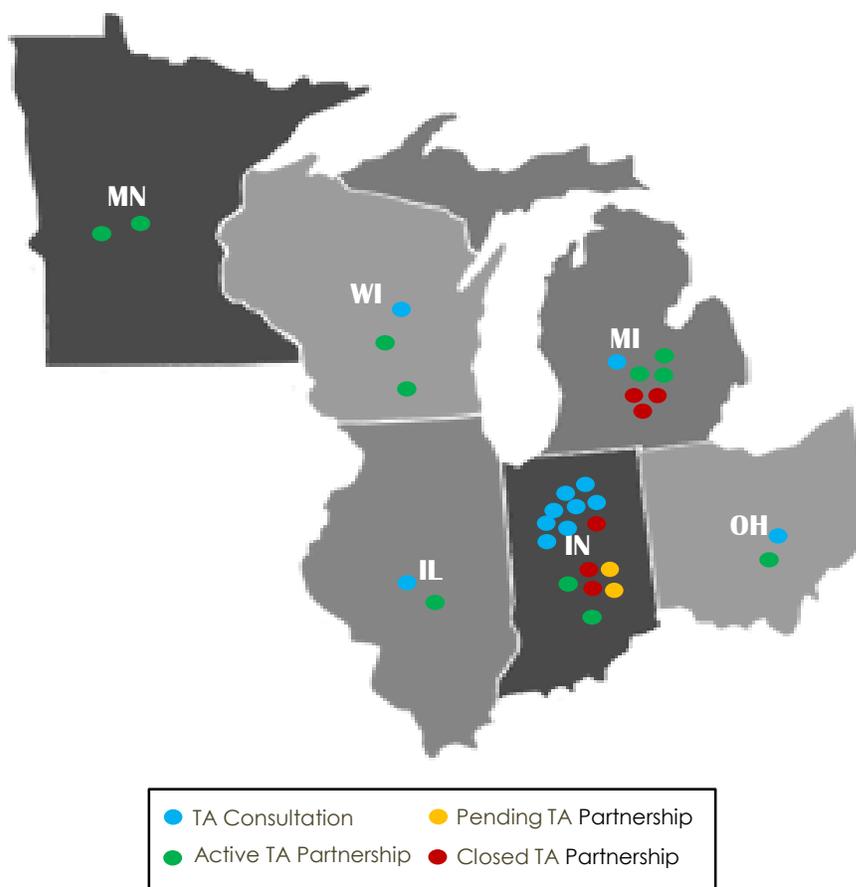


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of Great Lakes Equity Center Technical Assistance partnerships, by status, at the end of March 2014

## Professional Learning Experiences

In addition to the professional learning experiences provided in association with technical assistance partnerships, Center staff members also design and facilitate stand-alone professional learning experiences to address a variety of topics and needs. These professional learning experiences may be sponsored and hosted by the Center, or Center staff members may be invited as guest facilitators to events hosted by other organizations. This section of the report summarizes details about these stand-alone learning experiences hosted and facilitated by Center staff members.

The Center offers four types of learning experiences:

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

During the first half of its third year, the Center hosted one EquiLearn webinar and was invited to guest-facilitate a learning experience at the Indiana Girls Collaborative Project's, STEM-ulating Collaboration Conference. Each experience was attended by more than 20 participants representing a broad array of roles and positions including parents, community members, teachers, district administrators, state administrators, higher education faculty members, and researchers.

## Future Directions

Service provision related to existing and new partnerships will continue to advance and proceed through the end of Year Three. The Center will also host at least four additional professional learning experiences during the remainder of Year Three. Another new horizon the Center is eager to meet during the coming months of Year Three is the offering of the Center's first online course; the course is scheduled to be released in the fall of 2014 (i.e., Quarter Four of Year Three).

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The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.  
–Aristotle





# Equity Tools and Products

## Goal Two

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

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

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

### Center Publications

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

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

Center publications are written or produced by experienced practitioners and top researchers in the fields of educational leadership, special education, and educational

equity. The publication process involves theme selection, content development, an extensive, rigorous editing process, and finally, dissemination. Center publications are disseminated via email to individuals who subscribe and they are also posted to the Center's website.

During Quarters One and Two of Year Three, the Center published five newsletters, three e-bulletins, and one brief. Topics and themes covered were: Restorative Justice which was a call for readers to reframe school disciplinary thinking and practices; and a four part series on the State of Education for students with dis/abilities, immigrant students, Asian American students, and American Indiana students. These publications highlighted the importance of educators recognizing the diversity across and within student groups, as well as ways of increasing collaboration between schools and families, students, and community members.

## 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. For the first half of the current year, a total of 30 resources were harvested and seven published to the Equity Library after careful review, bringing the total number of resources in the library to 478.

## Equity Tools

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. As the tools make their way along the Center's production process, they are reviewed and validated before being published as Equity Tools.

A number of tools have emerged through the provision of service and have been identified for further vetting or validation before being publicly disseminated. One tool in particular, the Policy Equity Analysis Tool (PEAT), was identified for further study as it was used by teams in a state department of education and several school districts. Data gathered were used to revise and refine the tool; the tool continues to be revised and improved and is being packaged for ease of use in dissemination. Many other tools have emerged in association with partnerships and professional learning experiences; these tools have been made available to partners and PL experience participants via the e-Learning Lab. Moving forward, a selection of these tools (n=10) have been identified to go through the Center's formal validation and publication process, and will be made publicly available on the Center's website.

## Future Directions

The Center is on track to continue to regularly develop and harvest equity-related publications and resources. In the final two quarters of Year Three, the Center projects to publish at least five more newsletters and one brief, as well as two podcast episodes. Moreover, two equity tools developed in conjunction with Center partnerships will be published. The Center will also explore possibilities of having the resources in the Equity Library available under Google search and other platforms that may confer wider reach to Region V and beyond.

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It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.

-Maya Angelou





# Networking and Dissemination

## Goal Three

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

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

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

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

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

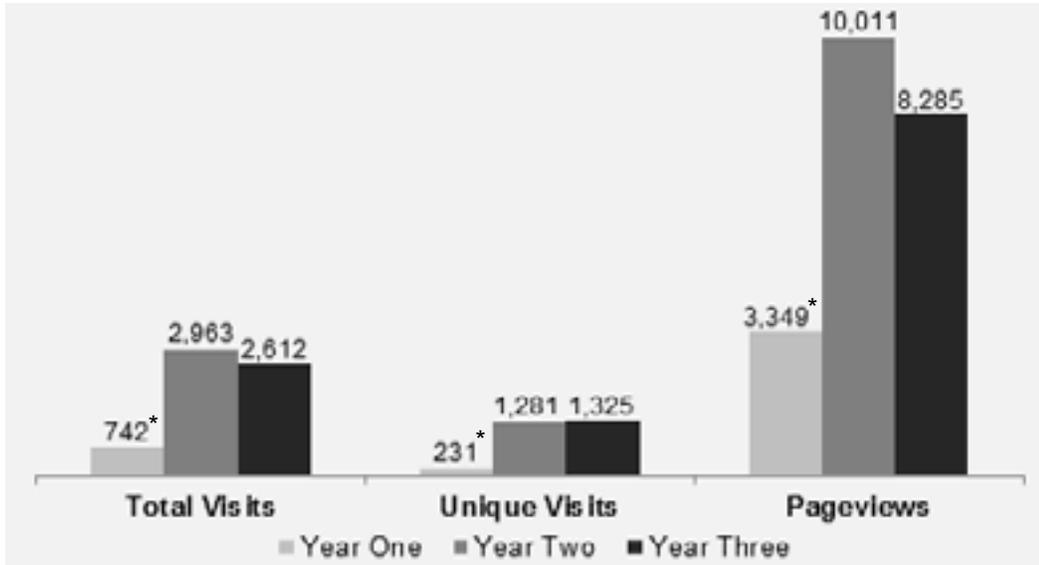
Center's needs change. The Center's dissemination strategies include the website, which contains the online Equity Library, social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, marketing via direct email dissemination of e-publications, traditional print media promotional materials, and networking events. To support networking and dissemination efforts, during the first quarter of Year Three the Center hired a part-time Coordinator to spearhead continuous improvement in this arena. The new Coordinator refined the Center's networking and dissemination plan and strategies, with a particular focus on messaging and strengthening the brand identity. The following section summarizes efforts and accomplishments related to networking and dissemination, as well as the extent to which those efforts have been fruitful in increasing the Center's visibility and engagement with Region V stakeholders.

## Center Website

The Great Lakes Equity Center website is an axial tool for disseminating and communicating the Center's work. The site provides information about the Center and offers potential partners the opportunity to contact the Center, submit a request for assistance, subscribe to the Center's publications, and download a wide array of equity related resources.

The following three figures (5–7) display data related to visitation patterns to the Center's website for the first half of each year. Because the Center's website was launched at the end of the first quarter of Year One, and visitation patterns were stabilizing during the following quarters of that year, data from the first two quarters of Year Two prove to be a better comparison for Year Three. Hence, although Year One data are presented, only data from the first two quarters of Year Two and Year Three are compared.

By the end of the second quarter of Year Three a total of 1,325 individuals visited the website a total of 2,612 times, and automated analytics documented 8,285 page views on the Center's website (see Figure 5). Compared to the same time period in Year Two, more individuals visited the Center website during the first half of Year Three (1,325) compared to the same time period in Year Two (1,281). Moreover, despite an ostensible spike in website visits (2,963 versus 2,612) and pages viewed (10,011 versus 8,285) during the first half of Year Two, total visits and pages viewed for the first half of Year Three were almost on par with Year Two numbers. These data may be interpreted to suggest that although more people visited the Center's website during the first half of Year Three, those visitors viewed fewer pages and visited the website fewer times compared to the same time period in Year Two. One possible explanation for this observation is that at the beginning of Year Two the Center experienced robust expansion in service provision. For example, the during that time period, the Center hosted its first set of learning experiences, including an online webinar and Equity Leaders Institute, and published its first podcast episode. The spike in visitation to the Center's website coincides with this increase in activity, and appears to "level off" thereafter.



\* Note: Website was launched in Quarter Two of Year One; hence, these data are not comparable.

Figure 5. Visitation patterns to Great Lakes Equity Center website during first two quarters of Year One, Two, and Three (Oct 2011 – Mar 2014)

The geographic distribution of visitors to the Center’s website during the first two quarters of Year Three spanned 47 countries and 49 states within the United States. Almost all (96%) of the visits to the Center’s website came from within the United States; the majority of which originated from Region V (81%) with a most coming from the Center’s “home” state of Indiana (55%). These patterns seem to be consistent with and also reflect the distribution of the Center’s partnerships and the high activity engaged in by the Center in the Indiana.



Figure 6. Geographic distribution of visitors (continental United States) to the Great Lakes Equity Center website for Quarters One and Two of Year Three (Oct 2013 – Mar 2014)

## Equity Library

As described in Goal Two, the Equity Library is a virtual database housed on the Center's website through which high-quality, research- and practice-based tools and resources are disseminated. During the first half of the Center's third year, a total of 98 resources were downloaded from the library 134 times, compared to 97 resources downloaded 184 times during the same time period in Year Two. The majority of resources downloaded during the first half of Year Three were downloaded only once (76%), while nearly a quarter (24%) were downloaded two or more times. Compared to the same time period in the previous year where nearly 40% of resources were downloaded two or more times. These data suggest that the Center has maintained the number of resources accessed from the Equity Library between Year Two and Three, but the frequency of downloads has declined somewhat.

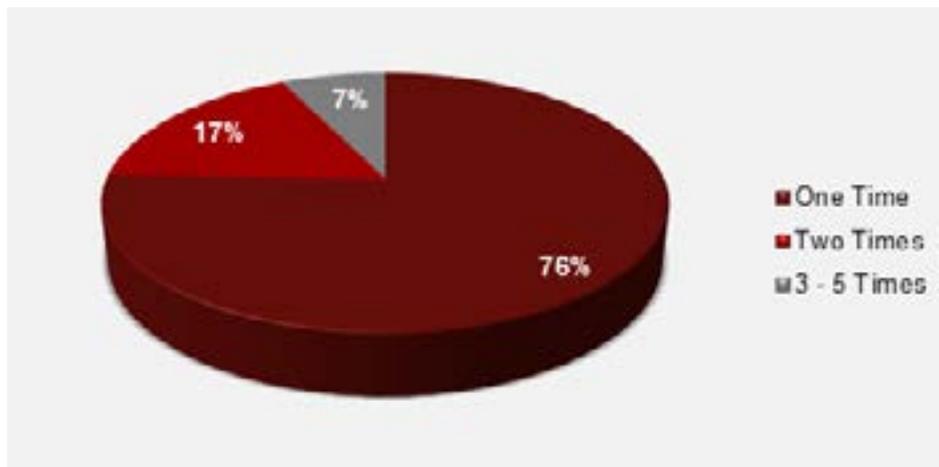


Figure 7. Distribution of resources downloaded from Great Lakes Equity Center's online Equity Library by frequency of downloads for Quarters One and Two of Year Three (Oct 2013 – Mar 2014)

## Publication Dissemination

Center-authored subscription-based publications (e.g. Newsletters and E-Blasts) are disseminated via direct email, with an extensive tracking system that measures receipt and engagement with e-publications. Efforts to enlist new publication subscribers includes, providing a sign-up sheet at every event in which Center staff members participate, an online sign-up form posted on the Center's website, and sending emails to Center affiliates inviting them to subscribe. Over the first and second quarters of Year Three, the total number of publication subscribers increased by 18% from 325 to 382. Moreover, 12% of all webpage views related to Center publications, compared to 8% in the first half of Year Two.

Open and click-through rates are used as indicators of subscriber interest and engagement with Center e-publications. Open rates describe the percentage of subscribers who actually opened the email message containing the publication; click-through rates describe the percent of subscribers who opened an email message and clicked at least one link in the message. Across all nine e-publications disseminated by the Center during the first half of Year Three, the average open rate was 37%, ranging from 30 to 43% on individual

messages. Moreover, the average click through rate was 42%, ranging from 35 to 62% on individual messages. The data presented in Figure 8 provide an overview of subscriber engagement (i.e., open and click through rates) with the different types Center publications; these data reveal that subscribers appear to be more likely to engage with briefs and e-bulletins as compared to e-newsletters. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that messages related to briefs and e-bulletins are much shorter in length than are newsletters.

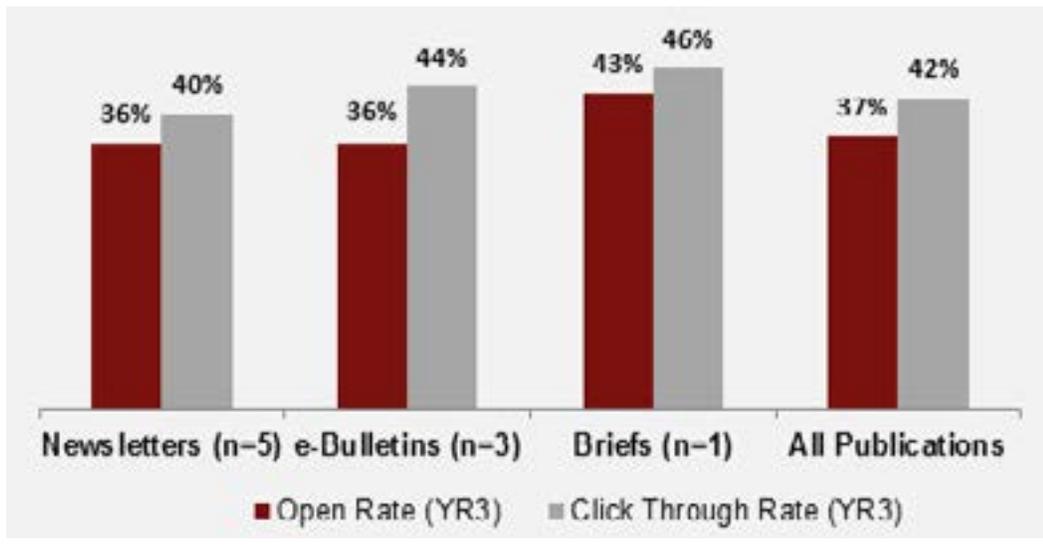


Figure 8. Subscriber engagement with Great Lakes Equity Center publications, overall and by publication type, for Quarters One and Two of Year Three (Oct 2013 – Mar 2014)

### Social Media (Facebook and Twitter)

In addition to dissemination via the website, the Center uses the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter to provide timely news and announcements to connect with other individuals and organizations engaged in similar work. These alternative channels also allow for “re-tweeting” and “liking” as forms of first derivative dissemination. Center staff members continued to make regular posts to Twitter (n= 80) and Facebook (n=76) during the first half of Year Three with increasing frequency. Facebook page “likes” increased by 46 from 146 to 192; in addition, the total number of Facebook page views increased slightly to a total of 577 compared to 554 for the same period in Year Two. The number of Twitter followers more than doubled from 40 to 64. The increased activity on social media platforms can be attributed to the hiring of a Coordinator to oversee these efforts.

### Networking and Stakeholder Events

Another important way the Center stays connected, contributes to the larger community of research and practice, and builds its network is by hosting, contributing to, and participating in professional conferences, stakeholder meetings, and serving on committees and boards. During this reporting cycle, Center staff members served on and engaged regularly in meetings for a number of committees and advisory boards including, Chicago Public Schools Thought Partners Advisory Committee, Indiana Disproportionality Committee, Indiana Partnership Center Advisory Board, Great Lakes

participated in a series of meetings with the United States Department of Education in Washington, DC. These included the Winter 2013 and Spring 2014 EAC Directors' Meetings, and the annual Leveraging Resources Conference.

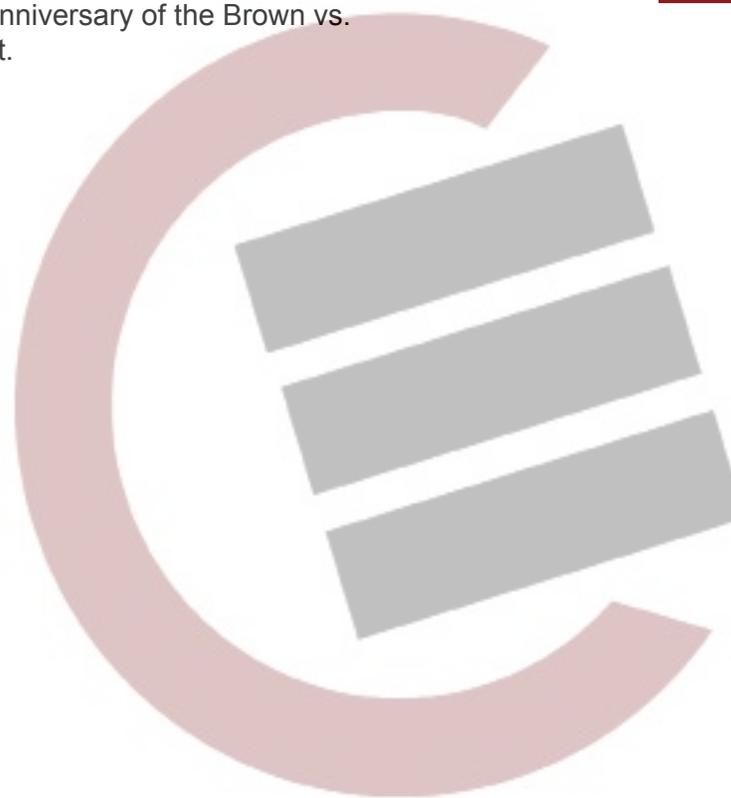
The Center was also privileged to host a team of educators from Moi University in Kenya who were visiting the Indiana University School of Education in Indianapolis. Other activities included attending the University Council on Education Administration's 2013 Conference that was held in Indianapolis.

## COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS

- Chicago Public Schools: Thought Partners Advisory Committee
- Indiana Disproportionality Committee (IDC)
- Indiana Partnership Center Advisory Board
- The Great Lakes Comprehensive Center's advisory board
- The Indiana Girls' Collaborative Project
- The North Central Collaborative

## Future Directions

With deep roots in Indiana and Michigan, Great Lakes Equity Center continues to enjoy a strong and positive presence in Region V, and is observing increasing awareness of its work. Efforts to expand the Center's reach and deepen existing networks within Region V continue. The Center is committed to continuing to learn about how to leverage social media campaigns more effectively to reach and engage audiences - for example, live Tweeting at events. As Year Three ends, Center staff members will continue to participate in and serve on committees and boards, and to host, attend and contribute to networking and stakeholder experiences. Most notably, in the final two quarters of Year Three, the Center will host several events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, including a student art contest.





# Research and Evaluation

## Goal Four

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

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

The Center's embedded efforts to continuously monitor and improve its work through research- and practice-based decision making is designed to nurture a learning organization, as well as to provide opportunities to engage in scholarly research that contributes to the broader knowledge and research base on technical assistance models and equity in education. Utilizing a participatory, mixed methods approach to data collection, all stakeholders are invited to analyze and discuss the data as the work emerges. Most of the activities aligned with this goal area are internally focused on ongoing evaluation, data-based decision making, and engaging an ever-widening circle of stakeholders in providing input to the Center's work.

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

## PRIMARY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

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

The primary activities and accomplishments for this goal area relate to the development of data collection and reporting systems, methods, and tools, as well as the generation of data and research that support and inform the Center's work. The data and findings generated about each goal area are reported previously in the respective goal sections of this report. However, the global methods and strategies for generating those data are here reported, as are strategies and structures for engaging Center staff members in ongoing learning and continuous improvement.

### Data Collection Activities and Data Management

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

During the first two quarters of Year Three, Center staff members continued to work closely with a consultant from Indiana University Research Database Complex to develop an online Oracle database to facilitate the management of the Center's expanding archive of data. The database is in the final stages of development, validation, and testing and will be launched during the next quarter of Year Three.

### Continuous Improvement: Strategic Data Use

A number of structures have been established by the Center's leadership to facilitate the use of data in project management, decision making and short and long term strategic planning. For example, each year the Center's leadership engages in strategic planning that subsequently informs monthly project management; data from work plans, the Center's logic model, and needs sensing informs that process. Also, Bi-Annual Visioning Summits are hosted each year to process, examine, and use data in ongoing strategic planning and big-picture decision making; the first of the two visioning summits for Year Three was hosted in Quarter One, the second will be held in Quarter Three. In addition to the Visioning Summits, the Center also hosted two internal "Lunch and Learn" sessions and one of two annual Advisory Board meetings.

**Table 1. Great Lakes Equity Center Data Collection Efforts by Primary Evaluation Question**

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

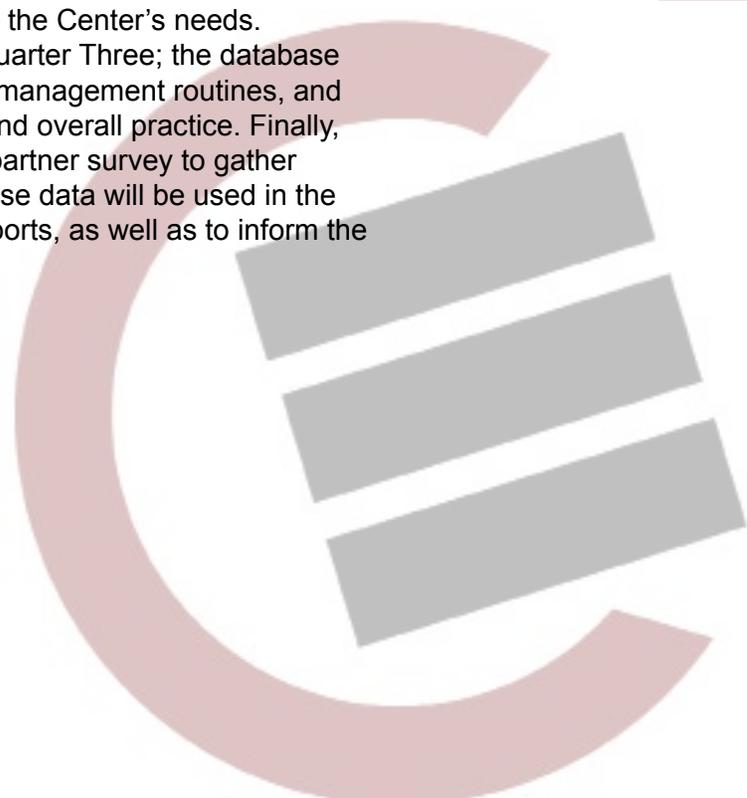
A variety of reports and presentations are prepared at regular intervals to provide overviews of the Center's progress and demonstrate accountability to a wide audience of stakeholder groups, including advisors and grant officers. During this reporting cycle the Annual External Evaluation Site Visit report, Year Two Evaluation Report, and Year One and Two Annual Reports were published. During the first half of Year Three, much effort was focused on developing standard monthly and bi-annual data summaries to provide support for these reports, as well as to provide timely, succinct data reports to the Center team. As a result, seven procedures and templates were developed, and a total of nine data summaries were generated and provided to the Center team related to monthly metrics and post-session questionnaire data. Additionally, the continuous improvement team prepared a presentation summarizing the Center's efforts for the spring 2014 EAC Directors' Meeting.

### **Practice-Informed Scholarly Research**

In addition to research conducted in the design and development of products and presentation materials, formal research activities were conducted in association with several of the Center's active TA partnerships. Center staff also presented a paper titled, a statewide initiative to close the achievement gap: exploring the utility of an equity-focused policy review process, at the University Council for Educational Administration conference which was held in Indianapolis. The paper reported on a partnership between the Center and a state education agency in a collaborative effort to address disparities in the achievement gap in the state.

### **Future Directions**

As the Center moves into the final two quarters of Year Three, research and evaluation efforts will continue to support reporting and accountability measures. Data collection and reporting routines continue to be refined in response to the Center's needs. Phase One of the relational database will be launched in Quarter Three; the database should support the Center as it transitions into new project management routines, and strengthen Center operations by improving accountability and overall practice. Finally, the Continuous Improvement team will conduct an annual partner survey to gather feedback from all of the Center's collaborative partners; these data will be used in the ensuing Year Three annual performance and evaluation reports, as well as to inform the Center's Annual Strategic Planning process.



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## Advisory Board

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