Formative Evaluation of the Wisconsin Regional Service Network

Lisa Hoogstra, Ph.D.
Jennifer Kregor
Dan O’Brien
Formative Evaluation of the Wisconsin Regional Service Network

June 2011

Lisa Hoogstra, Ph.D.
Jennifer Kregor
Dan O’Brien
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Analysis and Findings</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSN Successes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSN Challenges Areas for Improvement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Within and About the RSN</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths of Communication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Communication</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication With Stakeholders About the RSN</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 8 Communication and Activities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths of Indicator 8 Communication</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 8 Challenges and Areas for Improvement</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication With Stakeholders About Indicator 8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 8 Assistance Activities</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 13 Communication and Activities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths of Indicator 13 Communication</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 13 Challenges and Areas for Improvement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication With Stakeholders About Indicator 13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 13 Assistance Activities</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCSA Communication and Activities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths of PCSA Communication</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCSA Barriers and Areas for Improvement</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication With Stakeholders About the PCSA</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCSA Assistance Activities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the RSN</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Perceptions</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the RSN</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others’ Perceptions of the RSN</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) contracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct a formative evaluation of the Regional Service Network (RSN). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess how well the RSN is currently functioning and to identify potential areas for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the network. DPI requested specific feedback from the RSN Project Directors and RSN Personnel Development Coordinators with regard to the following topics:

- RSN successes and challenges
- RSN structure and processes
- Communication (strengths, barriers, and the individuals with whom they are communicating)
- Perceptions of the RSN (both internally and externally)

DPI was particularly interested in the types of communication that occur regarding the Procedural Compliance Self-Assessment (PCSA)\(^1\) and State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators 8 and 13,\(^2\) as well as training, technical assistance, and informational products that RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators provide to school and district staff regarding the PCSA and Indicators 8 and 13.

Background

The statewide RSN is a vehicle through which the DPI improves educational outcomes and life prospects for students with disabilities by providing the following services and supports to local education agencies (LEAs):

- **Leadership** in meeting the state and federal requirements associated with the provision of special education and related services to students with disabilities
- **Technical assistance and professional development** to improve LEA performance on SPP indicators for DPI special education initiatives
- **Regular ongoing communication** from DPI to all LEA special education leadership staff and feedback from the field

The RSN is made up of representatives from each of Wisconsin’s 12 regional Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs). RSN Project Directors from each CESA attend

---

\(^1\) DPI is responsible for monitoring implementation of special education requirements by public agencies. DPI does this monitoring through the PCSA. LEAs are among the public agencies that are required to complete the PCSA on a cyclical basis.

\(^2\) The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires states to develop state performance plans to monitor IDEA implementation by local education agencies. These state plans must include “measurable and rigorous targets” for addressing performance indicators in the priority areas identified by IDEA. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) identified 20 performance indicators for these priority areas. See [http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/index.html](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/index.html) for the 20 indicators included in Wisconsin’s State Performance Plan.
statewide meetings in which DPI provides updates regarding special education law and Wisconsin’s progress on the SPP indicators. DPI works through the RSN to organize and coordinate regional professional development opportunities for LEAs. Information from DPI also is disseminated through the RSN to the LEAs.

The RSN supports the work of DPI’s Special Education Team by providing ongoing and systematic communication and regional technical support to LEAs in the areas of compliance with special education law, improvement of LEA performance on the SPP indicators, and assistance in successfully implementing other special education initiatives. In the area of compliance, the RSN provides information, training, and technical assistance to LEAs to help them complete the PCSA. The PCSA uses samples of individualized education program (IEP) records and other sources to determine whether the LEA is in compliance with special education law. Beginning with the 2011–12 school year, one fifth of public agencies in the state, including LEAs, will be required to complete the PCSA each year.

The RSN also provides LEAs with training, technical assistance, and informational products to help them improve their performance on SPP indicators. For the formative evaluation of the RSN, DPI requested that RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators provide the evaluation team with information about the types of training, technical assistance, and informational products they provide to school and district staff regarding the PCSA and Indicators 8 and 13. DPI also requested feedback on respondents’ communication with various stakeholders about the PCSA and these two indicators.

Indicator 8 is a measure of schools’ efforts to involve parents. School districts collect data for this indicator by conducting a uniform survey of parents of children with disabilities. The survey tallies the percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services who agreed that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities. Each LEA in the state conducts the survey once during a six-year cycle. Since 2000, DPI has funded the Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI) as a parent involvement resource to LEAs. Its goals are closely aligned with Indicator 8 improvement activities.

Indicator 13 is a measure of schools’ efforts to ensure that students with disabilities are prepared to make the transition from high school to postsecondary education or training. Beginning with the 2011–12 school year, Indicator 13 will become an annual data collection for all LEAs. DPI is developing an online IEP transition form that will assist LEAs in meeting transition requirements with 100 percent compliance. Since 2000, DPI has funded the Wisconsin Statewide Transition Initiative (WSTI) as a transition resource to LEAs. The primary purpose of WSTI is to improve transition programs for students with disabilities.

**Overview of the Evaluation**

The evaluation team conducted interviews with RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators to obtain feedback on the RSN. The interviews focused on the following topics:

- Major RSN successes and challenges
- Perceptions of RSN structure and processes
• Overall communication within and about the RSN
• Communication and activities pertaining the PCSA
• Communication and activities pertaining to Indicator 8
• Communication and activities pertaining to Indicator 13
• Perceptions of the RSN by respondents as well as their feedback on how the RSN is perceived by others

The purpose of the interviews was to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of RSN structure and processes; the ways in which RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators are communicating about the RSN, the PCSA, and Indicators 8 and 13; and the extent to which the RSN is perceived as effective and useful by respondents and others.

Prior to the interviews, RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators were asked to complete two supplementary data forms that requested the following information:

• The frequency of communication with key stakeholders about the RSN, the PCSA, and Indicators 8 and 13
• Trainings, technical assistance, and informational products provided to school and district staff about the PCSA and Indicators 8 and 13.
Interview Analysis and Findings

In April and May 2011, the AIR evaluation team conducted phone interviews with 13 RSN Project Directors and 2 RSN Personnel Development Coordinators; all 12 CESAs were represented. Of the 15 individuals who were interviewed, 14 provided supplementary information on the frequency of their communication with various stakeholders about the RSN, the PCSA, and Indicators 8 and 13, as well as the types of training, technical assistance, and informational products they provide to schools and districts about the PCSA and Indicators 8 and 13. At least one respondent per CESA provided this supplementary information.

A primary goal of the interviews was to determine whether CESAs are experiencing similar successes and challenges, and whether they communicate in similar ways about the RSN, the PCSA, and Indicators 8 and 13, and provide similar resources to school and district staff about the PCSA and Indicators 8 and 13. The next sections of the report present the findings from the interviews and supplementary data. The findings are organized according to the following interview topics:

- RSN successes
- RSN challenges and areas for improvement
- Overall communication within and about the RSN
- Indicator 8 communication and activities
- Indicator 13 communication and activities
- PCSA communication and activities
- Perceptions of the RSN

RSN Successes

Overall, RSN Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators provided positive feedback about the current RSN structure and processes. Respondents mentioned several RSN successes and identified several strengths of the network. The most frequently mentioned strengths and successes included collaboration and communication within the RSN, the organization of the RSN, and improvements in trainings on the SPP indicators and the PCSA.

Collaboration and Communication Within the RSN. Respondents provided favorable feedback on collaboration and communication within the RSN, particularly the communication that occurs at meetings. More than two thirds of respondents (11 of 15) reported that communication and collaboration were strengths of the RSN. As one respondent stated, “The network and the relationships that we build with each other and share across the state [has been a great success]. I’ve learned so much from my colleagues.”

Organization of the RSN. The organization of the RSN also was a commonly cited strength of the network. Of the 15 interview respondents, 10 referred to the strength of the RSN’s
organization. As one RSN Project Director stated, “The format of the RSN directors having direct links to the state and...serving as liaisons to the district works well. That connection, particularly given everybody’s time and effort, is an efficient way to get information to districts.” Respondents also referred to specific aspects of the RSN as strengths: the RSN meetings, the diversity of experience within the RSN, access to DPI’s trainings and workshops, and the clear goals and expectations communicated by DPI.

**Improvements in Trainings on SPP Indicators and the PCSA.** Four respondents cited improvements in trainings on SPP indicators and the PCSA as the greatest success of the RSN. As one participant explained, the RSN’s focus on the indicators has helped school districts understand their importance:

> We struggled when the whole indicator process took place or rolled out. School districts didn’t look at them as a priority…. Now we’re starting to help them realize the importance of the indicators, and they’re more aware of the indicators.

Other respondents agreed, saying that face-to-face trainings make it clear to participants that the indicators matter. The CESAs also take the indicator data more seriously because districts are receiving clearer and more consistent information about the indicators, which has improved the quality of the data. Respondents also noted that districts are showing less anxiety about the self-assessment process because the series of trainings offered by DPI helps them feel more prepared.

**Successes Specific to CESAs.** Respondents also were asked about RSN successes specific to their CESA. The most commonly mentioned success (10 of 15 respondents) was high attendance at trainings. Three respondents also cited communication with their professional development coordinators as a strength.

**RSN Challenges and Areas for Improvement**

Respondents identified several challenges to the effective functioning of the RSN. Three or more respondents mentioned the following challenges: a greater need for flexibility, funding, lack of clarity about goals, a need for more effective use of meeting time, and CESA-specific areas for improvement.

**Greater Need for Flexibility.** Four respondents indicated that there is a need for greater flexibility within the network. These respondents explained that indicator-specific goals and guidelines from DPI often come unannounced. Although the goals clarify expectations and areas of focus, they leave little room for work on issues specific to the CESAs. Some participants explained that funding is often related to flexibility: “Once we get the main activities taken care of out of the grant, we don’t always have discretionary funds [for other work].” Another respondent explained that one of the strengths of the RSN is the variety of experience and expertise that the RSN Project Directors bring to the network; this respondent thought that DPI could make better use of this expertise.

**Funding.** Four respondents specifically mentioned funding as a challenge for the network as a whole.
Lack of Clarity About Goals. Four respondents also said that the goals of the RSN are not always clear or consistent. As one respondent explained, “I think the direction we’re going sometimes is changed throughout the year…. Let’s be clear on what we’re going to work on for the year, and let’s stick with that.”

More Effective Use of Meetings. Five respondents noted that in-person meetings for RSN Project Directors have been cut back this year. Although they would like to have more face-to-face meetings, they understood that holding fewer meetings is a cost and efficiency issue. These respondents explained that because there are fewer meetings, effective use of meeting time is essential. Specific suggestions for improving the efficiency of the meetings included assigning tasks, following up, taking minutes, and reporting the minutes out in a timely manner.

CESA-Specific Areas for Improvement. Areas for improvement specific to individual CESAs included following up more effectively with participants in trainings and better addressing and preventing staff overload.

Communication Within and About the RSN

Respondents were asked to comment on both the strengths of communication within the RSN as well as barriers to communication. They also were asked to describe how they communicate with different stakeholders about the RSN.

Strengths of Communication

Overall, respondents provided favorable feedback on communication within the RSN. More than half of the respondents (8 of 15) described communication as being very effective within the RSN. Five respondents explained that information sharing is consistent thanks to the DPI website and established routines, such as providing folders of information at every meeting and e-mailing minutes to participants and individuals who were not able to attend. Respondents indicated that communication most commonly occurs through face-to-face meetings and e-mail. Phone and printed materials were the second most commonly mentioned methods of communication. One RSN Project Director described his method of sharing information with his administrative assistant for dissemination to RSN staff:

I forward things to her or put something together to share with the RSNs; then she puts it together in a format so they can pick and choose what they open and what they read. It might be upcoming meetings [or] newest information on indicators. That goes out at least weekly. They love that.

Barriers to Communication

One third of respondents indicated that there are no barriers to communication within the RSN. The most common barrier cited by respondents (4 of 15) was staff turnover. As one respondent explained, recent retirements have led to a loss in expertise, and it is not always clear whom to contact for information on specific issues that a former staff member used to address. Four respondents also expressed frustration that decisions are made by DPI in a “top down” manner and that not enough time is left for discussion among RSN Project Directors at meetings. Three
respondents also voiced concern about the reduction in the number of in-person RSN Project Director meetings and said that webinars do not replace face-to-face discussion.

Communication With Stakeholders About the RSN

Participants were asked about their communication with specific individuals regarding the RSN. Common responses and modes of communication with key stakeholders follow:

- **CESA Administrators.** Nearly all respondents described effective collaboration and communication with their CESA administrator, although two respondents indicated that they would like more time to meet with their administrator. All respondents reported that they communicate with their CESA administrator at least once a month; the majority (71 percent) reported that they communicate with their CESA administrator either weekly or more than once a month.

- **Other RSN Project Directors.** Respondents viewed other RSN Project Directors as effective collaborators. As a group, the RSN Project Directors were described by respondents as having diverse array of strengths and experience. As one respondent explained, “We each have our own areas of strength. If I’m having questions arise about school-based services, I know [that an RSN Project Director at another CESA] has a good handle on that. We certainly do e-mail one another when we need that sounding board…. There’s a great system of support.” Two respondents noted they would like to communicate with and see other RSN Project Directors more often. Half of the respondents reported that they communicate with other RSN Project Directors more than once a month; all respondents reported that they communicate with other RSN Project Directors at least every 1–2 months.

- **DPI Staff.** Six respondents reported good communication with DPI. Respondents continually referred to the strength of the DPI website. One participant stated:
  
  "Having had some opportunity to look at other states, DPI’s website is strong. There’s very little left to question…. [If there is something] the districts need to know, or if a district calls me and I need to know, there’s just a lot of good information there. They make good use of webinars and more real-time or on-time information. Things are currently updated. They have a very good website."

  Although respondents were generally positive in their comments about DPI, five respondents mentioned that staff turnover at DPI sometimes makes their job more difficult because they are not always sure who to contact for information. Approximately 70 percent of respondents reported that they communicate with DPI staff more than once a month (three indicated that they communicate weekly or more often); all respondents reported that they communicate with DPI staff at least every 1–2 months.

- **Special Education Directors.** Communication with special education directors primarily occurs through face-to-face meetings and follow-up e-mails. CESAs are required to hold five meetings during the year with special education directors in their region. Some respondents know their special education directors personally and feel comfortable calling them; these respondents said that this personal connection is a real strength. Three respondents mentioned that some of their special education directors struggle with finding time for RSN meetings. As one respondent noted, “Many of them wear multiple
hats, and they can’t always attend the networking meetings.” More than half of respondents (57 percent) reported that they communicate with special education directors daily or weekly, 36 percent reported communicating with special education directors more than once a month, and 7 percent reported monthly communication.

- **School Teachers/Staff.** Respondents explained that they primarily share information with teachers and staff indirectly through special education directors. Some respondents noted that teachers sometimes accompany special education directors to meetings on specific topics. Respondents varied considerably in their reports of the frequency with which they communicate with teachers and staff; frequencies ranged from weekly to less than once every six months. This variation could be due in part to differing interpretations of whether indirect communication with teachers and staff qualifies as communication.

**Indicator 8 Communication and Activities**

**Strengths of Indicator 8 Communication**

Overall, RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators spoke favorably about communication regarding Indicator 8. According to respondents, information and data pertaining to Indicator 8 are shared effectively, and collaboration with key stakeholders is strong. Respondents reported that most of the trainings and technical assistance regarding Indicator 8 are provided through their WSPEI Coordinator.

Half of the respondents rated Indicator 8 trainings, technical assistance, and informational products provided by their CESA as “moderately effective” in promoting LEA procedural compliance. The other half varied in their responses: two rated these activities as “very effective,” two rated them as “minimally effective,” and two rated them as “not effective.” Those who provided low ratings explained that the compliance rating for Indicator 8 is approximately 75 percent for the state as a whole. One respondent added that it is difficult to reach parents to request their participation in the parent survey. Figure 1 provides a summary of the ratings provided by 12 respondents on the effectiveness of Indicator 8 training, technical assistance, and informational products offered by their CESA in promoting LEA procedural compliance for this indicator.
Nearly all respondents (8 of 10) said they feel prepared to meet needs of districts in their CESA with regard to Indicator 8. One respondent who did not feel prepared indicated that she would like more information on how to improve on Indicator 8; another respondent said that staff were investigating and analyzing data to determine what their direction will be in addressing district needs.

According to three respondents, the most helpful resource provided by DPI for Indicator 8 is WSPEI. Other helpful resources include newsletter updates, data collection software, and funding.

Indicator 8 Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Respondents indicated several challenges and areas for improvement related to Indicator 8.

- **Low Attendance.** A third of respondents (5 of 15) mentioned that low attendance and low involvement are problems at trainings.

- **Indicator 8 Experts.** A third of respondents indicated that they do not have a specific person to go to for information about Indicator 8.

- **More Parent Involvement.** Five respondents mentioned the persistent struggle to involve parents.

Suggestions regarding how to address current challenges with respect to Indicator 8 included more district parent liaisons; clarification of expectations of RSN Project Directors with regard to Indicator 8, writing measurable goals, and providing more trainings. Specific things DPI can provide include a re-worded parent survey; more information concerning districts that have been successful in involving parents; training for new RSN directors; and an improved, user-friendly website.
Communication With Stakeholders About Indicator 8

Respondents are communicating with stakeholders such as their CESA administrator, other RSN Project Directors, DPI staff, special education directors, and school teachers and staff in the same ways that were reported for overall communication about the RSN but less frequently (see Table 1). Differences in communication are noted below:

- **WSPEI Coordinator.** The WSPEI coordinator focuses specifically on Indicator 8. Four respondents noted that they have good communication with their WSPEI coordinator.

- **DPI Staff.** Three respondents stated that the parent consultant at DPI has retired and the position has not yet been filled. This situation has presented a challenge for RSN Project Directors and staff with respect to Indicator 8 activities.

### Table 1. Typical Frequency of Communication With Stakeholders:
Communication About Indicator 8 Compared With Communication About the RSN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stakeholder</th>
<th>Indicator 8 Communication</th>
<th>RSN Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WSPEI</td>
<td>Weekly (or more often) to more than once a month</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESA Administrator</td>
<td>Monthly to every 1–2 months</td>
<td>Weekly to more than once a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other RSN Project Directors</td>
<td>Every 1–2 months to every 3–4 months</td>
<td>More than once a month to every 1–2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPI Staff</td>
<td>Weekly (or more often) to more than once a month</td>
<td>Weekly to more than once a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Directors</td>
<td>Monthly to every 1–2 months</td>
<td>Weekly to more than once a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers/Staff</td>
<td>Every 1–2 months to every 3–4 months</td>
<td>More than once a month to monthly (or longer)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The two responses most frequently selected by respondents are included in the table to indicate the most common range of responses. Responses of seven or more respondents are represented. In all but three cases, responses of at least 10 respondents (71 percent) are represented.

*Responses varied widely with regard to the frequency of communication with school teachers or staff about the RSN; the most frequent response was “more than once a month” \((n=5)\); two respondents indicated “monthly,” two indicated “every 5–6 months,” and two indicated “less than every six months.” Each of the three remaining respondents gave different responses regarding the frequency of communication (“weekly,” “every 1–2 months,” and “every 3–4 months,” respectively).

**Indicator 8 Assistance Activities**

WSPEI coordinators organized most of the Indicator 8 trainings mentioned by respondents. These trainings included group on-site trainings, IEP workshops for parents, National Center for Special Education Accountability (NCSEAM) modules, Love and Logic training, and parent support workshops. Special education directors and teachers are the most common participants in Indicator 8 trainings, although respondents also mentioned that district liaisons, parents, and psychologists occasionally attend trainings. According to respondents, the number of people who participate varies according to interest. Most respondents reported that there are anywhere from 6
to 20 people in attendance at trainings; larger CESAs reported that attendance ranged from approximately 30 to 50. Respondents’ assessment of participation rates in Indicator 8 trainings also varied from CESA to CESA, ranging from approximately 25 percent to 100 percent attendance by districts.

Products pertaining to Indicator 8 include:

- Handouts and updates
- Materials developed by WSPEI (e.g., parents’ rights brochures)
- WSPEI weekly e-newsletter
- Indicator 8 tips and targets

**Indicator 13 Communication and Activities**

**Strengths of Indicator 13 Communication**

All 15 respondents stated they feel prepared to meet the needs of districts in their CESA with regard to Indicator 13. Six respondents also reported that there is good communication regarding Indicator 13, and four respondents said that information has been shared effectively. The RSN Project Director at CESA 11 serves as the RSN liaison to WSTI and frequently communicates with and provides updates to other RSN Project Directors about WSTI activities. The DPI and WSTI websites are both regarded as excellent resources for accessing information about Indicator 13.

The majority of respondents (10 of 13) rated the training and technical assistance provided by their CESA on Indicator 13 as “very effective” in promoting LEA procedural compliance; and two respondents rated these activities as “moderately effective.” One respondent did not provide a rating but indicated that although the trainings were very clear, several teachers within the region were still not meeting the requirements for this indicator and had requested additional assistance from the RSN Project Director in helping them identify where they are making mistakes. Those who rated Indicator 13 activities as moderately effective explained that there is approximately 75 percent compliance for this indicator in the state as a whole and that there is still room for improvement. Respondents who rated Indicator 13 activities as “very effective” based their ratings on improvements in district performance on this indicator.

Participants were appreciative of the recent change of making Indicator 13 trainings mandatory. One participant stated:

> What was a tremendous help was when DPI… [required] everyone who wrote a transition plan…[to attend] this particular training. That was very helpful. Otherwise, you get a lot of spin-offs of people doing their own thing to make it a better training. But then you always risk them not covering specific things that need to be covered.

Participants also provided favorable feedback on the Indicator 13 training packets and materials, the WSTI website, and the Indicator 13 trainings.
Indicator 13 Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Respondents mentioned few very barriers to communication regarding Indicator 13. Five respondents said that there were no barriers. Respondents did mention the following challenges and areas for improvement.

- **IEPs.** One third of respondents explained that IEPs are always a challenge, and that they simply need to “stay the course.” Four respondents indicated that their teachers need more time with IEPs and more training. Specific areas in which to add increased focus include making connections with other agencies, helping teachers better articulate what they do with students and what transition is, and helping them write measurable goals and objectives and the summary of performance.

- **Clarifying Roles.** Others mentioned the need to clarify roles and expectations with regard to Indicator 13 activities. One respondent explained that she was unclear about “what I’m supposed to be doing on Indicator 13 and who I [am] supposed to be talking to.” She was not sure what the responsibilities were of the WSTI coordinator she was working with and what her responsibilities were as an RSN Project Director with regard to Indicator 13 trainings.

- **Training Documents Beyond the Guidance Documents.** A more user-friendly document for teachers was requested from DPI. As two respondents explained, the guidance documents, while helpful as a reference, can be frustrating for teachers to use.

- **More Indicator 13 Trainings.** Four respondents recommended that DPI provide more trainings for teachers on what successful implementation looks like for Indicator 13. For example, one respondent suggested developing a synopsis of what successful districts have done to meet transition requirements and to share this synopsis with teachers in Indicator 13 trainings.

- **DPI Staff.** Two respondents noted that the transitions consultant at DPI has retired and the position has not yet been filled, which leaves them without a contact at DPI for questions regarding transition issues.

Communication With Stakeholders About Indicator 13

Respondents reported that their communications with stakeholders regarding Indicator 13 are similar to their communications about the overall RSN with respect to the quality of communication, although they generally communicate less frequently with various stakeholders about Indicator 13 than they do about the network as a whole (see Table 2). However, RSN Project Directors did report communicating more frequently with other RSN Project Directors about the Indicator 13 than about the network as a whole. A few RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators communicate directly with a WSTI coordinator about Indicator 13 as well as other stakeholders such as DPI staff and other RSN Project Directors. As one respondent explained, “WSTI is a little bit different. We used to have a WSTI coordinator in every CESA. Now I think there’s probably only three.” She said her CESA was fortunate because they had a WSTI coordinator on-site. RSN Project Directors with direct access to a WSTI coordinator cited proximity and good communication as strengths. Most respondents rely
on the WSTI website as well as information and updates about transition activities provided by the CESA 11 RSN Project Director, who serves as the RSN liaison to WSTI.

Of the 14 respondents who reported the frequency of their communication with a WSTI representative, the majority (64 percent) reported communicating monthly or more often; 14 percent reported communicating every 1–2 months; 14 percent reported communicating every 3–4 months; and 7 percent reported communicating less than once every six months. Table 2 compares the frequency with which respondents communicated with stakeholders about Indicator 13 with the frequency with which they communicated with stakeholders about the network as a whole.

Table 2. Typical Frequency of Communication With Stakeholders: Communication About Indicator 13 Compared With Communication About the RSN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stakeholder</th>
<th>Indicator 13 Communication</th>
<th>RSN Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WSTI</td>
<td>More than once a month to</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESA Administrator</td>
<td>Monthly to every 1–2 months</td>
<td>Weekly to more than once a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other RSN Project</td>
<td>More than once a month to</td>
<td>More than once a month to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>3–4 months</td>
<td>every 1–2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPI Staff</td>
<td>Monthly to every 1–2 months</td>
<td>Weekly to more than once a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Every 1–2 months to every</td>
<td>More than once a month to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>3–4 months</td>
<td>monthly (or longer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For communication with DPI about Indicator 13, frequencies were fairly equally distributed across response categories; the most frequent response was “monthly” \( n=4 \); three respondents selected “more than once a month,” three selected “every 1–2 months,” three selected “every 3–4 months,” and the remaining respondent selected “less than once every 6 months.”

**Indicator 13 Assistance Activities**

**Trainings.** The majority of trainings reported by respondents (14 of 15) were DPI-sponsored trainings. CESAs are able to access these trainings via television. RSN Project Directors or Personnel Development Coordinators from seven CESAs also reported hosting face-to-face trainings on Indicator 13. These trainings include effective transition planning, networking trainings, and IEP trainings, each of which has components pertaining to Indicator 13. Typically, transition coordinators, special education teachers, school psychologists, and directors of special education attend the trainings. The majority of respondents (10 of 13) said that for the past year, the percentage of districts attending the trainings was 75 percent or more; six respondents reported 90 percent to 100 percent attendance; four reported 75 percent to 80 percent attendance; one reported 50 percent attendance; one reported 33 percent attendance; and one reported 25 percent attendance.
**Technical Assistance.** Technical assistance pertaining to Indicator 13 consists of telephone assistance and e-mails. One CESA has a Transition Advisory Network that meets monthly and includes teachers and transition coordinators. The purpose of this group is to provide updates, support, and resources related to Indicator 13.

**Products.** Products disseminated about Indicator 13 are primarily DPI materials such as PowerPoints and handouts from the webcast trainings. Three respondents also mentioned that newsletters and e-mails are sent out to teachers and directors of special education with tips and news concerning Indicator 13. All 15 respondents reported that materials go to teachers; 9 of 15 respondents reported that materials also go to special education directors. Other individuals who occasionally receive materials are transition coordinators and psychologists.

**PCSA Communication and Activities**

**Strengths of PCSA Communication**

Compared to Indicators 8 and 13, respondents felt that PCSA communication within the RSN was especially strong. All those who responded (14 of 14), felt prepared to meet the needs of districts in their CESA regarding the PCSA. In addition, all respondents (14 of 14) reported that the RSN trainings and technical assistance are “very effective” in promoting LEA procedural compliance. The most common sources on which this judgment was based were participant feedback surveys and compliance letters. Resources that respondents found to be helpful for communicating about the PCSA included the PCSA self-assessment guide, manual, and timeline; district consultants at DPI and DPI contacts; and the website and webinars provided by DPI.

**PCSA Barriers and Areas for Improvement**

Although respondents were very positive about communication regarding the PCSA, they did identify some barriers to communication and areas for improvement. Three respondents mentioned that “top down” decisions regarding the PCSA have been made by DPI without consulting RSN Project Directors. Three respondents expressed concern that schools may not actually use the information disseminated. Two respondents reported problems with low attendance at trainings.

When RSN Project Directors and Personnel Development Coordinators were asked if they had any needs within their CESA regarding the PCSA, they mentioned the following needs specific to CESAs:

- More advanced timelines and planning for the PCSA
- Technical advice
- Materials
- Assistance in reaching out to districts

The most commonly mentioned area for improvement was to add time for discussion among RSN Project Directors at RSN meetings. As one member explained:
The weakness is that we don’t have an opportunity for our own discussion. It’s continual information collecting. Our meetings aren’t necessarily networking meetings. They’re, ‘Okay here you twelve are, this is the information you need to know,’ and there’s not time to collaborate.

Some respondents discussed ways to improve consistency in providing trainings and technical assistance to districts on the PCSA. Respondents recognized that additional efforts are needed to ensure that materials and PowerPoints pertaining to the PCSA are similar and consistently shared with other RSN Project Directors. One respondent suggested solidifying the timeline pertaining to the PCSA and ensuring that everything is ready to go by September. Respondents made two requests for additional materials or resources pertaining to the PCSA: a mock self-assessment and a PCSA blog where teachers can get information and post questions.

**Communication With Stakeholders About the PCSA**

Communication about the PCSA functions similarly to communication with stakeholders about the RSN, although it generally less frequent. However, RSN Project Directors reported communicating more frequently with other RSN Project Directors about the PCSA than about other network activities. The majority of respondents (86 percent) reported that they communicate with other RSN Project Directors about the PCSA monthly or more often (see Table 3).

![Table 3. Typical Frequency of Communication With Stakeholders: Communication About the PCSA Compared With Communication About the RSN](#)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Stakeholder</th>
<th>PCSA Communication</th>
<th>RSN Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CESA Administrator</td>
<td>Monthly to every 1–2 months</td>
<td>Weekly to more than once a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other RSN Project Directors</td>
<td>More than once a month to monthly</td>
<td>More than once a month to every 1–2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPI Staff</td>
<td>Monthly to every 1–2 months</td>
<td>Weekly (or more often) to more than once a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Directors</td>
<td>More than once a month to monthly</td>
<td>Weekly to more than once a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers/Staff</td>
<td>Every 1–2 months to less than once every six months</td>
<td>More than once a month to monthly (or longer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The two responses most frequently selected by respondents are included in the table to indicate the most common range of responses. Responses of seven or more respondents are represented; in all but two cases, responses of at least 10 respondents (71 percent) are represented.*

**PCSA Assistance Activities**

**Trainings.** In providing supplementary data on PCSA trainings, technical assistance and information products, half of respondents indicated that their CESA provides specific trainings for the PCSA. Respondents who did not list specific trainings regarding the PCSA explained that either no districts in their region had to complete the PCSA this year or that they simply provide help as needed. Trainings on the PCSA are provided to directors of special education, teachers, and school psychologists. One respondent mentioned that parents sometimes attend if they are a
part of the self-assessment committee. Eight of those interviewed indicated that 20–40 people attend each training session. Two respondents said that 10–20 people attend; one reported that 6–15 attend; and two reported that 10 or fewer attend. Respondents indicated that the RSN Project Director is the most common provider of trainings. Others noted that they had hired consultants or that the special education director(s) at their CESA provided the trainings.

As seen in Table 4, the percentage of districts that attended PCSA trainings last year varied across respondents and CESAs. Most respondents reported the percentage of districts attending that were required to complete the PCSA last year. Some respondents, however, reported the percentage of districts within the region as whole that attended trainings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Districts That Attended Last Year’s PCSA Trainings</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–40%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%–80%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–90%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%–100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six respondents reported that all or most (90 percent to 100 percent) districts that were required to complete the PCSA last year attended the PCSA trainings. One respondent reported that 80 percent to 90 percent of districts attended; two reported that 70 percent to 80 percent of districts attended; and two reported that 30 percent to 40 percent of districts attended. Two respondents reported that no districts attended PCSA trainings either because no districts within the region were required to complete the PCSA last year or because no districts had requested that trainings be offered. Respondents explained that some districts hire consultants to conduct PCSA trainings rather than attending trainings offered by the CESA.

Technical Assistance. Technical assistance is provided in a variety of ways across CESAs. Nearly half of respondents reported that they provide technical assistance to districts primary by telephone and e-mail. Other technical assistance provided includes PCSA area network meetings with guidance counselors, in-district support to districts that are not able to attend trainings, a self-assessment support group, in-district support provided by a WSPEI representative, and referral of districts to DPI when the CESA is not able to answer a question.

Products. Special education directors and teachers receive products both electronically and in paper format (e.g., handouts, binders, and newsletters). The informational product most frequently mentioned by respondents (9 of 14) was the binder of PCSA training materials provided by DPI. Other resources include RSNews, bookmarks of the 20 indicators, a self-assessment log, and RSN minutes.
Perceptions of the RSN

Respondents’ Perceptions

- **Respondents View the RSN as Effective.** Seven respondents indicated that the RSN is highly effective, and five respondents indicated that the RSN is moderately effective. These tallies are based on respondents’ comments about the overall effectiveness of the RSN as well as comments about its effectiveness in relation to a particular group, such as DPI or the CESAs. Although four respondents indicated that the RSN is minimally effective, this low rating was based on the effect of the RSN on teachers and parents. No respondents indicated the RSN is not effective.

- **The RSN is Viewed as a Bridge Between DPI and Districts.** Three respondents saw themselves as an important in communicating information to districts from DPI and from districts to DPI.

- **Resident Experts.** One respondent indicated that the RSN has become more important since the RSN Project Director became a resident expert on each of the CESAs at RSN meetings.

Changes in the RSN

- **Less Important as Technology Expands.** Two respondents discussed the possible declining need for the RSN as a conduit of information from DPI to the districts. They noted that the network was developed in the 1970s, before e-mail was common and when phone calls were much more expensive.

- **Stronger Need in Indicator 13.** One respondent indicated that there would be a greater role for the RSN in communicating the requirements of the Common Core State Standards for IEPs.

Others’ Perceptions of the RSN

- **CESA Administrators.** The large majority of respondents described the CESA administrators as highly valuing the RSN and the RSN Project Directors as a connection to DPI. Three respondents indicated that the CESA administrators particularly value their role in transmitting special education information.

- **Directors of Special Education.** Two thirds of respondents (10 of 15) indicated that directors of special education view the RSN very positively and/or feel the RSN is a very necessary and valuable part of their work. Respondents indicated that they regularly receive high ratings from special education directors on training evaluations. Two respondents noted that directors of special education find the RSN valuable because of the information it provides to district staff; another respondent explained that the RSN is seen as “their voice” with DPI. Two respondents expressed concern about directors of special education. One respondent felt special education directors see the RSN as an extension of DPI and view the RSN as an entity that enforces compliance. One respondent was concerned that some special education directors are not using the RSN because they think they need to pay for RSN services in the same way that they pay for
some CESA services. The respondent thought that if special education directors were informed that they could attend RSN trainings for free, the reception would be positive.

- **School Teachers and Staff.** Two thirds of respondents (10 of 15) indicated that school teachers and staff are mostly unaware of what the RSN is or what its function is. Some respondents indicated that a greater effort should be made by the RSN to inform school staff of the RSN’s function. Two respondents indicated that school staff have a positive perception of the RSN, although one respondent also indicated that most schools were unaware of the RSN.

- **DPI Staff.** More than half of respondents (8 of 15) indicated that they believe DPI staff value the RSN and have a positive attitude toward RSN staff. One respondent observed, “The RSN and the state department people—they’re a team.” Another respondent thought that DPI undervalued the RSN and felt that RSN Project Directors should be treated more as equals by DPI.

- **CASS.** One respondent indicated the RSN was viewed by CASS (Council of Administrators of Special Services) very positively, in that both the RSN and CASS represent directors of special education.