

Wisconsin CREATE Initiative

Year 2 Evaluation



| September 2011

Wisconsin Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement Report

Wisconsin CREATE Initiative: Year 2 Evaluation

September 2011

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Introduction

Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research, has been conducting an ongoing evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the Wisconsin Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement (CREATE) initiative. The evaluation is intended to help the state and CREATE staff better understand the impact of the initiative as well as identify possible areas for improvement. This report presents the results of the second year of the evaluation, which focused on documenting the implementation of the CREATE initiative in 2010–11 and assessing the initiative’s impact thus far at the district level. The purpose, goals, and design of the initiative are presented first, followed by an overview of the evaluation. The next sections of the report present findings from the second year of the evaluation and recommendations for possible improvements.

Purpose and Goals of the CREATE Initiative

The CREATE initiative was launched in 2008 by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), with funding from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). CREATE is a three-to five-year statewide initiative that is designed to close achievement gaps between students from diverse backgrounds and to eliminate race and ethnicity as predictors of special education referrals. The purpose of the CREATE initiative is “to increase statewide capacity to train and enhance educators’ understanding of research-based and culturally responsive policies, procedures, and practices” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008 request for proposals, p. 9; copy in the possession of the author). Specific goals of the initiative are the following:

- Synthesizing and expanding research-based practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students in general and special education.
- Establishing a racial context for all educators that is personal, local, and immediate.
- Leveraging the ongoing improvement of schools through collaborative work with existing technical assistance networks, continuous school improvement processes, and regional and state leadership academies.
- Engaging a statewide discourse across local, professional practice, and policy communities on improving educational outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students.
- Developing products, with a particular focus on Web-based professional development, that help schools implement effective and evidence-based teaching and school organizational practices that support successful educational outcomes for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (see http://www.createwisconsin.net/about/overview_goals.cfm).

Ultimately, the initiative is intended to help school districts improve their performance on the following Wisconsin State Performance Plan indicators:¹

- Graduation rates: The percentage of youth with individualized education programs (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma (Indicator 1).
- Dropout rates: The percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of school (Indicator 2).
- Suspension/Expulsion: The percentage of districts that have significant discrepancies in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs or that have (a) significant discrepancies, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs, and (b) policies, procedures, or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancies and do not comply with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and procedural safeguards (Indicator 4).
- Preschool outcomes: The percentage of preschool children aged 3–5 with IEPs who demonstrate the following improvements: positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships); acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs (Indicator 7).
- Parent involvement: The percentage of parents with children receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities (Indicator 8).
- Inappropriate identification in special education: The percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services as a result of inappropriate identification (Indicator 9).
- Inappropriate identification in special education categories: The percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories as a result of inappropriate identification (Indicator 10).²

¹ IDEA 2004 requires states to develop state performance plans to monitor IDEA implementation by local education agencies. The 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) has identified 20 performance indicators for these priority areas, one of which is reducing disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education as a result of inappropriate identification. Wisconsin developed a state performance plan in 2005 (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010).

² A full list of Wisconsin State Performance Plan indicators can be found at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/spp.html>. A copy of *The State of Wisconsin State Performance Plan, 2005–2006 through 2012–13* can be found at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sped/pdf/completespp.pdf>

Design of the CREATE Initiative

To achieve its goals of eliminating race and ethnicity as predictors of special education referrals and increasing statewide capacity to implement culturally responsive policies, procedures, and practices, CREATE provides information, professional development, and technical assistance to school districts and communities throughout the state. Coordinated by Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 6, CREATE is a collaborative endeavor among CESAs, local education agencies, DPI, and state and national organizations. CREATE encompasses multiple components to support successful educational outcomes for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Each component is led by a CESA and includes activities of the following types: (1) dissemination of relevant information about the initiative itself or about culturally responsive practices; (2) training to increase the skills and competencies of educators and others; (3) establishing communities of practice among districts and/or individuals addressing similar issues; and (4) developing tools and processes to aid in identifying gaps and needs associated with disproportionality at the local level. Table 1 lists the CREATE components for the 2010–11 funding year, the types of activities associated with each component, and the CESA involved. The components may change in future years.

Table 1. CREATE Components: 2010–11

| CREATE Component | Type of Activity | CESA |
|---|---|-------------|
| Overall Coordination | Coordination | CESA 6 |
| Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education in Wisconsin | Training; community of practice | CESA 6 |
| Annual CREATE Conference | Training; dissemination | CESA 9 |
| American Indian Student Achievement Network | Training; community of practice; dissemination | CESA 12 |
| Monthly e-Newsletter | Dissemination | CESA 6 |
| Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices and Leadership for Educational Equity | Training; tools | CESA 1 |
| Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project | Training; tools and processes; dissemination; community of practice | CESA 8 |
| Needs Assessment and Development of Strategic Plans for Addressing Disproportionality | Training; tools and processes | CESA 11 |
| Professional Development Academies | Training; tools and processes | CESA 11 |

Overview of the Year 2 Evaluation

In its evaluation of the CREATE initiative, Learning Point Associates has used a developmental evaluation approach (Patton, 2008) that is sensitive to the fact that the CREATE initiative is both dynamic and complex (Snowden & Boone, 2007), characterized by ongoing development and adaptation and the involvement of multiple stakeholders in its local implementation (school districts, schools, CESAs, county agencies, and individuals within these organizations).

The Year 2 evaluation of the CREATE initiative was designed to address the following questions:

1. How were the CREATE components implemented in 2010–11?
2. To what extent are there interactions among and between the various program components?
3. What effect does participation in the CREATE program have on districts' capacity to provide culturally responsive education and to reduce the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and in special disability categories?
4. To what extent do participating districts change their instructional and administrative practices and policies to provide more culturally responsive education?
5. To what extent do participating school districts report reductions in achievement gaps or improvements on performance indicators specifically addressed by the CREATE initiative (e.g., State Performance Plan indicators 9 and 10)?
6. What perceived relationship or relationships exist between instructional and administrative policies and practices and such perceived improvements?
7. What are the major system challenges and constraints reported by districts that influence the effectiveness of the initiative?

Data collection and analysis address all CREATE components. However, the greatest focus is paid to the following components, as specified in the Invitation for Applications for the evaluation:

- Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education
- American Indian Student Achievement Network
- Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices.

To accomplish these goals, the evaluation team (1) developed a profile of each of the CREATE components that documents how the component was implemented in 2010–11 and identified connections with other components; (2) conducted interviews with coordinators of the CREATE components on successes and challenges in implementing planned activities; (3) reviewed and summarized results of evaluation surveys administered by CREATE coordinators to participants

in several of the components; and (5) developed case studies of nine school districts that have participated in the CREATE initiative, based on interviews with district and school staff who participated in CREATE activities in 2010–11.

The following sections of the report present the findings for each of these evaluation activities. Recommendations for possible areas of improvement in implementing the CREATE initiative or in addressing current challenges are then presented.

Profiles of CREATE Components

Profiles of the CREATE components are presented in the following sections. Each profile provides an overview of the purpose and organization of the component, the component's participants or audience, and the component's goals and activities in 2009–10 and 2010–11. The profiles are based on a review and analysis of key documents (e.g., planning documents, participant lists, conference and workshop agendas and handouts) relevant to implementation of the CREATE components.

Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education in Wisconsin (CESA 6)

The Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education in Wisconsin is a partnership established in 2008 among CESA 6, Pacific Education Group (PEG), and West Wind Education Policy (West Wind) to address racial disparities in Wisconsin. A primary goal of the consortium has been to deepen participants' understanding of cultural and racial disparities in education and to enable participants to engage in open conversations about race. State and district teams then engage in follow-up work to analyze their systems and exercise leadership to eliminate racial disparities.

Since its inception in fall 2008, the consortium has assisted six district teams and DPI in analyzing their systems and engaging in equity planning. The consortium has also provided training for CESA staff serving as apprentice coaches to learn to facilitate open conversations about race and to assist district teams with equity planning. Following are an overview of consortium goals and activities for 2009–10, a summary of goals and activities for 2010–11, and a description of consortium participants.

Goals and Activities, 2009–10

In 2009–10, the consortium's goals were to accelerate the work of equity leadership planning so that by the end of the 2009 calendar year, each team would have a specific plan of action for achieving racial equity, and each district team would be prepared to engage its school principals in equity leadership development by January 2010. Seminars for principals were offered for the first time in 2009–10.

The following workshops and training sessions were offered in 2009–10 to assist teams in meeting these goals:

- *District Equity Leadership Team Seminars (October 7, 2009; January 21, March 17, and May 11, 2010).* Topics addressed included the analysis of district policies and practices through the lens of race; equity transformation plan development; professional learning communities and school culture; teacher and administrator capacity and equity walk-throughs; empowering families and engaging communities of color; and reflecting on progress and planning for the future.

- *Superintendent and Team Lead Seminars (October 6, 2009; January 20, March 16, and May 10, 2010)*. Seminars topics included equity policy development and governance; strategic alignment; systems accountability for identifying and eliminating racial disparities; and personal leadership development.
- *Principal Development Workshops (January 20, March 16, and May 10, 2010)*. Seminars focused on engaging in courageous conversations about race, leadership for racial equity, systems thinking, and organizational learning.
- *Beyond Diversity Seminars for Principals (December 1–2, 2009) and for DPI Staff and Others (March 30–31, 2010)*. The seminars were designed to increase participants’ awareness of the degree to which racism and other diversity issues are part of educational failure.
- *Local Coaches Training Sessions (October 6, 2009; January 20, March 16, and May 10, 2010) and Intercession Coaching Meetings (November 2009; February, April, and June 2010)*. Onsite training was provided to apprentice coaches by a consortium consultant and the lead coach using the consortium’s model for equity leadership coaching. Each local coach also attended the intersession meetings of her or his team and team-coached these meetings with the lead coach, who took part by phone or video conference.

Participants and consortium organizers agreed that the consortium had been successful in accomplishing its primary goal—to increase participants’ understanding of racial equity—but district teams requested additional assistance with equity planning and continued opportunities for district teams to meet to share their progress.

Goals and Activities, 2010–11

Consortium seminars were originally scheduled to end in spring 2010, but at the request of participating districts, CREATE leadership decided to continue to provide technical assistance and support to state and district equity teams in 2010–11. A major change in 2010–11 was a reduction in the number of local coaches that were available to assist district teams. Based on an assessment of district needs, CREATE leadership reduced the number of local coaches from 14 to four. Each participating district was given the option of selecting a local coach to continue assisting with implementation of district action plans. Four of the six districts chose to continue to work with a local coach. Fewer seminars also were offered in 2010–11; no seminars were offered for principals, superintendents, or team leads, and the number of seminars for state and district equity teams was reduced from four to two.

The consortium’s goals for 2010–11 were to assist district and state teams in the design and implementation of equity action plans; facilitate discussion and sharing of team progress; and continue discussion of Critical Race Theory. To support this work, the consortium offered

seminars for state and district equity leadership teams in October 2010 and in March 2011. Glenn Singleton of PEG, who previously led the seminars in 2009–10, led these one-day seminars. Discussions focused on how race and equity impact children and on issues related to increasing graduation rates; decreasing suspension, expulsion, and dropout rates; and hiring and retaining certified teachers of color. In the October 2010 and March 2011 meetings, districts had opportunities to work with their teams and share with other districts. In addition to participating in the seminars, district teams were required to submit strategic equity plans identifying district goals and desired outcomes, specific actions steps to be taken to achieve these goals, timelines, leaders responsible for implementation, and measures to be used in determining success.

The consortium continued to offer training for local coaches who were working with district teams. A one-day training session was held in October 2010 and March 2011 in conjunction with the seminars for state and district equity leadership teams. David Davidson, formerly with West Wind and currently on the staff of PEG, continued to lead the training for local coaches.

Related Activities. Related consortium activities completed by the project coordinator include an article about the consortium in the October 2010 CREATE e-newsletter and a presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the Every Child a Graduate Conference in January 2011. In addition, the consortium coordinator served on the CREATE Conference planning committee and participated in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 2 for a summary of 2010–11 consortium activities.

Table 2. Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education: 2010–11 Activities

| Activities | Scheduled Dates |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Local Coaching | |
| Four coaches working with districts | Ongoing |
| Equity Coach Development | |
| Two one-day training sessions | October 11, 2010 March 7, 2011 |
| District and State Equity Leadership Team Seminars | |
| Two one-day seminars | October 12, 2010 March 8, 2011 |
| Conference Presentation | |
| A presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the Every Child a Graduate Conference | January 13, 2011 |
| Contributions to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| An article on 2010–11 consortium activities in the October 2010 CREATE e-newsletter | October 19, 2010 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Participation in CREATE Conference planning committee meetings | July 2010–May 2011 |
| Participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Participants

District leadership teams from six districts (Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, Janesville, Kenosha, and Waukesha) participated in the consortium in 2010–11. Teams from these districts also participated in 2008–09 and 2009–10. DPI staff participated in each of the three years.

More than 60 participants from state and districts teams attended the October 2010 and March 2011 equity leadership seminars; approximately 50 district team members and 13 DPI staff participated. Attendance at the seminars was somewhat lower in 2010–11 than in the previous year. In 2009–10, 67 district team members and 25 staff members from DPI attended consortium seminars.

CREATE Conference (CESA 9)

The annual CREATE Conference is designed to enhance educators' understanding and application of research-based, culturally responsive policies, procedures, and practices. The conference includes sessions on effective instructional practices and administrative practices that support successful educational outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students. The first CREATE Conference was held in June 2009. The second conference was held in April 2010. The CREATE Conference takes the place of the Summer Institute on Addressing Disproportionality, which was held annually from 2005 through 2008. CESA 9 is responsible for planning the annual conference, which includes forming a planning committee, developing the agenda, identifying conference presenters, deciding on the location, making hotel arrangements, and inviting participants. Following are an overview of the 2010 conference, a summary of 2011 conference goals and activities, and a description of conference participants.

The 2010 Conference

The 2010 CREATE Conference was held April 28, 2010, at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin, in conjunction with the 2010 Preconference Needs Assessment, held on April 27, 2011. The conference was designed to address topics of interest to general education and special education staff in all Wisconsin school districts, team members from school districts with disproportionate representation in special education, and members of the Wisconsin State Human Relations Association (WSHRA). Topics for sectional presentations were selected based on a review of 2009 needs assessment data and results of a survey completed by districts that participated in the needs assessment. The survey asked districts to identify the areas in which they most needed professional development and technical assistance in developing their district improvement plans. Survey results were categorized into the following strands by the conference planning committee: parent/community involvement; needs assessment/data collection; and diversity training/culturally responsive classroom practices. Sectional presentations were organized around these strands. Keynote and sectional presentations and other conference resources are available on the CREATE Wisconsin website at <http://www.createwisconsin.net/events/2010conferenceresources.cfm>.

The 2011 Conference

The 2011 CREATE Conference was held April 28, 2011 at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Two preconference events also were held—a Beyond Diversity seminar on April 26–27, 2011 and the annual needs assessment on April 27, 2011. (A profile of the CREATE Needs Assessment is presented in a later section.) Five planning committee meetings were held between July 2010 and March 2011 to plan the conference and the preconference needs assessment. “Save the Date” cards and e-blast distributions began in December 2010.

In selecting the theme for the 2011 conference, the planning committee reviewed data from the 2010 needs assessment as well the 2010–11 professional development options selected by districts to support the development of their district improvement plans. Because a majority of districts selected professional development options focusing on culturally responsive practices, the committee chose this topic as the conference theme. Keynote and sectional presentations were organized around the following topics: culturally responsive classroom practices; response to intervention (RtI) and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS); family/community involvement; district and school policies and environment; and evaluation and accountability. Sectional presentations were designed to provide practical strategies that conference participants could apply in their practice.

Drs. Geneva Gay and Jeannette Haynes Writer gave the keynote presentations. Dr. Gay is a professor of education at the University of Washington–Seattle where she teaches multicultural education and general curriculum theory. Her presentation, “Culturally Responsive Teaching in Theory and Practice,” focused on the major conceptual principles of cultural responsiveness in teaching and their implications for practice at various educational levels. Dr. Haynes Writer is an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces; her research interests are in the areas of Tribal Critical Race Theory, critical multicultural teacher education, social justice education, and indigenous education. Dr. Haynes Writer’s presentation, “Recognizing and Centering Community and Relationships in the Quest for Culturally Responsive Education,” focused on the importance of recognizing and building on the knowledge that students bring from their communities.

In addition to the keynote and sectional presentations, the conference included a poster session to highlight the opportunities for professional development and technical assistance provided by the other CREATE components. A similar poster session was presented at the 2010 conference.

A follow-up meeting of the planning committee was held on May 19, 2011, to discuss conference successes and potential areas for improvement. Feedback from the evaluation surveys was also discussed.

The agenda for the 2011 CREATE Conference and brief biographies of conference presenters are available at: <http://www.createwisconsin.net/events/2011createconference.cfm>. Keynote and

sectional presentations and other conference resources will be posted on the website as soon as they are available.

Related Activities. Related activities completed by the project coordinators included writing an article on the upcoming CREATE conference in the January 2011 CREATE e-newsletter; writing an article on the 2011 CREATE Conference in the May 2011 CREATE e-newsletter; and conference calls and meetings with the other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 3 for a summary of 2010–11 conference activities.

Table 3. CREATE Conference: 2010–11 Activities

| Activities | Scheduled Dates |
|---|------------------------|
| Conference Planning and Coordination | |
| Planning committee meetings | July 2010–March 2011 |
| 2011 CREATE Conference | April 28, 2011 |
| Conference planning committee follow-up meeting | May 19, 2011 |
| Contributions to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| An article on the upcoming CREATE Conference in the January 2011 CREATE e-newsletter | January 11, 2011 |
| An article on the 2011 CREATE Conference in the May 2011 CREATE e-newsletter | May 13, 2011 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Participants

A total of 179 participants attended the 2011 CREATE Conference on April 28, 2011. Participants included staff from most of the districts that participated in the preconference needs assessment as well as representatives from other Wisconsin school districts, DPI, several CESAs, WSHRA, and the University of Wisconsin system. Attendance this year was lower than last year, when 310 participants attended. The lower attendance at the 2011 conference may have been due, in part, to the timing of the conference. Some districts had their spring breaks scheduled during the week of the conference and chose not to attend.

American Indian Student Achievement Network (CESA 12)

The American Indian Student Achievement Network (AISAN) is designed to serve as a community of practice for 25 Wisconsin school districts with the highest percentage of Native American students. The purpose of the network is to help these districts identify and address barriers to learning that limit the opportunities of Native American students and to provide resources and training for school and district staff. AISAN includes two primary working groups: (1) tribal language and culture teachers (both school and community based); and (2) home–

school coordinators, counselors, and other school staff who work closely with, and provide a variety of services to, Native American students and their families.³

The AISAN project coordinator is responsible for planning organizational meetings and professional development opportunities for AISAN members. Specific responsibilities include forming a planning committee for conferences or workshops, developing conference and meeting agendas, identifying conference presenters, deciding on event locations, inviting participants, and facilitating meetings. Following are an overview of AISAN goals and activities for 2009–10, a summary of goals and activities for 2010–11, and a description of AISAN participants.

Goals and Activities, 2009–10

The primary goals of the network in 2009–10 were to assess and prioritize district needs for improving educational opportunities for Native American students; to provide professional development opportunities for instructional and noninstructional staff working in American Indian Language and Culture Education programs, and to establish an online community of practice for selected staff from the 25 districts participating in the network.

The following AISAN meetings and conferences were held in 2009–10 to address these goals:

- *AISAN Organizational Meeting, October 21, 2009.* Prior to the October 2009 National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Convention, AISAN held an organizational meeting to discuss how network participants who were attending the convention would share information with the other districts in the network. Other topics of discussion included scheduling training opportunities for tribal language and culture teachers and providing networking opportunities for home–school coordinators. Nine participants from five school districts attended.
- *Wisconsin Tribal Language Symposium and American Indian Student Achievement Conference, March 1–2, 2010.* The focus of this joint symposium and conference was on establishing a community of support for Native American students and infusing Native American language and culture into the curriculum and classrooms. The conference included sessions on understanding and eliminating racism; creating change in Native American education; increasing attendance rates and reducing truancy among Native American students; best practices in Title VII; assessing tribal language learners; tribal language planning; and DPI’s tribal language revitalization grant. In addition, an organizational meeting was held for home–school coordinators to discuss the future direction and goals of AISAN. An organizational meeting of tribal language teachers and program staff also was held to discuss the formation of a Wisconsin tribal language

³ AISAN was established in 2008–09, but much of the initial work of the project involved identifying potential members and contacting them to invite their participation in the network. An initial conference call for representatives from the 25 districts served by the network was held in December 2008 to discuss the purpose and goals of AISAN. A follow-up meeting was held in January 2009 to identify priority areas for the group. Although the participants expressed interest in continuing to meet, no meetings were scheduled until the following fall.

consortium. A total of 123 participants attended the conference from more than 30 school districts, including most of the 25 districts that are affiliated with AISAN. Participants from several tribal communities also attended.

- *Workshop on the Dropout and Graduation Crisis among American Indian Students, June 14–15.* As a follow-up to the State Superintendent’s Graduation Summit held on March 2, 2010, the AISAN project coordinator applied for a \$3,000 grant from DPI to hold a workshop on the dropout and graduation crisis among American Indian students. Sessions provided opportunities for districts to share information about graduation and dropout rates, the efforts schools and districts have been taking to address these issues, and possible joint initiatives between districts. A total of 55 individuals attended the workshop; 15 school districts or tribal schools were represented.

AISAN also provided funding for several participants to attend additional training events in 2009–10, including the Minnesota Indigenous Language Symposium, the 13th Annual American Indian Studies Summer Institute, the CREATE Conference, and the NEIA Convention. In addition, AISAN introduced a Moodle site in 2009–10 to serve as an online discussion forum for network participants, but there was limited activity on the site in its first year.

Although feedback from participants in AISAN events was quite positive, particularly for the March 2010 symposium and conference and the June 2010 workshop, several participants expressed concerns about the overall coordination of the network. Many participants indicated that communication with AISAN members was infrequent and that more advanced planning was needed for events so that members had sufficient time to obtain approval for travel arrangements from their school districts or tribal communities. Participants also requested greater involvement of Native Americans in positions of leadership within the network and greater participation of tribal community members in AISAN events.

In response to this feedback, the CREATE leadership team made the decision to bring in a new coordinator for AISAN in 2010–11. Andrew Gokee, Chair of the Native American Center at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, was selected to serve as the new AISAN coordinator. Don Rosin, the Native American Center coordinator for the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training, and Support (FACETS), was also enlisted to serve as the CREATE tribal ambassador to help develop relationships with Wisconsin tribal communities and school districts and to invite their participation in AISAN and in the CREATE Early Childhood Project, which focuses on improving services to young Native American children with disabilities.

Goals and Activities, 2010–11

The primary goals of AISAN in 2010–11 were to continue to provide training and networking opportunities for tribal language teachers and home–school coordinators; to expand the network’s outreach to tribal communities and school districts and encourage their participation in AISAN; and to improve communication with network members through advance notification of

network events and the establishment of online communities of practice for AISAN members. Specific objectives included collaborating with the Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA) to plan and cosponsor the WIEA annual conference and conducting a formal needs assessment of members of the Wisconsin Tribal Language Consortium (WTLC). Following is a description of the major activities of the network in 2010–11.

Network Meetings and Follow-up Activities. During the past year, AISAN held meetings for each of its two primary working groups—tribal language teachers and home–school coordinators. At the request of participants who attended the Wisconsin Tribal Language Symposium in March 2010, the WTLC was formed during the current program year. The group is an informal association of tribal language teachers and tribal language program personnel who are working to support, maintain, or revitalize tribal languages throughout the state of Wisconsin. Two meetings of this group were held in 2010–11. The first was held in December 2010 at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point; the second was held in April 2011 in conjunction with the WIEA annual conference in Keshena, Wisconsin. A network meeting for home–school coordinators was also held in April 2011 in conjunction with the WEIA conference.

The December 2010 meeting of the WTLC was a follow-up to the Tribal Language Symposium held in March 2010. The meeting agenda and a packet of training materials were mailed to participants in advance of the meeting. At the request of participants, the meeting focused on tribal language program updates and organizational development and included an introductory discussion of the development of a comprehensive needs assessment of the organization and its communities. The needs assessment is being funded through a grant from the Headwaters Foundation to the WTLC; the grant proposal was written by the AISAN project coordinator. The primary purpose of the needs assessment is to help identify the specific training needs and priorities of tribal language teachers and programs. Results of the needs assessment will be used by the WTLC to guide strategic planning. Bowman Performance Consulting, a Native American consulting firm, was hired to work with members of the WTLC to develop the needs assessment. Staff from Bowman Performance Consulting attended the December meeting and helped facilitate a discussion of organizational and training needs. Plans for developing the needs assessment also were discussed. Meeting participants included 24 individuals representing eight different tribal communities.

Subsequent to the December 2010 meeting, a needs assessment survey was developed by Bowman Performance Consulting in collaboration with the AISAN project coordinator. Data collection for the needs assessment began in April 2011. A total of 84 surveys were sent to WTLC members. Most surveys were sent by e-mail link; hard copies of the survey were provided to individuals who did not have an e-mail address or who requested a copy.

A second meeting of the WTLC was held on April 30, 2010, to continue discussion of organizational development. The preliminary results of the WTLC needs assessment survey also were presented and discussed. The meeting was cofacilitated by the AISAN project coordinator

and by Nicole Bowman, president of Bowman Performance Consulting. At the time of meeting, 26 of 84 surveys had been completed by members from eight of the 11 Wisconsin tribal communities. Participants who had not yet completed the survey were encouraged to do so. Computers were made available to participants so that they could complete the survey online; hard copies also were made available. A total of 45 individuals from eight Wisconsin tribal communities attended the meeting.

A session designed specifically for home–school coordinators who are participating in AISAN was held on April 29, 2011, at the WIEA conference. The session was titled, “The American Indian Student Achievement Network: What’s Next?” The session focused on a discussion of responses to behavioral and academic issues of Native American students in special education. The meeting was facilitated by CREATE Tribal Ambassador Don Rosin and his wife, Jerianne Rosin. A total of 24 individuals attended; 10 school districts were represented.

The 2011 WIEA Conference. AISAN was a cosponsor of the 2011 WIEA Conference, *Learning Today for Tomorrow’s Leaders*, held April 29–30 in Keshena, Wisconsin. The AISAN project coordinator served on the conference planning committee and helped to select the presenters. Eleven meetings of the planning committee were held between September 2010 and April 2011. “Save the Date” announcements were sent out beginning in January 2011. The conference included sessions on working with Native American students, family involvement, adolescent substance abuse and recovery, and developing culturally relevant curricula. Several sessions also focused on tribal language revitalization. Dr. Anton Treuer presented a keynote address titled “Indigenous Language Revitalization in Indian Education Today.” He was also the presenter for two workshops. The first was a screening of the film *First Speakers: Restoring the Ojibwe Language*; the second was a presentation specifically for tribal language teachers and WTLC members titled “New Strategies for Indigenous Language Revitalization.” As noted earlier, AISAN hosted sessions at the conference for both home–school coordinators and WTLC members. For the 2011 WIEA Conference, project coordinator Andrew Gokee and CREATE Tribal Ambassador Don Rosin registered a total of 62 individuals (38 tribal language teachers and 24 home–school coordinators) representing 16 school districts. Overall conference attendance was approximately 200. A follow-up meeting of the conference planning committee was held May 12, 2011 to discuss conference successes and possible areas for improvement.

Community Outreach. Throughout the year, CREATE Tribal Ambassador Don Rosin met with representatives of tribal education committees in all 11 tribal communities; visited 15 school districts, and attended four tribal council meetings to promote awareness of the CREATE initiative and to invite participation in AISAN.

Online Communities of Practice. AISAN is in the process of developing two online communities of practice to replace the Moodle networking site that had limited participation last year. Don Rosin established an online chat group for home–school coordinators in December 2010. Andrew Gokee registered a Facebook page for use by members of the WTLC in

December, although the site is not yet operational. It is not yet clear to what extent members of the network are interested in using these resources. There has been some participation in the online chat room, but many of the posts have been requests for help in locating resources.

Related Activities. Related activities completed by the project coordinator include an article on AISAN in the March 2011 CREATE e-newsletter; preparation of materials for inclusion in a presentation on the first two years of CREATE at the January 2011 Every Child a Graduate Conference; and a sectional presentation at the 2011 CREATE Conference on the importance of tribal languages. The project coordinator also provided research and background information to the coordinator of the CREATE Early Childhood Project regarding American Indian Heritage month and its current association with the Thanksgiving holiday and participated in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 4 for a summary of 2010–11 AISAN activities.

Table 4. American Indian Student Achievement Network: 2010–11 Activities

| Activity | Scheduled Dates |
|---|---|
| Network Meetings | |
| Wisconsin Tribal Language Consortium meeting | December 3, 2010 |
| AISAN Home–School Coordinators meeting | April 29, 2011 |
| Wisconsin Tribal Language Consortium meeting | April 30, 2011 |
| WIEA Conference | |
| Conference planning meetings | September 2010–April 2011 |
| WIEA Conference | April 29–30, 2011 |
| Follow-up meeting of the conference planning committee | May 12, 2011 |
| Community Outreach | |
| The CREATE tribal ambassador met with representatives of tribal education committees in all 11 tribal communities, visited 15 school districts, and participated in four tribal council meetings to provide information on AISAN. | Ongoing |
| Online Communities of Practice | |
| Online chat room for home–school coordinators | Ongoing since December 2010 |
| Facebook page for members of the Wisconsin Tribal Language Consortium | Registered in December 2010 but not yet operational |
| Conference Presentations | |
| Contributed information on AISAN for a presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the Every Child a Graduate Conference | January 13, 2011 |
| CREATE Conference sectional presentation, “The Importance of Retaining Tribal Languages” | April 28, 2011 |
| Contribution to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| An article on 2010–11 AISAN activities in the March 2011 CREATE e-newsletter | March 15, 2011 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Provided research and background information to the coordinator of the CREATE Early Childhood Project regarding American Indian Heritage month and its current association with the Thanksgiving holiday | November 2011 |
| Participation in scheduled conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Participants

Participants in AISAN include tribal language teachers and home–school coordinators from the 25 Wisconsin school districts with the highest percentages of Native American students (see Table 5).

Table 5. AISAN District Affiliates

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ashland School District | Seymour School District |
| Bayfield School District | Shawano School District |
| Black River Falls School District | Siren School District |
| Bowler School District | Superior School District |
| Crandon School District | Tomah Area School District |
| Cumberland School District | Unity School District |
| Freedom Area School District | Wabeno Area School District |
| Green Bay Public Schools | Washburn School District |
| Hayward School District | Webster School District |
| Lac du Flambeau #1 School District | West de Pere School District |
| Lakeland Union High School | Winter School District |
| Menominee Indian School District | Wisconsin Dells School District |
| Milwaukee Public Schools | |

CREATE Monthly e-Newsletter (CESA 6)

The CREATE e-newsletter is designed to keep teachers, administrators, community members, and parents informed about culturally responsive education. The newsletter connects educators with resources such as grants, instructional strategies, literacy materials, and professional development opportunities that focus on culturally responsive practices. Five issues of the newsletter were published during CREATE’s initial year. Since then, 10 issues have been published each year, with issues appearing monthly between September and June. The newsletter is available to anyone who wishes to subscribe. Past issues of the newsletter and information on how to request a subscription are included on the CREATE website. Following is a description of the goals and content of the newsletter.

Newsletter Goals and Content

The primary goal of the CREATE newsletter is to promote cultural awareness and to disseminate news and information about culturally responsive education. Each issue includes news and articles on cultural issues of national and local interest. For example, the October 2010 issue included the article “Linguistic Rights in the USA: A Complex and Contradictory Situation,” by Bradley R. Strathern, an article that originally appeared in the collection *The Linguistic Rights of*

Minorities (see <http://www.diversity.org.mk/Sodrzini.asp?idEKniga=182>). The newsletter also includes articles from various Wisconsin newspapers that highlight local events of interest. In addition, each issue of the newsletter features resources and professional development opportunities that are relevant to culturally responsive education. In 2010–11, “In the Community” was added as a newsletter feature and includes announcements of Wisconsin community events such as cultural fairs, classes, and festivals.

Another goal of the newsletter is to promote awareness of the CREATE initiative by disseminating information about CREATE projects and events. Each issue includes a “CREATE Spotlight” that highlights a specific component of the initiative or the work of one of the project coordinators. For example, the March 2011 issue featured an article on the American Indian Student Achievement Network by project coordinator Andrew Gokee. Updates on upcoming CREATE events or activities also are included in each newsletter.

A specific goal for 2010–11 was to increase the subscription base of the newsletter. To accomplish this goal, a CREATE Twitter account and Facebook page were created. Links to these online resources appear in the newsletter. In addition, information about the newsletter has been distributed at CREATE conferences and workshops. As a result of these efforts, newsletter subscriptions have almost doubled during the past year. In April 2010 there were 332 subscribers to the newsletter. By May 2011, the number of subscriptions had increased to 615. The number of CREATE followers on Twitter has grown by approximately 108 this year.

Related Activities

In addition to designing and disseminating the newsletter, the newsletter coordinator is responsible for maintaining the CREATE Facebook and Twitter accounts and updating the CREATE website. Each issue of the newsletter is posted to the website. A summary of the content of each issue and links to specific articles are available in the newsletter archives. The website’s events calendar also is updated regularly to highlight upcoming CREATE workshops and conferences as well as community events of interest. Updates to the resource pages of the website were begun in 2010–11 and will continue in 2011–12. The project coordinator also contributed an article to the June 2011 CREATE e-newsletter highlighting progress made in increasing newsletter subscriptions, establishing CREATE social media accounts, and updating the CREATE website. The project coordinator also served on the CREATE Conference planning committee and participated in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 6 for a summary of newsletter-related activities in 2010–11.

Table 6. CREATE Monthly E-Newsletter: 2010–11 Activities

| Activities | Scheduled Dates |
|--|--------------------------|
| CREATE Monthly e-Newsletter | |
| Ten monthly e-newsletters | September 2010–June 2011 |
| Management of e-newsletter subscriptions | Ongoing |
| Maintenance of Website and Social Media Accounts | |
| Maintenance of CREATE website | Ongoing |
| Maintenance of CREATE Twitter account | Ongoing |
| Maintenance of CREATE Facebook page | Ongoing |
| Contributions to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| An article on the CREATE e-newsletter, website and social media in the June 2011 CREATE e-newsletter | June 2, 2011 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Participation in CREATE Conference planning committee meetings | July 2010–May 2011 |
| Participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices and Leadership for Educational Equity (CESA 1)

The CREATE Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component provides training for school-based teams that are interested in implementing effective culturally responsive classroom practices. The training is designed for teams of six classroom teachers and one administrator from the same school. The series of eight training sessions assists participants in identifying new ways to reach students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Graduate-level course credit is available for participants who complete the course and pay course fees through a university affiliate.

In 2010–11, Leadership for Educational Equity trainings also were offered for the first time to district leadership teams. This series of eight training sessions is designed for teams of up to eight district administrators from across departments. Recommended participants include the director of special education/pupil services, the director of curriculum and instruction, no more than two building-level administrators, and leadership representatives in the areas of data, equity, literacy, English language learning (ELL), and other initiatives such as RtI and PBIS. The training sessions assist district administrators in developing their capacity to provide leadership around issues of educational equity. Districts participating in the Leadership for Educational Equity training also were encouraged to form a school-based team or teams to participate in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices training.

Following are summaries of the goals and activities of the 2009–11 Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices trainings and the goals and activities of the Leadership for Educational Equity trainings. A list of districts participating in the trainings also is provided.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices Trainings: 2009–11 Goals and Activities

The primary purpose of the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops is to help teachers critically examine and reflect on the influence of culture, class, power, and privilege on their current classroom practices and to learn to implement culturally responsive classroom practices. The first four sessions of the series focus on understanding culture and diversity, recognizing the role of power and privilege in both individual and institutional interactions, and developing a philosophy of social justice and equity. The focus of later sessions is on how to implement culturally responsive practices in five areas: classroom environment, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and classroom management. Workshop activities include large and small group discussions on selected readings, cross-cultural simulations, classroom maps, and review of classroom artifacts (e.g., classroom procedures and expectations, grading and disciplinary policies, lesson plans, and curriculum materials). Participants also are given assignments to complete between sessions. Workshop materials and resources are made available to participants online through a Moodle site.

In 2009–10, training sessions were completed by the first cohort of participants from two school districts. Because of the late start of the trainings in spring 2009, all sessions could not be completed during the 2008–09 program year; the remaining sessions were therefore held in fall 2009. A second cohort of participants also completed the trainings in 2009–10. Teams from three school districts participated. Both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 participated in four two-day training sessions. Training sessions for Cohort 2 were offered in September and November 2009 and February and April 2010. Although the location of the workshops varied, all teams traveled to the same location for each workshop.

Several changes to the workshops were implemented in 2010–11 based on participant feedback and increased interest in participating in the workshops by districts throughout the state. Although participants in the 2009–10 sessions provided favorable feedback on the content of the workshops, they reported several challenges in attending the training. One challenge was the time it took to travel to the workshops; another challenge was the amount of time participants were required to be out of the classroom. Suggestions for addressing these challenges included holding regional workshops and scheduling one-day rather than two-day training sessions. Both of these changes were implemented in 2010–11.

Another challenge noted by the project coordinator was that most school districts sent teams that included staff members from different buildings as well as some district staff, which made it difficult for team members to work together when they returned to their district. In 2010–11, districts were required to send school-based teams.

School-based teams from 10 districts participated in the series of training sessions in 2010–11. To accommodate the large number of teams involved in the trainings, teams were organized into three regional cohorts: Green Bay, Madison, and Milwaukee. A series of eight one-day training sessions was offered in each of these regions. Monthly training sessions were scheduled between September 2010 and May 2011 for each regional cohort.

Two trainers worked with each regional cohort. Following are the trainers by cohort.

- Greenbay: Courtney Bauder from the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh and Dr. Barbara Van Haren from CESA 1
- Madison: Courtney Bauder from the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh and Dr. Calandra Lockhart from Alverno College
- Milwaukee: Dr. Shelley Zion from the University of Colorado–Denver and Dr. Calandra Lockhart from Alverno College

A teleconference was held among the four trainers one to two weeks prior to each training session. Teleconferences were one to two hours in length. During each conversation, the trainers established an agenda for each session, together with materials and readings.

Leadership for Educational Equity Trainings: 2010–11 Goals and Activities

The 2010–11 Leadership for Educational Equity trainings were designed specifically for districts identified as having disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education. The purpose of the training was to provide technical assistance to district leadership teams to: (1) develop the capacity of each team to provide leadership around educational equity; (2) support teams to examine policies and practices and to develop and implement a plan to reduce or eliminate disproportionality and ensure educational achievement for all students; and (3) create a coherent plan to utilize the resources of the CREATE initiative in substantive and strategic ways to support school improvement in targeted school sites and to link or eliminate other district initiatives to support the goals of the schools and district.

District teams discussed definitions of educational equity, culturally responsive educational systems, and social justice, and examined personal, professional, and institutional practices that support the development of equitable educational systems. Teams also analyzed the current status of their educational system, identified district needs with respect to equity, and determined what structures were needed to address those needs. The trainers shared resources to help districts teams analyze their systems, including rubrics for evaluating classrooms, communities, schools, policies, and personal beliefs. Teams also were provided with resources such as podcasts and videos to take back to their districts and share with staff. Time was provided for district teams to work together on the development of district improvement plans. Opportunities also were made available for teams from different districts to share ideas and discuss common challenges. Team members were given readings and assignments to complete between sessions.

The three leadership teams that participated in the trainings each had school-based teams that were participating in the classroom practices trainings. Part of the leadership team’s planning and homework was to connect to that group and decide how the implementation of culturally responsive classroom practices would be rolled out within the district.

The trainers and facilitators for the sessions were Dr. Shelley Zion from the University of Colorado–Denver and Dr. Barbara Van Haren from CESA 1. Eight monthly training sessions were held for leadership teams between September 2010 and April 2011.

Related Activities

Related activities completed by the project coordinator include the submission of an article on the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices trainings for the December 2010 CREATE e-newsletter; a presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the Every Child a Graduate Conference in January 2011; participation in sectionals on cultural responsiveness at the PBIS National Forum, the National Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) Conference, and the 5th Annual RTI Conference; and participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 7 for a summary of 2010–11 activities for the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices and Leadership for Educational Equity component.

Table 7. Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices and Leadership for Educational Equity: 2010–11 Activities

| Activities | Scheduled Dates |
|--|---------------------------|
| Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices Trainings | |
| Eight full-day trainings for three regional cohorts of school-based teams | September 2010–May 2011 |
| Leadership for Education Equity Trainings | |
| Eight full-day trainings for district leadership teams | September 2010–April 2011 |
| Conference Presentations and Participation | |
| A presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the Every Child a Graduate Conference | January 13, 2011 |
| Participation in the PBIS National Forum, the National CASE Conference, and the 5th Annual RTI Conference | Summer–Fall 2010 |
| Contributions to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| An article on the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices trainings in the December 2010 CREATE e-newsletter | December 13, 2010 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Participants

Following are the school districts, listed by regional cohort, that sent teams to the Culturally Responsive Practices trainings in 2010–11:

- Green Bay: Pulaski, Seymour, and Fond du Lac
- Madison: Sun Prairie, Madison Metropolitan, Monona Grove, and Middleton-Cross Plains
- Milwaukee: Glendale-River Hills, Racine, and Germantown

All but one of the participating districts were identified as having significant disproportionality in 2010–11. A total of 130 building-level staff members participated in the workshops; 113 completed the full series of trainings.

The districts that participated in the Leadership for Education Equity trainings were Glendale, Middleton-Cross Plains, and Monona Grove. A total of 19 district staff members participated in the trainings; 16 completed the full series of sessions. One team failed to complete the training because the team was dissolved when one of its members left the district to take a job elsewhere and another became seriously ill.

Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project (CESA 8)

The purpose of the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project is to increase the capacity of early childhood providers and teachers to provide culturally responsive education and care to Native American children from birth to age six. In partnership with the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC) Birth-to-3 Program and the Wisconsin Inter-Tribal Early Childhood Association, project staff from CESA 8 are working to build relationships and strengthen partnerships among tribal communities, school districts, and government agencies. The intended outcome of this work is to ensure appropriate identification and provision of special education services to young Native American children and their families. Following are overviews of the Early Childhood Project's goals and activities for 2009–10, the goals and activities for 2010–11, and a description of project partners and participants.

Goals and Activities, 2009–10

The Early Childhood Project's primary goals in 2009–10 were to: (1) develop an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition to guide project work; (2) collaborate with tribal partners, school districts, and county agencies to develop interagency agreements for identification of and provision of special education services to young Native American children and their families; (3) develop and disseminate culturally responsive early childhood practice resources; (4) coordinate project efforts with other state early childhood initiatives; and (5) increase public awareness of culturally responsive practices.

The Early Childhood Project completed several activities in 2009–10 to advance these goals. Following is a summary of those activities.

- *Development of an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition.* In 2008–09 and 2009–10, project staff worked with the State Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team to obtain commitments from tribal representatives to serve as members of an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition. If formed, the coalition would serve as a system of support for individuals and organizations that provide services to young Native American children with special needs and would facilitate interactions among agencies providing these services. The coalition would also serve as a vehicle for tribal representation in policy and decision making at the state and local levels on issues affecting young Native American children. In February 2010, staff from CESA 8, CESA 12, and GLITC hosted the Early Childhood Tribal Service Providers Workshop to explain the purpose of the coalition and to obtain commitments from participants to serve as members. The workshop was offered in conjunction with the Third Tribal Gathering (description follows). Approximately 30 participants attended the workshop.
- *The Third Tribal Gathering, February 23–24, 2010.* In 2009–10 project staff worked with the State Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team and the GLTIC Birth-to-3 Program to plan and host the Third Tribal Gathering. Two previous tribal gatherings were held in 2007 and 2008 to engage tribal communities, school districts, and state and county agencies in collaborative work designed to improve services for Native American infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities and their families. The goal of the Third Tribal Gathering was to help strengthen existing partnerships, build new collaborative relationships, and develop interagency agreements to improve developmental outcomes for young Native American children with disabilities. Sessions focused on special education identification and screening procedures, coordination of county Birth-to-3 programs, school-based special education services, natural to least restrictive environments, and the implications of these issues for interagency agreements. A session on interagency agreements provided a framework for developing action plans for ongoing work. Representatives from each tribal nation, county agency, and school district that participated in the gathering were encouraged to display materials and resources showcasing their efforts to serve young children and their families. Approximately 80 individuals attended the gathering, including representatives from eight tribal communities.

In addition to helping to plan and cohost the Early Childhood Tribal Service Providers Workshop and the Third Tribal Gathering, project staff developed and disseminated culturally responsive early childhood practice resources to child care resource and referral agencies and to CESA Birth- to-3 coordinators and Early Childhood Special Education Program support teachers. Project staff began to coordinate project efforts with other state early childhood initiatives such

as the Preschool Options Project and Child Find. They also helped to promote awareness of culturally responsive practices through conference and workshop presentations.

According to the project coordinator, the Third Tribal Gathering was successful in bringing together partners from tribal communities, school districts, and state and county agencies to work on the development of interagency agreements. Participant feedback on the event was very positive, and participants were able to make progress in developing interagency agreements. Feedback on the Early Childhood Tribal Service Providers Workshop was also quite positive, but the workshop was not successful in achieving its goal of securing commitments from participants to serve as members of an early childhood tribal coalition.

One of the major challenges to forming the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition has been establishing relationships with tribal communities and securing commitments from tribal members to participate in the coalition. Project staff were not sure which tribal members they should be talking with or at what level to enlist their support for project efforts. To help address this challenge, the CREATE leadership team selected Don Rosin to serve as the CREATE tribal ambassador to help build relationships with each of Wisconsin's 11 tribal communities and to encourage their support for the work of the Early Childhood Project and AISAN.

Goals and Activities, 2010–11

The primary goals of the Early Childhood Project in 2010–11 were to: (1) continue efforts to develop an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition to guide project work; (2) plan and implement professional development activities and opportunities for district and tribal staff; (3) engage in outreach to tribal communities and school districts to build relationships and develop partnerships; (4) partner with the State Early Childhood Interagency Team and the GLITC Birth-to-3 Program to plan and coordinate the Fourth Tribal Gathering; and (5) coordinate project efforts with other statewide early childhood initiatives. Following is a summary of 2010–11 activities related to each of these goals.

Development of the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition. In 2010–11, project staff continued to partner with the state Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team and the GLITC Birth-to-3 Program to support the development of the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition. At the end of the 2009–10 program year, the partners held a videoconference with representatives from several tribal communities to explain the purpose of the coalition and to secure commitments to join the coalition. The tribal representatives requested that coalition vision and mission statements be developed that could be shared with tribal leaders and community members.

In response to this request, the partners formed the Early Childhood Resource Team to draft coalition vision and mission statements and serve as core group of resource providers for the evolving coalition. Members of the team include the Early Childhood Project coordinator, the CREATE tribal ambassador, a representative from the GLITC Birth-to-3 Program, and representatives from several early childhood organizations, including a Head Start program, a

Birth-to-3 agency, a child care agency, a school-based early childhood program, and a parent organization. The team held two meetings in August 2010 to work on the coalition vision and mission statements, to discuss ways to obtain input from tribal communities on the vision and mission statements, and to plan future activities. As a follow-up to the August meetings, members of the resource team met with representatives from three tribal communities in fall 2010 to obtain their feedback and input on the vision and mission statements and to generate interest in becoming members of the coalition.

Members of the resource team conducted site visits to four tribal communities in August and September 2010 to assist with local efforts to coordinate services for young Native American children with disabilities. Between December 2010 and March 2011, team members also facilitated four meetings with representatives from tribal communities, school districts, and county agencies to discuss the development of local interagency agreements. An organizational meeting of the resource team was originally scheduled for May 17, 2011, to plan future work, but it was postponed.

Members of the resource team have also begun to develop directories so that school districts and county agencies know who to contact within the tribal community, but also so that members of the tribal community know who to contact at schools and county agencies regarding services for young children. Directories have been developed for three tribal communities.

Professional Development Activities. Project staff offered the following early childhood workshops for tribal service providers and parents in fall 2010:

- A two-day training on Social-Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (SEFEL) for 24 Tribal Head Start and Early Invention staff (October 28–29, 2010)
- A workshop on special education and the IEP process for 15 tribal service providers and parents (November 9, 2010)
- Two four-hour SEFEL workshops for 11 tribal child care providers (November 16 and 23, 2010)

Community Outreach. A major barrier to the project's work last year was developing relationships with tribal communities and enlisting their support for project efforts. To begin to establish relationships with tribal communities, CREATE Tribal Ambassador Don Rosin arranged to meet with leaders in each community to provide information about the CREATE initiative and the work that is being done to improve services and supports for Native American children and youth. Between September 2010 and March 2011, he met with representatives of education committees in all 11 tribal communities to discuss their needs, concerns, and issues with regard to Birth-to-5 services and to encourage their participation in the Fourth Tribal Gathering. He also met with staff members from four county agencies as well as special education directors in 13 school districts to discuss the need to coordinate services for young Native American children with disabilities and to invite them to participate in the upcoming

tribal gathering. In April 2011, the tribal ambassador also visited five tribal communities and five school districts as a follow-up to the tribal gathering.

The Fourth Tribal Gathering. In 2010–11 project staff partnered with the State Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team and the GLITC Birth-to-3 Program to plan and cohost the Fourth Tribal Gathering. The gathering was held March 24–25, 2011 in Odanah, Wisconsin, and brought together representatives from tribal communities, school districts, and state and county agencies to engage in collaborative work on the development of culturally responsive Child Find procedures within Native American communities. The goal of the event was to ensure that all infants and young children who are eligible for early intervention or preschool services are being identified and served. Child Find is the first step in a process for locating, identifying, and evaluating infants and young children who are eligible or potentially eligible for enrollment in early intervention programs and for special education services. Session topics included identifying Child Find practices that are responsive to families and work well in Native communities, and developing informed referral networks for tribal communities. Such networks identify individuals, programs, and agencies that come into contact with young children in the community (e.g., physicians, Birth-to-3 programs, Head Start programs, child care programs, social service agencies, and parents) and serve as a “road map” for families and others for accessing and securing services that may be needed. Representatives from each tribal community were asked to begin to identify primary referral sources within their community. A total of 90 participants attended the gathering; all 11 Wisconsin tribal communities were represented.

Coordination With Other Statewide Early Childhood Efforts. The project coordinator met with directors and staff of other early childhood initiatives and programs throughout the year to coordinate project work with other statewide efforts. For example, she attended two statewide meetings of higher education faculty that focused on identifying resources to meet the needs of young dual-language learners and their families; participated in meetings and conference calls with the Early Childhood Collaborating Partners Healthy Families Screening Committee; and met with president of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association to discuss collaborating on a series of professional development workshops on culturally responsive early child care practices for early childhood teachers and child care providers.

Related Activities. Related activities completed by the project coordinator include writing an article on the Third Tribal Gathering for the September 2010 CREATE e-newsletter, writing an article on cultural perspectives on Thanksgiving for the November 2010 CREATE e-newsletter; a presentation at the 2010 Healing Our Communities Conference; sectional and poster presentations at the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association Conference; a presentation on the first two years of CREATE at the Every Child a Graduate Conference; a presentation on culturally responsive practices for the May 2011 Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners Videoconference; and participation in conference calls or meetings with other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 8 for a summary of 2010–11 Early Childhood Project activities.

Table 8. Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project: 2010–11 Activities

| Activity | Scheduled Dates |
|--|---|
| Early Childhood Tribal Resource Team | |
| Two organizational team meetings | August 2010 |
| Site visits to four tribal communities to provide assistance | August 2010 |
| Meetings with representatives of three tribal communities to share vision and mission statements for the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition | Fall 2010 |
| Facilitation of four local meetings on the development of interagency agreements | December 2010–March 2011 |
| Development of directories for each tribal community | Ongoing |
| Professional Development Workshops | |
| Four professional development workshops conducted by project staff for tribal service providers and parents | October–November 2010 |
| Community Outreach | |
| The CREATE tribal ambassador met with representatives of tribal education committees in all 11 tribal communities; visited 13 school districts; and met with staff from four county service agencies to provide information on the Fourth Tribal Gathering and related project work. | Ongoing |
| Fourth Tribal Gathering | |
| Planning meetings | January–March 2011 |
| Fourth Tribal Gathering | March 24–25, 2011 |
| Coordination With Other Statewide Initiatives | |
| Participation in meetings and conference calls with directors of other statewide early childhood initiatives | Ongoing |
| Conference Presentations | |
| A presentation on infant and early childhood efforts in Wisconsin at the Healing Our Communities Conference | October 5–6, 2010 |
| A presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the Every Child a Graduate Conference | January 13, 2011 |
| Sectional and poster presentations at the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association Conference | November 11–13, 2011 |
| A presentation on culturally responsive practices for the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners Videoconference | May 24, 2011 |
| Contributions to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| Articles in the September and November 2010 issues of the CREATE e-newsletter | September 14, 2010 November 12, 2010 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Participants

Participants in project activities typically include representatives from tribal communities, school districts, and county, regional, and state agencies. The intended audience for tribal gatherings includes the following groups:

- Parents
- Tribal and community child care providers
- Tribal Head Start directors and disability coordinators
- Tribal service providers and health directors
- Tribal council members
- Tribal and public school administrators
- Early childhood regular and special education teachers
- College and university early childhood faculty
- Special education directors
- Other related service staff (e.g., physical, occupational, and speech therapists)
- County Birth-to-3 administrators, service coordinators, and providers
- CESA administrators
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction consultants
- Wisconsin Department of Health consultants

CREATE Needs Assessment and Development of a Strategic Plan (CESA 11)

School districts identified by DPI as having disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and in specific disability categories are required to conduct a research-based review of policies, procedures, and practices and identify areas in which improvements could be made to reduce or eliminate disproportionality. The CREATE Needs Assessment is designed to assist districts with this process. Identified districts are required to attend a day-long session, held in conjunction with the CREATE Conference, to review district policies and practices, using a structured review rubric developed by the National Center on Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (now Equity Alliance). Districts use the results of this structured review to develop an annual improvement plan to address disproportionality.

The project coordinator for the CREATE Needs Assessment is responsible for facilitating the preconference session, developing tools to assist districts with completing the needs assessment process, and sharing results of the needs assessment with DPI and CREATE project coordinators to inform planning of professional development and technical assistance activities. Following are

a summary of the goals and activities for the 2010 and 2011 CREATE Needs Assessment and a description of districts participating in this process.

Goals and Activities, 2009–11

The goals of the preconference needs assessment session are to familiarize district teams that are new to the process with the needs assessment rubric and the steps required to complete it and to provide time for teams that have previously completed the needs assessment to review progress in achieving goals and to identify new or continuing areas for improvement. An additional goal of the session is to provide information on technical assistance and professional development opportunities that are available to districts to assist them with their improvement efforts.

The Needs Assessment Process. The needs assessment process requires districts to assess their progress in 23 focus areas organized into four categories or standards. These standards and focus areas identify policies and practices that are culturally responsive and are designed to ensure that educational opportunities are available to and accessed by all students, including students with disabilities and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.⁴ Based on review and discussion of relevant local data, district teams rate their progress in each focus area as *beginning*, *developing*, or *at standard*, and identify priority areas for the coming year. Using these priority areas, each district team develops an annual district improvement plan that identifies strategies, personnel, resources, and staff needed to implement their goals.

Development of Tools and Resources to Assist District Teams. In 2009, project staff developed a web-based system that allows district teams to complete each step of the needs assessment process online. The system automatically generates the district's annual improvement plan once all steps are completed. The needs assessment website also includes resources to assist district teams with this process (e.g., definitions of priority standards and focus areas, examples of district data sources, and instructions for developing a district improvement plan). Each district is assigned a username and password to access the site.

For the 2009 Needs Assessment, districts were given the option of submitting their annual improvement plans online using this system. For the 2010 and 2011 Needs Assessment, all districts were required to submit their annual improvement plans through the needs assessment website. Based on feedback from districts that used the online system in 2009, the project coordinator redesigned the website in 2010 to make it easier for districts to view and update their district improvement plans. The redesigned website makes it possible for districts to track goals, changes, and successes, and use this information to set future goals.

⁴ A list of these standards and focus areas is included in the 2011 CREATE Conference brochure, available at <http://www.createwisconsin.net/events/2011conference/2011%20Conference%20Program%20APRIL%202011.pdf>, pp. 12–13.

Coordination of the Needs Assessment and Professional Development Activities. The project coordinator is responsible for summarizing the results of the needs assessment and sharing these results with DPI and other CREATE project coordinators for use in planning professional development activities. Districts that participated in the 2009 Needs Assessment also completed a survey that asked them to identify their technical assistance needs for the next two years. Results of the survey were shared with DPI and CREATE project coordinators for use in designing and delivering professional development activities relevant to district needs.

At the 2010 preconference needs assessment session, districts were presented with a menu of 15 professional development or technical assistance options and asked to select one or more options for 2010–11. Several of the options included activities offered through other CREATE components such as the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops and the CREATE professional development academies. Other options were offered by outside consultants such as the Beyond Diversity trainings led by Glenn Singleton of PEG.

At the 2011 preconference needs assessment session, identified districts were offered a similar range of professional development options. However, additional requirements were introduced by DPI for the selection of options by districts. Districts that had been identified for 1–3 years as having disproportionate representation in special education were required to select at least one CREATE professional development activity. Districts identified for 3–5 years that had disproportionate representation of black students in special education were required to send a district team to the Beyond Diversity training. Districts identified for 3–5 years that had disproportionate representation of Native students in special education were required to send a team to meetings and trainings offered by the American Indian Student Achievement Network. Newly identified districts had the option of participating in one or more professional development opportunities but were not required to do so.

In 2010 and 2011 the menu of professional development options provided to districts was posted on the needs assessment website, and districts were required to submit their selections with their annual improvement plans. In both years, the project coordinator prepared summaries of districts' priority areas and their selection of professional development options. The summaries were shared with DPI and CREATE project coordinators for use in designing and delivering professional development activities.

Changes to the Needs Assessment in 2011. Based on feedback received from participants in the 2010 Needs Assessment, the project coordinator made changes in the process for notifying districts that they were required to attend the preconference needs assessment session and in the organization of the session. In advance of the session, districts that were required to attend in 2011 were sent letters that included the district username and password and instructions on how to access the needs assessment website. This advance notification reduced the amount of time facilitators had to spend helping districts access the website during the session. To provide more time for district teams to work together, fewer presenters were scheduled in 2011. In addition, to

facilitate collaboration within district teams, each team member was asked to complete a collaborative partnership survey that asked them to rate their needs assessment team against features of successful collaborative partnerships; team members then discussed team characteristics that had contributed to past successes and strategies that could be used in the future to improve collaboration among team members.

In 2011, continuing districts also were given several options for meeting together to work on their district improvement plans. Districts that were implementing PBIS could meet with Lucille Eber, Director of the Illinois PBIS Network and the session keynote speaker, to discuss strategies for using PBIS to address disproportionality. Districts that were focusing on strategies to improve prereferral, referral, and identification processes for emotional and behavioral disorders could meet with Lisa Bardon, a professor at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point who has expertise in this area. Continuing districts could also choose to meet on their own to work on their district improvement plans. Newly identified districts were required to meet with DPI staff for an orientation to the needs assessment process.

Related Activities. Related activities completed by the project coordinator include submission of an article on the 2011 Needs Assessment for the May 2011 CREATE e-newsletter, participation in the PBIS National Forum in July 2010, and a presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the January 2011 Every Child a Graduate Conference. In addition, the project coordinator served on the CREATE Conference planning committee and participated in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 9 for a summary of 2010–11 needs assessment activities.

Table 9. CREATE Needs Assessment: 2010–11 Activities

| Activities | Scheduled Dates |
|---|------------------------|
| Facilitation of the CREATE Preconference Needs Assessment Session | |
| Full-day session to assist districts in completion of an evidence-based review of policies, procedures, and practices and development of an annual improvement plan | April 27, 2011 |
| Development of Relevant Tools and Resources | |
| Refinement of a web-based needs assessment system and development of related resources | Ongoing |
| Conference Presentations and Participation | |
| Participation in the PBIS National Forum | July 17–18, 2010 |
| A presentation on the first two years of the CREATE initiative at the Every Child a Graduate Conference | January 13, 2011 |
| Contributions to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| An article on the 2011 Needs Assessment in the May 2011 CREATE e-newsletter | May 13, 2011 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Summary and dissemination of needs assessment results and district professional development selections to other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |
| Participation in CREATE conference planning committee meetings | July 2010–May 2011 |
| Participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Participants

In 2011, 164 individuals from 28 school districts attended the CREATE Preconference Needs Assessment. The majority of district teams that participated were required to attend by DPI, but several districts chose to attend voluntarily to learn about the process. Some identified districts were unable to attend because of conflicts with other events such as the Beyond Diversity training which was held on the same day. These districts made alternate arrangements to complete the needs assessment process.

DPI recommends that district teams include, at minimum, the director of special education, the curriculum and instruction coordinator or assessment coordinator, a school psychologist, and at least one elementary school teacher (general education or special education). Most district teams that participated in the 2011 Needs Assessment had at least four members, although some districts sent much larger teams. One district that participated voluntarily sent 29 staff members to the preconference session.

Professional Development Academies (CESA 11)

The CREATE Professional Development Academies were developed to provide training on best practices for addressing the needs of students from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds and to provide districts with effective strategies for addressing disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education. The academies were first offered in 2009–10, and all districts identified as having significant disproportionality were required to send teams to the trainings. Professional development academies also were offered in 2010–11, but they were among 15 professional development activities offered to districts; districts were asked to select at least one activity but could choose to participate in several. The focus of the 2010–11 academies was also redefined based on information provided by identified districts on their professional development and technical assistance needs.

CESA 7 coordinated the professional development academies in 2009–10. In 2010–11, CESA 11, which coordinates the CREATE Needs Assessment, also coordinated the professional development academies. This organizational change facilitated communication among project staff about the professional development needs of districts that chose to participate in the academies. Following are an overview of academy goals and activities for 2009–10 and a description of 2010–11 goals and activities. Information on participation in the academies is also provided.

Goals and Activities, 2009–10

The primary goals of the 2009–10 professional development academies were to provide district teams with effective strategies for reducing disproportionality and for enhancing the academic engagement and outcomes of students from culturally and racially diverse backgrounds. Two full-day trainings were offered during the year; the first was held in September 2009, and the second was held in February 2010. The trainers for the academies were Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan and Carl Hasan, educational consultants with expertise in parent and community involvement and the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education.

At the September 2009 academy, the trainers presented national and state perspectives on disproportionality and facilitated a review of local data on disproportionality by participating district teams. Also presented was a framework for sustained district improvement in addressing disproportionality that emphasized family and community engagement; review of special education prereferral, referral, and placement policies and procedures; culturally responsive behavior management; and culturally responsive curricula and instruction. The February 2010 academy included a morning session devoted to small group discussions. Topics discussed included culturally responsive approaches to instructional services and assessment; curriculum content; positive behavior management and PBIS; and the use of tiered academic interventions and supports for students. The afternoon session focused on the importance of parent and

community engagement in supporting student learning and emphasized strategies for involving families from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds. All 26 districts required to attend the workshops sent teams to the trainings; 126 participants attended the September 2009 training, and 109 participants attended the February 2010 training.

Feedback on the two workshops was mixed. Some participants reported that the presenters were engaging and provided useful strategies and suggestions for increasing parent involvement and modifying PBIS to make it culturally responsive. Many participants, however, reported that the workshops were not relevant to the needs of their districts and did not provide concrete strategies for reducing disproportionality or implementing culturally responsive practices. Suggestions for improving the academies included providing more differentiated professional development for districts and linking the content of the workshops to district improvement plans.

Based on this feedback, the CREATE leadership team made the decision to provide districts with multiple professional development options in 2010–11. Districts could choose the options that were most relevant to their needs and that were best aligned with the priority areas they had identified in their district improvement plans. Because several districts were implementing RtI and PBIS and were interested in using these frameworks to address disproportionality, the CREATE leadership team decided to offer professional development academies on culturally responsive approaches to RtI and PBIS as training options for districts in 2010–11.

Goals and Activities, 2010–11

The 2010–11 CREATE professional development academies were designed to provide districts identified as having significant disproportionality with strategies for integrating culturally responsive practices into RtI and PBIS frameworks. Two full-day workshops were planned. Districts that chose to participate in one or both workshops were asked to send teams of 5–7 staff members to the trainings. District administrators as well as instructional and noninstructional staff were asked to participate.

The first workshop, “Addressing Disproportionality through PBIS,” was held on February 1, 2011. The workshop presenters were Rachel Saladis and Kent Smith, both trainers with the Wisconsin PBIS Network. The presenters provided an overview of PBIS, explained its approach to setting behavioral expectations and developing a positive school culture, and described the tiered system of interventions and supports that are used to address student behavioral problems. Factors that contribute to disproportionality in disciplinary referrals as well as special education referrals were discussed, and several suggestions were provided for embedding culturally responsive practices in PBIS structures. Suggestions included requiring PBIS team members and coaches to complete Beyond Diversity training and training in culturally responsive instruction; disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and disability status to identify trends across student subgroups; and using data to inform decisions about student interventions and supports. Participants also were provided with the following tools to guide implementation of culturally

responsive practices in schools: *Guiding Questions for Differentiating Disordered Behavior from Cultural Mismatch*, developed by Dr. Lisa Bardon, and the *Checklist for Culturally Responsive Practices in Schools*.

The second workshop, “Culturally Responsive Frameworks for RtI and PBIS” was held on April 8, 2011. The presenter was Karen Schaeffer, codirector of Empowering Education Consultation and Systems Support Services. Topics discussed included why culturally responsive frameworks are needed, critical aspects of culturally responsive systems, the need to examine district policies and practices for evidence of institutional bias, and strategies for achieving sustainable systems change. Participants also were given opportunities to explore frameworks and methods for incorporating culturally responsive supports for students into multitiered systems of support. The following tools for integrating culturally responsive practices into tiered intervention systems such as RtI and PBIS were shared with participants: the *Culturally Responsive System Process Review Protocol*, the *CRP Policy Screening Tool*, and the *Leadership and Teaming Systems Analysis Guide*.

Resource Development. In addition to planning and coordinating the workshops, the project coordinator developed a Moodle site that includes resources on culturally responsive practices. The intent is for districts and schools to use these resources to embed culturally responsive practices in all areas of curriculum and instruction. Topics include professional development opportunities, RtI information, PBIS information, updates, and resources. The site is ready to be launched and will be available to CREATE participants next year.

Coordination with Other Statewide Initiatives. CREATE Coordinator Ron Dunlap and the Professional Development Academies project coordinator are representing the CREATE initiative at meetings of the Wisconsin RtI Communication Council. Both attended the March and June 2011 meetings of the council and will participate in quarterly meetings in the future. The council includes representatives from key organizations offering RtI supports in Wisconsin, including the Wisconsin RtI Center, the DPI Internal RtI Workgroup, and professional organizations that provide technical assistance or professional development focusing on RtI. The purpose of the council is to coordinate RtI efforts in Wisconsin and to provide consistent information to school districts and other stakeholders on Wisconsin’s vision and mission for statewide implementation of RtI.

Related Activities. Related activities completed by the project coordinator include submission of an article about the 2010–11 professional development academies for the May 2011 CREATE e-newsletter; participation in the January 2011 Every Child a Graduate Conference; facilitation of a networking session for CREATE district equity leadership teams at the March 2011 Wisconsin RtI Summit; and participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators. See Table 10 for a summary of 2010–11 project activities.

Table 10. Professional Development Academies: 2010–11 Activities

| Activities | Scheduled Dates |
|--|------------------------|
| Professional Development Academies | |
| A full-day training on using PBIS to address disproportionality | February 1, 2011 |
| A full-day training on culturally responsive frameworks for RtI and PBIS | April 8, 2011 |
| Resource Development | |
| Development of a Moodle site that includes resources on culturally responsive practices and approaches for integrating these practices into RtI and PBIS | Spring 2011 |
| Coordination With Other Statewide Initiatives | |
| Participation in meetings of the Wisconsin RtI Communication Council | March and June 2011 |
| Conference Presentations and Participation | |
| Participation in the Every Child a Graduate Conference | January 13, 2011 |
| Facilitation of a networking session for CREATE district equity leadership teams at the Wisconsin RtI Summit | March 9–10, 2011 |
| Contributions to the CREATE e-Newsletter | |
| An article on the 2010–11 CREATE professional development academies in the May 2011 CREATE e-newsletter | May 13, 2011 |
| Coordination With Other CREATE Components | |
| Participation in conference calls and meetings with other CREATE project coordinators | Ongoing |

Participants

For the February 2011 academy, “Addressing Disproportionality through PBIS,” 16 individuals from five school districts registered for the event. Due to a snow storm, only five individuals were able to attend. One district sent a team of four staff members to the training; only one staff member represented the other district.

For the April 2011 academy, “Culturally Responsive Frameworks for RtI and PBIS,” 50 individuals from 9 school districts registered for the event; 47 staff members from these districts attended. Most districts sent teams of five or more members; two districts were each represented by only one individual.

Overall Coordination of the CREATE Initiative (CESA 6)

CREATE coordinator Ron Dunlap works closely with DPI on overall coordination of the CREATE initiative, including long-range strategic planning, monitoring regional and district action plans, and evaluation of the initiative's implementation and impact in collaboration with the initiative's external evaluator. Monthly conference calls or meetings also are held with CREATE project coordinators to review progress, identify and address challenges, and coordinate activities across components. The CREATE coordinator is also the project coordinator for the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, serves on the CREATE Conference planning committee, regularly participates in conferences or workshops offered through other CREATE components, and is a frequent contributor to the CREATE e-newsletter.

Major goals for the initiative this year have been to increase awareness of the initiative and its purpose and goals, assist districts in using the resources of the CREATE initiative to develop and implement district improvement plans, and coordinate CREATE efforts with other statewide initiatives and with institutions of higher education. Following is a summary of the activities related to each of these goals.

Increasing Awareness of the CREATE Initiative. CREATE leadership has engaged in several efforts this year to increase awareness of the initiative and support for its goals and activities. The CREATE coordinator has worked with Blue Door Consulting to develop strategies to increase the initiative's visibility. Efforts have included the use of CREATE branding on all materials used for CREATE-sponsored events (e.g., conference and meeting brochures and flyers); distribution of CREATE promotional materials at conferences and meetings, including an overview of the CREATE initiative and its components and copies of CREATE e-newsletters; and development of a video tour of the CREATE initiative that explains the purpose and goals of each CREATE component and the training and resources that are available through these components (the video tour is available on the CREATE website).

CREATE has both Twitter and Facebook accounts as well as a CREATE YouTube channel that includes testimonials from educators who are participating in CREATE about the initiatives' importance in advancing state and local efforts to implement culturally responsive educational systems. The addition of links to social media in the CREATE e-newsletter and distribution of promotional materials at CREATE conferences and meetings this year has helped to double CREATE e-newsletter subscriptions, further increasing awareness of the initiative and the resources and professional development opportunities that it makes available to educators.

Don Rosin, who was selected to serve as the CREATE tribal ambassador by the CREATE leadership team, has been actively engaged in building relationships with Wisconsin tribal communities and school districts and had been successful in generating support for the efforts of the American Indian Student Achievement Network and the Culturally Responsive Early

Childhood Project to improve services to young Native American children with disabilities and to reduce barriers to learning for Native American youth.

Helping Districts Access CREATE Training and Resources That Address Their Needs.

In 2010–11, the CREATE leadership team provided districts identified as having significant disproportionality with several professional development options to assist them with the development and implementation of district improvement plans. These options included participation in professional development activities offered by different CREATE components, including the American Indian Student Achievement Network, the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project, the CREATE Professional Development Academies, and the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component. A similar range of professional development options is being offered to districts in 2011–12. These options have increased districts’ familiarity with the CREATE components and the professional development activities offered by each of them. Because districts can now choose from among several different options, they can select activities that are most relevant to their needs and to the priority areas identified in their district improvement plans

Coordinating With Other Statewide Initiatives and Institutions of Higher Education.

In 2010–11 CREATE partnered with the Wisconsin RtI Center and PBIS Network to offer professional development academies focusing on culturally responsive approaches to RtI and PBIS. The RtI Center and PBIS Network provided and paid for the trainers for these events; CREATE handled workshop logistics and coordination. Similar workshops are planned for 2011–12. CREATE Coordinator Ron Dunlap and Melissa Moe, the coordinator for the professional development academies, also represent CREATE on the Wisconsin RtI Communication Council and are helping to coordinate efforts to implement culturally responsive RtI and PBIS systems in school districts throughout the state. Jayne Van de Hey, coordinator for the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project, is also working to develop a partnership with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association to offer a series of professional development workshops on culturally responsive early childhood education and care in 2011–12. CREATE has also begun to collaborate and create partnerships with future teachers and with institutions of higher education in Wisconsin.

Feedback on Implementation of CREATE Components

In April and May 2011, interviews were conducted with the coordinator of each CREATE component, with the exception of the coordinator for the CREATE e-newsletter.⁵ The interviews focused on successes and challenges in implementing planned activities in 2010–11 and plans for the following year. Coordinators of the components also provided the evaluation team with the results of evaluation surveys that had been completed by participants in CREATE workshops, seminars, and conferences; results of a survey completed by subscribers to the CREATE e-newsletter also were provided. These surveys were developed and administered by the CREATE coordinators or other CESA staff members. Following are a summary of interviews and survey findings for relevant CREATE components.

Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education in Wisconsin (CESA 6)

The coordinator for the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education reported that all consortium seminars and coaches’ trainings planned for 2010–11 were completed. He noted several consortium successes as well as several challenges faced by districts participating in the consortium and by other districts throughout the state.

Consortium Successes

The project coordinator reported that the six districts that have been participating in the consortium developed district action plans this year and are committed to moving forward with implementing their plans. He noted that “they realize that the work is going to take time and they’re really making an effort to move this forward as a district initiative.” This commitment has been a major change for some districts that had participated in the consortium and other CREATE components but had not adopted CREATE as a districtwide initiative until this year. All of the districts have strong equity leadership teams with participation from key district staff members, including in many cases the district superintendent. Another indication of the success of the consortium is that the districts want to continue to meet and work together next year.

Responses to participant surveys confirm that most district team members found the consortium’s equity leadership seminars useful. Local coaches also provided favorable feedback on the coaching sessions. A more detailed summary of feedback from these two participant groups follows.

District Equity Leadership Teams. The evaluation team received feedback surveys that were administered to participants in the October 2010 and March 2011 district equity leadership seminars. Of the 23 participants who provided feedback on the October 2010 seminar, 88 percent

⁵ The evaluation team received e-mail updates from the CREATE e-newsletter coordinator on project successes and challenges; a member of the evaluation team also participated in a CREATE project coordinators’ meeting in April 2011 where the coordinator for the CREATE e-newsletter provided an update on the newsletter and on progress in increasing newsletter subscriptions.

rated the quality of the seminar as *excellent*, 95 percent rated the usefulness of the material as *excellent*, and 91 percent rated the organization of the seminar as *excellent*. Between 96 percent and 100 percent of participants rated the seminar as either *good* or *excellent* on all three indicators. Ratings for the March 2011 seminar were equally positive. Of the 28 participants who provided feedback, 92 percent rated the quality of the workshop and the usefulness of the material as *excellent*, and 89 percent rated the organization of the workshop as *excellent*. For all three indicators, 100 percent of the ratings were either *good* or *excellent*.

Aspects of the seminars that participants liked most were the conversations within and across district teams, particular tools and protocols (e.g., the Tuning protocol), and the challenging nature of the activities.

Local Coaches' Training. Survey results from the two coaches' trainings in October 2010 and March 2011 were provided to the evaluation team. For both trainings, only two of the four coaches provided feedback. For the October 2010 training, both coaches indicated that the quality of the presentation, usefulness of what was learned, and organization of the presentation was *excellent*. Aspects of the training that the participants liked included the informal discussions and clarification regarding coaches' roles. Participants believed that they had a "better picture of [their] overall work" and that their "role [had] been defined." One participant suggested that more time be provided for responding to questions.

Feedback was also positive for the March 2011 training. Both respondents indicated that the quality of the presentation, usefulness of what was learned, and organization of the presentation was *excellent*. One coach indicated that the material on Bloom's Taxonomy was especially helpful, and another coach cited the flexible structure of the training as a positive factor.

Participant Suggestions

District team members and local coaches offered the following suggestions for improving the seminars:

- A social gathering in the evening to allow for deeper discussions
- Additional information on Critical Race Theory
- Extending the seminars to two days

Consortium Challenges

The project coordinator noted that, like districts throughout the state, districts participating in the consortium are facing budget cuts, and many staff members are retiring or leaving. Although there have been changes in leadership in some districts participating in the consortium, the new district superintendents appear to be supportive of the work of the district equity leadership teams. The project coordinator added, however, that "quite a few teachers [also] are retiring... We're losing a tremendous amount of experience and skill that cannot be replaced

when we bring on new hires.” Small rural districts are particularly hard hit by retirements because it is difficult for these districts to recruit new teachers. One of the consortium’s local equity coaches also is retiring and will be difficult to replace. The project coordinator also noted that the work being done on antiracism, race, and equity continues to be a challenge for district teams: “We don’t want people thinking ‘I attended one Beyond Diversity [training] now I know’...But [their] work is just beginning. [They] have no idea what this is all about.”

Next Steps

The consortium coordinator noted that because of interest from participating districts, there are ongoing discussions about continuing the consortium. Plans have been made to offer a one-day summit on Critical Race Theory for districts that have been participating in the consortium. This summit is one of the professional development opportunities being offered to districts for 2011–12 and was announced at the preconference needs assessment session in April 2011.

CREATE Conference (CESA 9)

The co-coordinators of the CREATE Conference were interviewed in April 2011 and provided feedback on successes and challenges in planning the conference. A summary of participant feedback on the 2011 conference was provided to the evaluation team by one of the coordinators. The evaluations are for only the CREATE Conference and not for the preconference sessions. Following is a summary of conference successes and challenges.

Conference Successes

The conference coordinators reported that a major success in planning the conference was the effective working relationships among members of the planning committee. Members of the planning committee included the conference coordinators, the CREATE coordinator, the coordinators of the CREATE Needs Assessment and monthly e-newsletter, the CREATE tribal ambassador, two consultants from DPI, a representative from the Wisconsin State Human Relations Association, and a faculty member from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. As one of the conference coordinators commented, “Everyone has been involved and everyone brings something to the table.”

The success of the planning committee is reflected in participant feedback. A total of 56 participants provided ratings of their overall impressions of the CREATE Conference, using a 5-point rating scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Of the 56 participants who responded, 86 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were very satisfied with the conference; 84 percent and 88 percent, respectively, *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the quality of the presentations was superior and that there was a reasonable variety of presentations. Most respondents (89 percent) also provided favorable feedback on the organization of the conference. Only 70 percent of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the online registration was easy to complete. However, 21 percent of respondents indicated that

they were uncertain if the online registration process was easy to complete; someone else may have completed the registration process for them, or they may have registered in person rather than online.

In addition to providing feedback on the overall conference, participants also were asked to rate particular sessions. Participants provided feedback on the value of the material that was covered and their likelihood of using what they learned. This information was gathered using a 4-point rating scale (1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Excellent). One of the more popular sessions was “Multicultural Storytelling.” Of the 13 participants who provided feedback, 92 percent reported that the information presented was *excellent* and that they were likely to use what they learned. As one of the respondents commented, “This was a great session! It was very interactive, fun, and informational.” Another popular session was “Connecting the Dots,” which provided a method for gathering information on students’ sense of connection to school staff. Of the 19 participants who provided feedback, 89 percent reported that the information presented was *excellent*, and 73 percent indicated that they were likely to use what they had learned. As one respondent commented, “It’s a great way to make teachers aware of the relationships they have with their students and where there is room for improving this.”

Participant Suggestions

Suggestions for improving future conferences included:

- Providing more sessions on cultures other than Native American
- Minimizing the amount of downtime between sessions
- Reducing the length of the sessions or making them more interactive
- Including more examples of successful schools
- Centralizing the online registration process with one person or agency

Topics that participants would like to see addressed in the future included:

- Fairness in the evaluation process when placement is not an option
- Multicultural storytellers
- How to support students who lack adequate family support
- White privilege and culturally responsive practices
- Ongoing district activities
- The relationship between a decreasing middle class and race

Conference Challenges

The project coordinators said that conference planning and implementation went relatively smoothly. However, one of the main challenges was the timing of this year’s conference. Because the conference was held in late April, it conflicted with some districts’ spring breaks.

The coordinators also thought that state budget challenges may have “distracted a lot of districts.” Although CREATE covers some of the costs of attending the conference, participants are still responsible for travel and hotel costs and some meals. There were no registration fees for the preconference events, but participants did have to pay a registration fee for the conference itself. Districts also had to cover the costs of substitutes for teachers who attended. Given these funding issues, the coordinators believed that some potential participants might have chosen not to attend. These factors may account for the decline in conference attendance this year compared to last year. Another challenge mentioned by the coordinators was the online registration process; some participants reported that they had problems registering online.

Next Steps

Given concerns about district budget cuts, the coordinators said that they were still waiting to hear whether the CREATE Conference would be held in 2012. They had begun think about possible conference topics for next year if the conference is held. One of the coordinators said that she would like to see district and school improvement efforts highlighted more than they have been in the past: “I think a lot of districts are ready to be doing things or to really see best practices in action. So I think the more [districts] that could present and say ‘this is what we’re doing, this is how we got here, this is what it looks like’ [would be a good way to share practices and successes with other districts].”

American Indian Student Achievement Network (CESA 12)

The AISAN project coordinator was interviewed to obtain feedback on the successes and challenges of AISAN in the past year. The project coordinator also provided the evaluation team with the results of feedback surveys that were completed by participants in the December 2010 Wisconsin Tribal Language Consortium meeting and the April 2011 Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA) conference. Following are summaries of AISAN successes and challenges.

AISAN Successes

The project coordinator has been primarily involved in working with tribal language and culture teachers, one of the two working groups within AISAN. Don Rosin, the CREATE tribal ambassador, has worked with home–school coordinators, the other AISAN working group. Members of the tribal language group have formed the Wisconsin Tribal Language Consortium (WTLC). The consortium is still an informal association of tribal language teachers and tribal language personnel but has begun to attract members. The project coordinator reported that the group has been a success: “The tribal language group are there. I think they’re starting to understand. At first, they were like ‘What’s this CREATE, what does it have to do with us?’ I said, ‘It’s an opportunity to collaborate, develop strategies, identify needs.’ They’re starting to buy in.”

The group met in December 2010 and again in April 2011 at the WEIA conference. There were 24 participants at the December meeting and 45 participants at the conferences sessions held specifically for members of the WTLC. The coordinator said that one of the primary advantages of the group is that participants can determine their own direction. One of the things that members want to do is engage in strategic planning. To assist with this effort, they are working with a consulting group to conduct a formal needs assessment to identify the specific training needs and priorities of tribal language teachers and programs. Initial results of the needs assessment were shared at the April meeting of the group held at the WIEA conference.

The project coordinator also said that the networking opportunities provided by the working group for home–school coordinators are both needed and valued by participants: “I think there’s a perceived lack of support from the districts in terms of the work they do. So they see the network as an opportunity to, if nothing else, vent to each other, try to strategize for solutions on how to make more impact back in the district. ‘I’m going through this, what did you do?’ So providing that sort of mutual support and collaboration. Truly a network.” Don Rosin established an online chat room for the group in December 2010. The first face-to-face meeting of the group this year was held at the WIEA conference in April 2011. Approximately 27 individuals attended. As CREATE tribal ambassador, Don Rosin has been successful in building relationships with both tribal communities and school districts and generating interest in participating in AISAN.

The WIEA conference has also been a project success. AISAN cosponsored the conference, and the project coordinator helped to select the speakers and arranged for meetings of the WTLC and AISAN home–school coordinators at the conference.

Feedback on the meetings of WTLC and AISAN home–school coordinators has been positive, as indicated by the results of participant evaluation surveys.

December 2010 WTLC Feedback. Feedback provided by 17 participants in WTLC meeting on December, 2010 was favorable. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with particular statements using a 5-point rating scale (1 = Do not Agree to 5 = Highly Agree). The summary of results that was provided to the evaluation team averaged ratings across participants. Overall, participants believed that the meeting was adequately planned and organized. The average rating for meeting planning was 4.2; meeting organization received an average rating was 4.5. Participants also indicated that the facilitators understood and accepted the group’s opinions and feelings (average rating: 4.8) and agreed that their time will be well spent by being active participants of the consortium (average rating: 4.6). Several participants also provided positive comments on the meeting. For example, one participant wrote “Excellent work,” and another described the meeting as “an outstanding working session.”

April 2011 Feedback on AISAN Sessions at the WIEA Conference. Summaries of 19 participant feedback surveys were provided to by evaluation team from the WEIA Conference;

however, the number of participants who provided ratings of particular sessions was not specified. Feedback was provided for each session using a 5-point rating scale (1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent). There were two back-to-back meetings of the WTLC; the first was an organizational meeting of the group, and the second was a presentation of WTLC needs assessment results. The organizational meeting received an average rating of 4.3, and the needs analysis received an average rating of 4.5. There was also a presentation by Anton Treuer on new strategies for indigenous language revitalization specifically for tribal language teachers and WTLC members; the average rating for this session was 4.8. The session for AISAN home-school coordinators received an average rating of 4.5.

AISAN Challenges

Two specific challenges were mentioned by the AISAN coordinator. These challenges are summarized by topic.

Underutilization of the Online Chat Room. The project coordinator indicated that the online chat room for home-school coordinators that was established by Don Rosin was probably underutilized. He noted that this method of communication is relatively new to network members: “It’s something that we don’t have a history of doing.” The coordinator noted that the Moodle site that was used last year was also underutilized. He believed that part of problem was that the site was not established by home-school coordinators themselves, and there were no established guidelines for using the site. According to Don Rosin, in an update provided to CREATE project coordinators, most posts to the site were requests for help in locating resources.

Lack of District Support. Another challenge has been lack of support from school districts in sending staff members to AISAN meetings and events. The project coordinator said some districts claimed that they lacked the funding to send staff to events. However, the AISAN coordinator noted that “CREATE takes care of travel, lodging, even if they have to get a sub.” Despite these financial supports, the project coordinator encountered resistance from some districts in allowing staff to travel to meetings.

Next Steps

The AISAN coordinator indicated that the WTLC plans to move ahead with its needs assessment. The needs assessment results will be used to identify future directions for the organization. At the time of the interview, he noted that AISAN funding for next year was not yet certain, making it difficult to establish specific goals for next year. However, the needs assessment was funded through a grant to the WTLC, and he thought he would be able to secure additional funds through the grant to support strategic planning efforts by members of the group. He noted that Don Rosin would be working with members of the home-school coordinators working group to help define future direction of the group.

CREATE Monthly e-Newsletter (CESA 6)

The coordinator for the CREATE e-newsletter provided e-mail updates to the evaluation team on progress in developing and disseminating the newsletter and efforts to increase subscriptions. The coordinator also provided feedback on newsletter successes and challenges at an April 2011 meeting of CREATE project coordinators that was attended by a member of the evaluation team. An article by the newsletter coordinator in the June 2011 CREATE e-newsletter provided additional information on CREATE social media and progress in increasing newsletter subscriptions. The coordinator also provided the evaluation team with the results of a survey completed by CREATE e-newsletter subscribers in spring 2011.

Overall, the coordinator said that the development of the newsletter has gone well and that all newsletters that were planned for 2010–11 were produced and disseminated on schedule. A major success this year has been an increase in the number of newsletter subscribers. Subscriptions have almost doubled since last spring. As of May 2011 there were 615 newsletter subscribers, compared with 332 in April 2010. Beginning with the January 2011 issue of the newsletter, links to the CREATE Twitter account and Facebook page were added to the newsletter; a link to the CREATE YouTube channel also was added starting with the April 2011 issue. The number of CREATE Twitter followers has grown by approximately 108 people during the course of the year.

The coordinator said that there have been few challenges in producing the newsletter during the past year. She indicated that next year the newsletter will incorporate some of the suggestions provided by subscribers who completed the recent newsletter survey.

Of the 17 subscribers who completed the survey, feedback on the newsletter was quite positive. All respondents indicated that the CREATE e-newsletter is informative. For example, when asked to comment on the content of the newsletter, one person wrote that the newsletter is a “great resource for educators, parents, and all community members who care about [or] work with children.” The nine subscribers who responded to a question asking if they would recommend the newsletter to others said that they would or already had. Many respondents indicated that they liked the content and accessible format of the newsletter.

Suggestions for improving the newsletter included:

- Additional information on family engagement
- More information on how to make classrooms culturally responsive
- Occasional spotlights on community members or educators who are having an impact on racially and culturally diverse students
- Highlighting a district that is involved in the CREATE initiative in every issue
- Adding information on funding sources

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices and Leadership for Educational Equity (CESA 1)

An interview was conducted with the coordinator of the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices and Leadership for Educational Equity component in April 2011. The coordinator also provided the evaluation team with a summary of responses to feedback surveys completed by participants in the 2010–11 classroom practices workshops and the equity leadership trainings. The coordinator reported that the workshops had gone well and that feedback from participants has been very positive. There have been some challenges, however. Following are summaries of project successes and challenges.

Workshop Successes

The project coordinator said that a major success this year was quadrupling the number of participants in the classroom practices workshops. The first year the workshops were offered, only seven staff members from two school districts participated. Last year, there were 27 participants from three school districts. In 2010–11, 130 participants from 10 school districts attended the workshops. Offering the workshops regionally also proved to be a success because participating districts could connect with other districts in their region and work together on common issues. The change in the workshop schedule was also advantageous. Rather than attending four two-day workshops every two months, participants attended a one-day workshop each month for eight months. Teachers were out of their classrooms for shorter periods of time and were more likely to complete assignments between workshops and to come prepared to the next workshop.

The project coordinator reported that there was also greater participation by building administrators, and even key district staff, in the teams that attended the trainings. The coordinator observed that, “I think that’s the type of support that is needed to bring about change.” In the past, building administrators had been asked to participate with teachers from their schools, but they often failed to show up for the workshops. The goal of the workshops is for all participants from a school to work together as a team to begin to implement culturally responsive practices within the school as a whole. Without support from school and district leaders, that result is unlikely to occur.

Overall, the feedback provided by participants in the classroom practices workshops was positive. Participants reported an increased awareness of white privilege, biases, and cultural norms. They also indicated that they learned to distinguish between equality and equity and were able to identify formative assessment strategies. In addition, participants reported that they had increased empathy for students from cultural backgrounds that differed from their own. Many participants indicated that they would continue their development by reading additional sources, learning more from their students, or sharing what they had learned with their colleagues.

The Leadership for Educational Equity trainings also were successful. The project coordinator reported that the two district teams that completed the training “walked out of there with excellent next steps [to move forward with district improvement efforts]. They were headed in the right direction.” Requiring districts teams to have school-based teams participate in the classroom practices trainings also was effective in coordinating the work of the two teams and making the connections between work at the district level and work at the classroom level.

The feedback on the Leadership for Educational Equity trainings was equally positive. Many participants indicated that they would recommend the workshops to others. One participant reported that “the theoretical content was high-quality, thoughtfully chosen, and accessible. The facilitators were knowledgeable and flexible to the needs of the districts.” Participants also reported learning how to use tools to collect and analyze survey data and how to develop connections between families and communities. Many participants indicated that they would share what they learned with their colleagues and bring back tools for them to use.

Participant Suggestions

Participant suggestions for improving the classroom practices workshops included using trainers from diverse backgrounds, reducing the amount of downtime during workshops, and allowing more time for group discussion. Suggestions for improving the equity leadership workshops included providing more structure and more assigned readings. One participant recommended spreading the sessions over a longer period of time to allow districts to incorporate what they learned into district activities. Additional suggestions included providing more information on community mapping and more time for group discussions.

Workshop Challenges

Despite the overall success of the workshops, there were some challenges. The project coordinator noted that many participants in the classroom practices workshops expressed frustration with the pace of the sessions. The coordinator noted that much of the work focuses on “getting to know yourself as a person, and recognizing biases and how those biases may impact your interactions and practices.” Some participants were frustrated that solutions were not provided in one or two sessions.

Trainers found it difficult to facilitate workshops with large groups. The project coordinator noted that if the size of the group exceeded 25–30 people, it became difficult to get to know individual participants and to address their needs.

Another challenge identified by the project coordinator is the lack of qualified trainers within the state who can lead the workshops. She has relied on an external trainer for most of the workshops that have been offered. To build state capacity will take time, however, and there is an immediate need for trainers. The coordinator also expressed concern about the ability of districts to send teachers and staff to eight days of training, given district budget cuts.

Next Steps

The project coordinator said that she is exploring other methods for delivering the workshops. She questioned the feasibility of eight face-to-face sessions, given district budget cuts and the time required of participants to be out of the classroom. One solution that is being considered is offering more intensive trainings earlier in the year and holding more streamlined activities throughout the year.

Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project (CESA 8)

The coordinator of the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project was interviewed in April 2011. She discussed project successes as well as challenges in trying to improve the coordination and delivery of services to young Native American children with disabilities. The coordinator also provided the evaluation team with a summary of responses to feedback surveys that were completed by participants in the Fourth Tribal Gathering, which project staff helped to plan and coordinate.

Project Successes

The project coordinator indicated that one of the major successes of the project this year was the formation of the Early Childhood Tribal Resource Team. The resource team provides information and training to individuals and organizations serving young Native American children and their families. Members of the team are professionals from various service organizations who have been able to incorporate this work into their existing jobs. For example, team members include an early childhood special education program staff member, a regional resource coordinator, and a Birth-to-3 program director.

Another project success was the development of vision and mission statements for an early childhood tribal coalition that, if formed, would serve as a vehicle for tribal representation in policy and decision making at the state and local levels on issues affecting young Native American children and their families. Members of the resource team drafted the vision and mission statements.

Project staff were successful in helping plan and cohost the Fourth Tribal Gathering. The gathering brought together representatives from tribal communities, school districts, and state and county agencies to engage in collaborative work on the development of culturally responsive Child Find procedures within Native American communities. A primary goal of the gathering was to provide participants with an understanding of Child Find procedures and informed referral networks used in identifying infants and young children who are eligible or potentially eligible for enrollment in early intervention programs or for special education services; another goal was to begin to identify Child Find practices that work well in Native communities. For the first time since the tribal gatherings have been held, representative from all 11 Wisconsin tribal communities participated. The project coordinator credited this achievement to the efforts of

CREATE Tribal Ambassador Don Rosin who has worked to establish relationships with leaders in each of these communities.

Participant feedback on the Fourth Tribal Gathering confirmed that the goals of the event were achieved. Of the 90 individuals who attended the gathering, 48 completed surveys, although some respondents did not answer all questions. Among the 48 who responded, 94 percent indicated that the purpose of the gathering was clear to them; all who responded ($n=46$) indicated that they had a better understanding of informed referral networks, and 91 percent of those who responded ($n=47$) indicated that they had a better understanding of Child Find. In addition, 95 percent of respondents ($n=43$) believed that the appropriate people were involved in the gathering; and all respondents ($n=46$) reported that the meeting had benefitted their agency or organization.

Participant Suggestions

Participants who completed surveys had few suggestions for the improving the event. Two respondents indicated that it would have been helpful to have more time for group discussion and planning. One respondent requested information on how to make parents feel more comfortable with the Birth-to-3 program. Another respondent requested additional information on how people have implemented Child Find procedures and what has or has not worked well for them.

Project Challenges

The project coordinator said that there is still a great deal of work to be done in developing relationships with tribal communities and obtaining their support for project efforts. She noted that the barriers to developing relationships with tribal communities were not as great as they have been in the past due the efforts of CREATE Tribal Ambassador Don Rosin, but there were still barriers to be overcome.

Another challenge for project staff is finding ways to help young Native American children make the transition into school. The project coordinator explained that “many early childhood programs are already sensitive to the fact that the child comes from the context of their families, and good programs are already bridging the home with the child care center, Head Start, [or other early childhood programs]. But when you go into the public school system...that’s where the disconnect happens.” She said that tribal child care providers and early childhood teachers have told project staff that Native American children often have difficulty making the transition into public schools. School districts typically do not have programs to help Native American children with this transition.

Next Steps

The project coordinator said that project staff were not planning to hold a tribal gathering next year: “We’ve found that just having one event was good PR to understand what the project is

about, but gaining members is coming through individual contacts.” Instead, project staff and members of the Early Childhood Tribal Resource Team will visit each tribal community next year to obtain input from tribal representatives on the vision and mission statements for the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition and to request commitments from each community to join the coalition. She indicated that project staff also will continue to develop directories for each tribal community and will make these available online. She noted, “We’re hoping that [the directories]...will be a vehicle for communicating about the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition.”

Visits to the tribal communities also will include follow-up by team members on efforts to develop informed referral networks. The project coordinator said that these efforts are “coming from within the tribal community. Who is their informed referral network within the tribe and then expanding it to who are their partners [e.g., school districts].”

A related effort by project staff will be to request continuing commitments from current members of the Early Childhood Tribal Resource Team and to recruit new members. Members of the team will continue to work on developing collaborative strategies and an action plan to strengthen the delivery of services to Native American children with disabilities throughout the state.

The project director also plans to continue to work on developing a partnership with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association to offer professional development workshops on culturally responsive practices to early childhood teachers and child care providers. She said that the association already has “vehicles to get information to child care workers and teachers, so instead of inventing something new [we will be] looking within their structure” to find ways to disseminate information and provide training on culturally responsive practices to a broader audience.

Other project efforts next year will include conducting research to identify ways to help young Native American children make the transition into school. The project director did not expect to be able to begin implementing activities designed to assist with these transitions next year, but she said that she had begun to look at the results of the CREATE Needs Assessment to see whether school districts are focusing on transitions into schooling in their district improvement plans. She noted that more effort needs to be put into educating school districts about the importance of successful transitions into school for student engagement and learning.

CREATE Needs Assessment and Development of a Strategic Plan (CESA 11)

The coordinator of the CREATE Needs Assessment was interviewed in April 2011 and provided feedback on successes and challenges in helping districts complete an annual needs assessment process. A summary of participant feedback on the 2011 preconference needs assessment session was provided to the evaluation team by the CREATE conference coordinator. Following are summaries of needs assessment successes and challenges.

Needs Assessment Successes

One success reported by the project coordinator was that the facilitators of the preconference needs assessment session spent much less time this year helping districts access the needs assessment website. The project coordinator had provided each district with a username and password in advance of the session, together with instructions on how to log into system. As a result, districts already knew how to access the system when they arrived at the session.

The project coordinator also noted that “100 percent of the districts we talked to [this year] wanted to attend [the needs assessment session]. There were some who were on spring break or were participating in Beyond Diversity and who couldn’t come, but apologized for not being able to come.” She said that this was a major change from two years ago when many districts were resistant to attending.

In addition, the coordinator reported that district teams seemed very engaged in the process this year. Some districts brought large teams to work on their district improvement plans, and several teams continued to work on their plans the following day. Teams appeared to appreciate having time set aside for them to work together on their district improvement plans. A request from participants last year was that district teams be given more time to work together. This year the project coordinator reduced the number of presenters during the morning session to provide more time for working sessions later in the day.

Giving district teams the option of meeting with Lucille Eber, Director of the Illinois PBIS Network, or Lisa Bardon, a University of Wisconsin professor with expertise in emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD), was also a success:

If...[districts] had worked on PBIS all year, then they could just get Dr. Eber in a room and have a one-to-one conversation and really work with her and ask questions. I heard from the person who was in the room [observing] that that was exactly what happened. They had really rich dialogue, then they used that information in the afternoon in their planning. And the same with Dr. Bardon; the districts that had worked with her on cultural mismatch and EBD [during the year] had a chance to work with her for a couple of hours.

District teams that were not working on either of these areas could meet on their own to work on their district improvement plans.

Participant feedback on the needs assessment session was quite positive. Of the 56 CREATE Conference participants who completed evaluation surveys, 38 indicated that they had attended the preconference needs assessment session; most (35 to 37) provided feedback on specific aspects of the session. Overall, 86 percent of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they had adequate time to work with their district teams; however, 50 percent indicated that they would still like more district teamwork time in the future. The majority of respondents (75 percent)

agreed or *strongly agreed* that the day was useful in reviewing the work of the current year, and 69 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the day was useful for planning their district's work for 2011–12. In addition, 78 percent of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they had a better knowledge of CREATE Wisconsin and its components; 70 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the structure of the day was a good use of district time and resources. A majority of respondents (61 percent) also *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the new CREATE assessment website is easy to use.

Participant Suggestions

Participant suggestions for improving the preconference session included:

- Providing more specific examples of what has worked with other districts
- Increasing the length of the conference to two days and providing more time for district teams to work together
- Scheduling the needs assessment session and the Beyond Diversity training on different days to allow participants to attend both sessions
- Identifying other district staff (e.g., superintendents) as key personnel to attend
- Simplifying the online assessment tool
- Providing more material in an online format to minimize travel costs
- Providing a more refined scale for evaluating progress in specific focus areas (e.g., a 10-point rather than a 3-point scale)

Needs Assessment Challenges

The project coordinator said although the CREATE needs assessment website was redesigned last year, the system is still too cumbersome. She noted that for each priority area selected by a district for its annual improvement plan, there are several tabs that must be completed for that focus area. She observed that “there are so many tabs that it seems complicated.”

The coordinator also said that she was unsure whether the questions included in the needs assessment rubric were the right questions to ask. For example, under the evaluation tab, districts are asked to respond to six questions regarding each activity the district had planned to implement the previous year (e.g., what were the positive outcomes of the activity; what resources were provided by the district that led to success or what resources were lacking that led to continued challenges). She said that it took a lot of work for districts to answer these questions and she would like be sure that the right questions were being asked.

Next Steps

The project coordinator plans to address each of these challenges next year. She said she would be working on improving the efficiency of the needs assessment website and would also work

with a consultant to determine whether the questions being asked of districts could be improved or streamlined.

The coordinator also said she planned to have project staff follow up with districts at predetermined points throughout the year to check on districts' use of the needs assessment system to monitor progress in implementing their district improvement plans. For next year's preconference needs assessment session, the coordinator said that she would like to develop a rubric that asks district teams to reflect on the impact of district improvement efforts on students.

Professional Development Academies (CESA 11)

The coordinator of the CREATE Professional Development Academies was interviewed in April 2011 and provided feedback on successes and challenges in planning and coordinating two workshops that focused on RtI and PBIS—one held in February 2011 and the other in April 2011. The coordinator also provided the evaluation team with summaries of feedback surveys completed by participants in the February and April workshops.

Project Successes

The project coordinator said that a major success this year was building relationships and recognition with districts. The coordinator was new to the role this year, and districts had not had any previous contact with her. Once dates were established for the RtI and PBIS workshops, she began contacting all 27 districts that had been identified as having significant disproportionality to invite them to participate in the workshops: "I didn't know what kind of communication to start with or what they already had received. That initial communication —here's who I am, look for my e-mails, here's my support staff person, she may be e-mailing you too—I would say that that was a success for us, and then having the event, because now they're used to hearing from us." She also said the February 2011 workshop on addressing disproportionality through PBIS was a success despite low participation: "The information was worthwhile....It was exactly what had been asked for and the presenters did an amazing job even with only five people in the room."

The April 2011 workshop on culturally responsive frameworks for RtI and PBIS was much better attended; 47 individuals from nine districts participated in the workshop. The project coordinator reported that the workshop was generally successful but noted that there were a few missteps with the presentation. The workshop presenter provided an overview of RtI and PBIS in the morning, which was already familiar to most participants. The afternoon session was somewhat rushed because of the amount of material that the presenter wanted to cover. Although some time was provided for district teams to work together at the end of the day, she said that participants told her that it would have been nice to have at least another half hour to meet.

The project coordinator noted that CREATE collaborated with the Wisconsin RtI Center and PBIS Network in presenting the February and April 2011 workshops. She said this collaboration

had been successful and will continue next year. She also noted that both she and CREATE coordinator Ron Dunlap are representing CREATE at meetings of the Wisconsin RtI Communication Council. The council brings together key RtI stakeholders to work on providing consistent information about Wisconsin's vision and framework for RtI. The representation of CREATE on the council helps to strengthen the connections between the RtI and CREATE initiatives.

Participant feedback on the RtI and PBIS workshops was generally positive. For the February workshop, only one of the five participants completed an evaluation survey. The survey asked respondents to use a five-point scale (1 = Poor, 2 = Below Average, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent) to rate the overall training, the usefulness of the information presented, whether the material covered met expectations, the relevance of the topics to respondents' teaching, and the organization and delivery of the presentation. The one participant who responded rated all aspects of the workshop as *good*.

Of the 47 individuals who attended the April workshop, 35 to 38 provided feedback on specific aspects of the workshop. Among those who responded, 69 percent rated the overall training as *good or excellent*, and 76 percent rated the usefulness of the material as *good or excellent*. In addition, 82 percent of respondents rated the relevance of the topics to their teaching as *good or excellent*, and 86 percent rated the delivery and organization of the presentation as *good or excellent*. The only aspect of the workshop that received relatively low ratings was the extent to which the material met expectations; only 53 percent of respondents rated this aspect of the workshop as *good or excellent*.

Participant Suggestions

Several respondents indicated that they would have liked more information and examples on how to implement culturally responsive RtI. Some indicated that the time spent discussing the importance of culturally responsive practices could have been better used to explore how culturally responsive frameworks can be implemented. Several respondents also said that more time was needed for team work. One respondent noted that it might have been helpful to organize workgroups by educational level—elementary, middle, and high school—since RtI is implemented differently across these levels.

Project Challenges

The project coordinator mentioned several challenges in planning and coordinating the workshops. She had originally planned to offer the workshop on culturally responsive frameworks for RtI and PBIS in November 2010. Because no one registered for the workshop, it had to be canceled. The November workshop was rescheduled for February 2, 2011, immediately following the workshop on addressing disproportionality through PBIS, which was scheduled for February 1, 2011. Unfortunately, there was a severe snowstorm on the first day of February that prevented most individuals who had registered for the PBIS workshop from attending; the

workshop had only five participants. In addition, the workshop on culturally responsive frameworks for RtI and PBIS, scheduled for February 2, 2011, had to be canceled because the presenter's flight was grounded due to the snowstorm. The workshop was rescheduled for a second time and was finally held in April.

The project coordinator had also planned to hold a networking event for districts at the Every Child a Graduate Conference in January 2011, but she had several miscommunications with the conference organizer in trying to arrange a session at the conference. By the time the misunderstanding was resolved, there was no longer space on the agenda for the networking event. The project coordinator did send out an e-mail to districts saying that she would be at the conference and would be available and have a space to meet with district teams, but none of the districts were planning to send staff members to the conference.

Next Steps

At the time of the interview, the project coordinator said that the CREATE leadership team was planning to offer two workshops next year focusing on RtI and PBIS. However, no planning had yet been done for the workshops. The coordinator said that she did plan to review the results of the 2011 district needs assessments to identify district needs with respect to RtI and PBIS so that these needs could be better addressed in future workshops.

She also noted that a Moodle site, which has already been developed, will be available for use by districts next year. The site includes resources on culturally responsive approaches to RtI and PBIS. The coordinator said that she is also exploring options for offering workshops through video streaming. The advantage of this mode of delivery is that it would help districts save on travel costs and potentially allow more district staff members to participate. The disadvantage is that participants tend to be less involved in workshops that are presented remotely.

District Case Studies

As part of its evaluation of the CREATE initiative, Learning Point Associates conducted interviews in April and May 2011 with school and district staff members from nine districts that participated in the CREATE initiative during the 2010–11 school year. Districts were asked to provide a list of staff members who had participated in specific CREATE components (the CREATE Needs Assessment, the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, the American Indian Student Achievement Network, the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops, and other professional development opportunities offered through the CREATE initiative). For each district, three to six staff members were selected based on their CREATE participation and the availability for an interview. Interview responses were used to develop case studies for each district.

Sample Selection

Based on the recommendation of the CREATE leadership team, nine districts were asked to participate in interviews. One district was participating in the CREATE initiative voluntarily. The remaining districts were identified as having disproportionate representation of racial or ethnic groups in special education and were required to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment (or an alternative needs assessment approved by DPI) and at least one professional development activity. The districts varied with respect to their geographical distribution within the state as well as the extent of their involvement in the CREATE initiative. Most districts participated in two or three CREATE components. Three districts participated in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PreK–12 Education, four in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops, and two in the American Indian Student Achievement Network. Districts also participated in a variety of professional development or technical assistance opportunities offered through the CREATE initiative (e.g., Beyond Diversity trainings, Leadership of Educational Equity trainings, CREATE professional development academies, regional and statewide meetings hosted by the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project, technical assistance on differentiating between cultural mismatch and disordered behavior, and local equity coaching).

Case Study Organization

The case studies provide a snapshot of each district's participation in the CREATE initiative and the districts' current efforts to address disproportionality and implement culturally responsive practices. To preserve confidentiality, district names are not used; districts are instead identified as Districts 1 through 9 for reporting purposes. The case studies are based on interviews with district and school staff who participated in specific CREATE components or professional development activities. Each case study provides descriptions of the following:

- District goals and activities related to the CREATE initiative
- The CREATE components in which districts staff members have participated and participant feedback on professional development workshops and technical assistance provided through the CREATE initiative
- The perceived impact of the CREATE initiative
- Plans for next year related to work on educational equity
- Facilitators of district improvement efforts
- Barriers to district improvement efforts
- Perceptions of the sustainability of district improvement efforts

Overview of Case Study Findings

This section summarizes information from the case studies on the following topics:

- What districts have gained through participation
- District feedback on CREATE activities
- Common facilitators of district improvement efforts
- Common barriers to district improvement efforts
- Characteristics of successful districts

In general, respondents offered favorable feedback on the CREATE initiative and on district improvement efforts related to educational equity and culturally responsive practices. Each district is at a different point of development—some districts have integrated professional development on culturally responsive practices at many levels, some have aligned other initiatives with culturally responsive practices, and others have only attended a few CREATE activities. This section highlights some of the similarities and differences across the nine case studies.

What Districts Have Gained Through Participation

All districts gained access to resources and professional development through participation in the CREATE initiative. These resources and professional development activities helped districts to increase their awareness of culturally responsive practices. The number of participants who attend the CREATE activities varied by district. Some districts sent select district leaders, although others sent a variety of district, school, and support staff to trainings. Some districts also sent school board members and individuals from community-based organizations to CREATE trainings or other activities.

Districts varied in the extent to which they were integrating culturally responsive practices at the district and school levels. The districts fell along a continuum from full integration of CREATE activities with policies and practices, such as hiring, professional development, and review of student data, to minimal integration in most of these areas. For example, at one end of the continuum is a district that implemented culturally responsive practices on a districtwide basis. The district has a strong leadership team that engages in strategic planning and coordinates all activities within the district that focus on educational equity; the district expects all staff members to attend Beyond Diversity trainings and strongly recommends that they attend trainings on culturally responsive instruction; culturally responsive practices have been integrated into all district initiatives, including RtI and PBIS; and the district has reached out to parents and the community. At the other end are districts that are participating in a few CREATE professional development activities, have made limited attempts to increase cultural awareness and implement culturally responsive practices, have little coordination across activities, and have limited district involvement and leadership.

Most commonly, districts reported that they have embedded or begun to embed culturally responsive practices into their RtI and PBIS frameworks. Another common practice reported by four districts was reviewing disaggregated student data on achievement, behavior, and participation to identify disparities across different racial and ethnic groups. Several districts also revised their special education identification and referral procedures and now require staff to consider cultural influences on behavior in making decisions about special education referrals.

Most districts reported that their involvement in CREATE has had a positive impact at both the district and school levels. Most commonly, districts said that participation in CREATE has helped raise staff awareness of educational inequities and cultural biases. This response was true for both administrators and teachers. This awareness has led to changes in hiring policies and practices, disciplinary policies and practices, and the use of data to inform decision making. At the classroom level, teachers have begun to differentiate instruction and use culturally responsive classroom practices.

As an example of changes in district hiring practices, one district now includes a demographically representative group of parents in the hiring process, together with teachers and administrators; another district added questions that ask about the candidate's use of culturally responsive teaching methods to the interview protocols for prospective teachers; and a third district includes professional development on culturally responsive classroom practices in their trainings for new teachers.

Several districts reported positive change in student behavior, although they noted that these changes are most likely due to ongoing initiatives such as PBIS. A few districts reported decreases in disciplinary referrals and special education referrals, both overall and among students from specific racial and ethnic groups. Some districts indicated that these changes were supported by data, although others did not indicate this underlying support. A few districts

mentioned that the results of the Youth Risk Behavior survey that was administered to students in the district showed that students were feeling more appreciated by school staff.

Despite the positive effects at all levels reported by districts, most respondents said that staff awareness of the CREATE initiative is limited, particularly at the building level. Respondents did note that many staff members are aware of district and building efforts to implement culturally responsive practices and address educational inequities.

District Feedback on CREATE Activities

This section summarizes the respondents' feedback on the benefits of participating in CREATE activities as well as concerns or criticisms offered by some respondents.

Needs Assessment (Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8). Seven districts in the case study sample participated in the needs assessment this year. One district worked on a more extensive needs assessment with the Equity Alliance. Another district that did not participate in the CREATE Preconference Needs Assessment noted a time conflict with the Beyond Diversity training and made arrangements to complete the needs assessment at a later date. In general, respondents reported that this year's needs assessment was good, and that the process has improved over the past two years. The districts liked that they had time to work on district improvement plans and were able to work with staff from DPI.

Consortium on Racial Equity in PreK-12 Education (Districts 2, 5, and 8). Three of the case study districts participated in the consortium. In general, the participants were very pleased with the seminars and reported that they were of high quality. A number of respondents who participated last year reported that the quality of the seminars was better this year. Respondents mentioned two improvements they would like to see in the future. One respondent said he would have liked more specific next steps, and one suggested offering consortium seminars in targeted, local areas to facilitate networking and collaboration with neighboring districts.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices (Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7). Four case study districts participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices trainings in 2010–11. Most respondents from these districts said that the trainings were helpful in increasing staff awareness of cultural differences. Although most teachers and building administrators found the trainings useful, some district administrators were concerned that the workshops were slow paced, lacked concrete next steps, and were not always applicable to their student populations.

American Indian Student Achievement Network (District 6 and 9). Two districts in the case study sample participated in the American Indian Student Achievement Network. Feedback on this component was limited. One respondent said that few meetings were held this year.

Beyond Diversity Training (Districts 5, 9). Two case study districts participated in the Beyond Diversity trainings offered through the CREATE initiative. Two districts also arranged for

Beyond Diversity trainings to be held within the district (Districts 2 and 8). The reported relevance of the CREATE-sponsored trainings varied, with one district reporting that the trainings were of high quality and targeted some immediate needs, and one district providing mixed feedback (one respondent did not believe that the training was relevant to the district's student population, although others found it stimulating and useful).

Other CREATE Activities. Districts also participated in the following professional development opportunities or technical assistance activities provided by CREATE or CREATE consultants:

- Technical Assistance from the Equity Alliance (District 1)
- District Equity Leadership Coaching (Districts 2 and 8)
- Leadership for Educational Equity training (District 3)
- Culturally Responsive Frameworks for RtI and PBIS workshop (Districts 4 and 6)
- Distinguishing Between Cultural Mismatch and EBD training and technical assistance (District 6)
- Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project Tribal Gathering (District 9)

Common Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Most commonly, districts credited district and school leadership and commitment as facilitators of district efforts to implement culturally responsive practices. The superintendent was a key individual in spearheading district efforts and, as one respondent noted, distributing the “energy” for commitment. Other leaders who were mentioned as facilitators of district efforts included members of district equity leadership teams, specific administrators coordinating the work, and teachers who were implementing culturally responsive classroom practices

Some districts noted that CREATE and DPI have facilitated district efforts. These respondents appreciated the funding for professional development opportunities that were provided by the CREATE initiative. Many respondents said that without these opportunities the district would not be able to provide this training. In addition, respondents said that CREATE gave them a common language for discussing race and racial and cultural inequities.

Common Barriers to District Improvement Efforts

Districts were concerned about gaining broader support for their efforts. Some districts were struggling to involve additional district and building-level staff, and other districts were struggling to get their school boards or other community members involved. Some districts indicated that entrenched teaching practices continue to be a barrier to implementing culturally responsive teaching practices.

Three districts identified a lack of district leadership and coordination as barriers to improvement efforts. For example, one district reported that it was a challenge to get all the schools together and to agree on goals and how to reach them.

Characteristics of Successful Districts

In our review of district case studies, a few characteristics serve as indicators of the extent to which districts made sustainable progress in implementing culturally responsive practices, reducing disproportionality, and addressing educational inequities. These characteristics also are indicative of whether the district was in a transformational process or simply supplemented existing practices.

- In districts that made large strides, strong district leadership was evident, and district leaders communicated a coherent vision for implementing culturally responsive practices.
- The district leadership team involved all administrators in district improvement efforts and developed strategies to increase teacher and community commitment.
- Rather than making sporadic and inconsistent efforts that focused primarily on reducing disproportionality, the district created a coherent vision for how to increase cultural responsiveness and developed or revised policies to support culturally responsive practices. For example, hiring policies and processes were revised.
- The district sought to improve the learning opportunities of *all* students rather than focusing on reducing disproportionality for a specific group of students.
- The district used CREATE resources to increase awareness and understanding of cultural responsiveness. In addition, district resources were used to supplement these activities and provide opportunities to a greater number of stakeholders at the community, district, and school levels. For example, a cohort of individuals that attended CREATE trainings were expected to share what they had learned with other district and school personnel.
- Rather than viewing improvement efforts as a response to state and federal requirements, the district viewed them as part of a long-term process to create sustainable practices. CREATE was perceived as a catalyst for this process.

Although all districts made some progress, the districts that made the least progress were characterized by lack of coherent and consistent district leadership. Teachers in these districts were either not aware of culturally responsive practices or were not committed to changing their practices. Although there were some early adopters and committed teachers in these districts, changes in practices were sporadic.

District 1 Case Study

District 1 was required to participate in a needs assessment process and to complete at least one CREATE professional development opportunity because the district was identified by DPI as having disproportionate representation of students of color in special education. The district met these requirements by working with the Equity Alliance⁶ to conduct a district needs assessment; teams from two district schools and four district administrators also participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops. Six interviews were conducted with school and district staff who have been involved in one or more of these activities. Four respondents were district staff members, one was from an elementary school, and one was from a high school.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents reported that the district is pursuing two goals that are specifically related to the CREATE initiative: (1) to develop a workforce that is “highly qualified, diverse, and culturally proficient,” and (2) to transform classrooms and create learning opportunities so that “students show the habits and attitudes of culturally proficient people.” Respondents indicated that these goals have been the same for the past two years but that the objectives, strategies for implementing them, and indicators of progress were rewritten in 2010–11 and will drive instruction in 2011–12. Involvement in the CREATE initiative has also helped the district examine student achievement data from a different perspective. Although district goals for improving student reading and mathematics achievement have existed for several years, examining the performance of different groups of students to understand achievement gaps has been a new focus.

Respondents noted that these goals are aligned with the district’s RtI and PBIS initiatives. The district has been implementing PBIS for the past three years. As one respondent observed, “CREATE is helping us put the cultural component into PBIS.” Another respondent said that she believed that initiatives like RtI and PBIS “are being put in place to make sure that we’re closing the achievement gaps. In order to close achievement gaps you have to be more culturally responsive. And you have to be looking at data continually to make sure that you are closing the gap, looking at your practices.”

During 2010–11, district administrators were actively involved in building district capacity to achieve goals related to the CREATE initiative and to revise district policies to support implementation of culturally responsive practices. The district leadership team met five times in 2010–11 specifically to discuss cultural proficiency, to work on revisions to district objectives

⁶ Equity Alliance was formerly the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, which developed the CREATE needs assessment. Equity Alliance promotes equity, access, and participation in education, and has continued to work with CREATE to offer technical assistance and professional development to districts identified as having significant disproportionality.

and strategies for achieving goals related to cultural responsiveness, and to plan for 2011–12.⁷ The team’s revision of district objectives and strategies for promoting cultural proficiency was a culmination of team discussions as well as the district’s participation in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops. At the time of the interview, the district’s goals and objectives for 2011–12 were almost finalized, and the leadership team planned to share these goals with teachers. One respondent noted that “participating in CREATE has sort of educated us along the way on how to write appropriate objectives.”

In addition to revising district objectives for supporting cultural responsiveness, the district revised its hiring policies and practices to address issues of diversity and cultural proficiency. For example, the district developed a set of questions on cultural proficiency that every job applicant must complete in order to be considered for employment. Several respondents noted that district teachers are predominantly white, and the district needs to recruit and hire a more racially and culturally diverse staff.

Another significant district activity in 2010–11 was a book study group that met to discuss Allen Johnson’s book, *Privilege, Power and Difference*. Group discussions were facilitated by the district superintendent. The group’s 29 participants included food service administrators, buildings and grounds administrators, and athletic services administrators, as well as academic administrators and principals to help create districtwide awareness and understanding of culturally responsive practices. No other district-level professional development activities were offered in 2010–11. A major focus of the work during the past year has been participation in professional development opportunities offered through CREATE. The district plans to provide districtwide professional development opportunities next year that focus on culturally proficiency.

The district has also been working to promote cultural awareness among district staff. For example, for the past several months the monthly human resources newsletter has highlighted different aspects of what it means to be a cultural proficient person.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

The district has participated in several CREATE activities both this year and in the past. Following is a summary of participant feedback on these activities.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. The district participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment in 2009 but arranged to participate in a more rigorous district needs assessment with Equity Alliance in 2010 at the request of DPI. A respondent who had participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment in previous years was quite critical of the

⁷ The district has a separate team that participates in the CREATE Needs Assessment. Although there is some overlap in the membership of the two groups, the district leadership team is responsible for key areas of district planning, including planning related to cultural proficiency.

process, noting that the sessions that the district was required to attend were “disorganized and repetitive.” She reported, “We’ve been through that [process] four years in several different formats, and everything we did last year in creating our needs assessment . . . wasn’t put on the website . . . and now we’re doing basically the same thing again [this year at the 2011 Needs Assessment].” The respondent also observed that “the people who are being invited and required to attend [by DPI] . . . are not the right group of people. If you’re going to make cultural change you have to look at the district, not the special education team.” Although she acknowledged that the needs assessment process has value, she observed that it “has . . . not helped move our district forward in the way that I wish it would have and could have, considering we’ve been doing this for four years.”

Two respondents mentioned that the district has worked with Equity Alliance this year to conduct a district needs assessment. Equity Alliance also provided technical assistance to the district in addressing identified professional development needs. One building-level respondent said that the district needs assessment helped the district to recognize the need to improve parent involvement, which prompted a review of district and building-level policies and practices. One result of these efforts was the translation of various district materials into different languages to make them more accessible to parents from diverse backgrounds. In addition, district staff began reviewing existing policy documents, such as the district harassment policy and the elementary handbook, to identify areas that needed to be revised to align with changing district and school policies.

In addition to the district-level needs assessment, two schools have administered surveys developed through the CREATE initiative to gather teacher and student feedback on school climate and practices. Building-level respondents considered the survey results helpful in developing an overall perception of school climate and in identifying specific concerns that they need to address.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices. The administrators of the two buildings that are participating in the CREATE initiative (one elementary and one high school) were asked by the district to identify candidates to participate in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops. Eight members from each of these schools participated in the sessions. District administrators and the superintendent have also participated. The majority of the participants participated for credit. Respondents reported that they were very satisfied with the workshops and noted that the facilitators were skilled and were responsive to participant feedback. For example, one respondent stated that there was no agenda on the first day but that, based on feedback, agendas were provided for subsequent sessions.

The most commonly noted benefit of participating in the workshops was an increased awareness of cultural differences—described by several respondents as “eye opening”—that helped them “think about things differently.” An additional benefit acknowledged by four respondents was the opportunity to network and learn from other districts’ challenges and successes in

implementing culturally responsive practices. Administrators also said that the opportunity to consult with the facilitators of the sessions and get ideas on how to structure their district professional development was useful.

Although the sessions were highly regarded by school staff and principals, several district administrators believed that the pace was too slow and the conversations were too basic for their level of understanding. As one respondent said:

Because we have worked hard as a district to come forward and really have a strong PBIS program, it's really unfortunate for us to sit through a day of that when we're like four steps past that. So, I wish we had some choice about the level of the work that we're doing because frankly, many of us don't need to start at step one.

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents reported that the CREATE initiative is having an impact, particularly for those who have been actively involved in the initiative.

District Level. The main goal in 2010–11 was to change district policies and increase the capacity of the district administrative team. The impact of the staff involvement in CREATE was thus stronger at the district level. The main impact was the increased level of communication about cultural awareness and best teaching practices supportive of cultural responsiveness that was a result of team discussions and participation in professional development activities. The book discussions with district and building-level administrators were regarded as helpful in increasing awareness and knowledge of cultural responsiveness. Respondents said that the superintendent asked all administrators to go through a self-assessment of their cultural proficiency, which filtered down to the school staff. One respondent acknowledged the effect of these discussions on various stakeholders:

Another group that's really kind of impressive to me, our athletic director for the district is pulling in all the coaches, even those who are not district employees and he's taking them the self-assessment. He sent the definition of cultural proficiency and then he's asked them... 'Just send me a quick response on how cultural proficiency would be important to your specific coaching situation.' He thinks that the coaches are really going to struggle, because it's so easy to be all about white privilege, when you're putting together a team. It's different than the teachers that come to teach kids every day.

This increased awareness and understanding resulted in changes in district policies in 2010–11, and the district is in the initial stages of disseminating these changes to teachers. As noted earlier, the district revised its hiring policies and practices to increase teacher diversity and to develop a culturally proficient staff. In addition, the district reviewed some of its current policies to determine whether they were culturally responsive and translated documents into multiple languages to increase their accessibility to families from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

School and Classroom Level. Because staff from only two schools within the district were involved in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops, the impact of the CREATE initiative at the school and classroom levels has been limited to participating schools. Respondents reported increased communication about cultural responsiveness and changes in school practices. For example, the district developed posters on culturally responsive classroom practices that will be placed in every classroom, and an elementary school staff meeting was devoted to discussing the posters with the teachers and ways to make classrooms more culturally responsive. There is also an increased focus on differentiating instruction not only to address cultural responsiveness but also individual learning styles and the needs of each student. At the high school level, there are new elective classes in social studies that are the result of work the department heads did at the CREATE conference. One of the elementary schools with an increasingly diverse student population also hired four African American teachers to increase the diversity of its staff.

Apart from teachers who have participated in Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops, most teachers in the district are not aware of the CREATE initiative. Respondents indicated, however, that the level of awareness differs by school. The schools with more diverse student populations have been more actively engaged in integrating culturally responsive practices into their classrooms, even if they were not involved in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops.

Student Behavior and Performance. In the schools that were actively engaged in implementing culturally responsive classroom practices, initial data suggest an impact on student behavior. However, respondents stated that the observed changes were at the individual student or classroom level. Two respondents, however, attributed changes in student behavior to PBIS, which the district has been implementing for the past three years.

Plans for Next Year

District activities in 2010–11 focused on building administrator capacity and district structures to support culturally responsive practices. Respondents indicated that the district’s primary goal in 2011–12 will be to develop culturally responsive school environments and to increase teacher capacity to implement culturally responsive classroom practices. Respondents identified several plans for the following year:

- Share new district goals and objectives with teachers.
- Provide district professional development opportunities for teachers to help them develop culturally responsive classroom practices.
- Implement book study groups in all district schools.
- Have staff use online training modules on culturally responsive practices developed by Equity Alliance.

- Send more teams to the CREATE Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops.
- Work on strategies to involve parents from diverse racial and cultural groups.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents were asked what had facilitated district efforts to reduce disproportionality and improve cultural responsiveness. District administrator support was regarded as the most important factor. For example, one respondent said of the superintendent: “His passion gives us all a reason to pause and evaluate and reflect.” Another respondent indicated that strong leadership has been important in involving all stakeholders in the process of change:

It really is starting at the superintendent level and he is working carefully with all of the administrators, all of us. Food service is involved, the athletic director is involved, buildings and grounds is involved...along with all the building principals. And we have had that through the CREATE initiative; this is a spring-off of that.

The opportunity to network at CREATE sessions and district meetings also was mentioned as a facilitator of district efforts.

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

When asked to describe challenges to district improvement efforts, respondents identified several challenges that they wanted to work on. A shared concern was increasing awareness and acknowledgement that institutional racism exists and that teacher commitment is needed to implement culturally responsive practices. Another concern shared by several respondents was developing structures to address cultural responsiveness and identifying clear targets for professional development, assessment of practices, and outcomes. Three district administrators emphasized the lack of diversity among teaching staff and the need to hire teachers who are from backgrounds similar to those of district students. One building respondent said that making sure everyone’s voice is heard and developing strategies to involve parents from diverse backgrounds in discussions about school and district policies is also a challenge.

Sustainability of District Efforts

Respondents were optimistic about sustaining current work on equity and cultural responsiveness, given current efforts to implement systematic changes in district policies, hiring processes, and classroom practices. Two respondents explained that because the number of students from culturally and racially diverse backgrounds is growing, they were not expecting budget cuts. Another respondent noted that the district has allocated funding for district professional development, indicating a commitment to provide continued support for existing initiatives.

Summary

District 1 appears to have made considerable progress in developing district capacity to implement culturally responsive practices and address disproportionality. Following are a few of the district's achievements:

- The already strongly implemented PBIS and RtI initiatives have aligned well with the goals of the CREATE initiative, and culturally responsive practices have begun to be embedded in the PBIS and RtI frameworks.
- Efforts in 2010–11 focused on changing district policies and increasing administrative capacity. The focus in 2011–12 will shift to improving classroom practices.
- The district has changed its hiring process and begun to hire more diverse and culturally competent teachers.
- The district has worked on developing a professional development plan that includes a focus on culturally responsive practices and plans to send another cohort of teachers to the CREATE Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops in 2011–12.
- The district has identified the need for greater parent involvement and plans to develop strategies to promote greater involvement of parents, particularly those from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds.

District 2 Case Study

District 2 is participating in the following CREATE components and activities: the CREATE Needs Assessment, the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, and professional development opportunities offered through the CREATE initiative. The district is required to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and professional development activities because of an overidentification of students of color—mainly African American and Latino males—in special education referrals. The evaluation team conducted three interviews with district staff members involved in one or more CREATE component during the 2010–11 school year.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents varied in stating a specific goal or goals that guide district participation in the CREATE initiative. One respondent said that the district's primary goal is to prepare each student for postsecondary education. To accomplish this goal, the district has created a framework that embeds culturally relevant practices and competence into the key areas of social and emotional learning, core academic development or instruction, and career awareness or career aptitudes and interests. Other respondents identified the broader goal of addressing racial inequities within the district and changing the beliefs of staff members about what students can learn and how well they can learn. According to respondents, these goals have remained consistent over the past two years but have become more focused and defined over time.

Respondents noted that the goals of the CREATE initiative are embedded in and aligned with all other district improvement work. For example, they mentioned the alignment of CREATE with the district's PBIS initiative and its continuous improvement model. All staff members involved in PBIS must attend Beyond Diversity training. Three or four trainings per year are provided to district staff by a trainer from PEG. The district also strongly recommends that staff attend a district-provided training on culturally relevant instruction before working on the PBIS team. One respondent noted that the district specifically asked that their PBIS data system include an indicator for race so that student data can be disaggregated by race and ethnicity. The district also has worked with Lisa Bardon from the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point on the use of guiding questions for distinguishing disordered behavior from cultural mismatch (a mismatch between aspects of the student's home culture and the culture of the school) and has embedded these questions into the district's PBIS framework. Schools are required to complete a cultural mismatch rubric when students of color are referred for PBIS Tier 2 interventions. The district's continuous improvement model involves regular review of district and building-level data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and ELL status. These data are then used to monitor student progress.

District decisions about goals related to culturally responsive policies and practices are made by the district equity leadership team and coordinated by the special education director. The team includes the following district and school staff: the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, the special education director, the director of PK–elementary education, the director of secondary education, two elementary school principals, one middle school principal, and one high school principal. The composition of the team has remained consistent during the past few years and includes staff with the authority to make decisions about district policies and practices. Members of the team participate in both the CREATE Needs Assessment and the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education.

Respondents were unclear about how members were selected to join the equity leadership team. One respondent said that a district representative from the special education department was required by CREATE to serve on the district team that participates in the needs assessment. Another respondent said that members were balanced between those selected, based on their positions, and those who volunteered, based on their interest in the initiative.

Respondents commented on numerous activities and progress made towards reaching district goals during the 2010–11 school year. Completing the Beyond Diversity training has become an expectation for all staff members. One of the respondents noted that 600 district staff members have completed the Beyond Diversity training, and 300 have completed the district's one-day training on culturally responsive instruction. The Beyond Diversity training is a prerequisite for the training on culturally responsive instruction. Demand for these trainings has been high; there has been a waiting list each time the Beyond Diversity training has been offered.

Another respondent mentioned that the district has formed a dedicated team of committed teachers who are working with a local university on culturally responsive teaching practices. These teachers received training from the university on lesson design and assessments, using a culturally relevant lens. As part of these trainings, teachers observed and provided feedback to one another on their execution of these lessons. Afterwards teachers brought what they had learned back to their schools and provided training to other teachers.

Respondents mentioned a number of ways the district is reaching out to the surrounding community. For example, the district had building administrators participate in a “cultural road rally”: “We had groups of three principals going out to various businesses, restaurants, ...[and] organizations that are dealing with issues of race...to have them become more familiar with the diversity that exists [within the community].” The school district also is working with the Latino community to offer community events and resources in Spanish. One challenge respondents mentioned is that there are undocumented families in the community who are fearful of working with the schools.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

In 2010–11, the district participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment and the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education. The district leadership team also received coaching from one of the consortium-trained local equity coaches (this was one of the CREATE professional development opportunities offered to districts). Following is a summary of participant feedback on these activities.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. District 2 has participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment for the past three years. One respondent said that the first year the needs assessment was good, but the second year it was not well organized. During the first year, facilitators “went through [the process] step by step because it was new. We had to do step one, then we all moved on to step two together.” In the second year, districts new to the process and districts that had participated the previous year both attended the needs assessment sessions as one large group. Rather than taking districts through each step of the process, the facilitators just explained the process to participants. The respondent noted that “we had the advantage because we’d done it once before, but new people...were just lost.” In the third year, the needs assessment organizers divided new districts and continuing districts into separate groups, and teams from continuing districts were given the option of spending most of the day working on their district improvement plans. As one respondent commented, “[We were able to look at] what it is we have accomplished...things that have been initiated but need a little more attention to have them become more integrated and embedded in our system, and then we identified other areas that we have not really addressed that we need to.” Respondents said that the most recent needs assessment session was very helpful because it gave them time meet as a team to assess their progress in meeting district goals as well as opportunities to network with other districts.

Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education. Two respondents discussed their involvement in the consortium and said that the trainings have been of high quality and useful to the district. One respondent said that “the information that is provided gives us an ability to identify additional resources and thought processes or aspects of systemic racism that are not obvious to us that we can then take...internally to go investigate, study, and learn about.”

Respondents said that the seminars this year, though fewer, were better than last year. One respondent said that PEG and West Wind, the groups that facilitated the seminars in past years, did not always work well together. West Wind was not involved this year, although one of their trainers joined the staff of PEG and continued to be involved in the consortium. This same respondent said that the seminars were better this year because the district team had more time for “processing with our own group...[and] we actually got to collaborate with some other teams.”

One of the respondents provided feedback on the district’s work this year with its local equity coach who is a participant in the CREATE consortium. Although the respondent described the local coach as “phenomenal” and said the district team enjoyed working with her, she noted that the team had not done a good job of setting up times to meet with its coach outside of the consortium seminars. The coach did not live in the district, and arrangements had to be made for her to come to the district; additional effort was required to bring her up-to-speed on the team’s work when meetings were scheduled. The respondent said that the team would benefit from the coach’s guidance and support if members were able to meet with her regularly, but the team had not managed to schedule regular meetings.

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

All respondents reported that the CREATE initiative is impacting district and school policies and practices.

District Level. Respondents reported that their participation in CREATE has had a “huge” or “fairly significant” impact on district policies and practices. They mentioned that the CREATE initiative has provided the district with a new cultural lens for looking at data, policies, and practices. For example, one respondent said that CREATE has “given us tools, some areas of focus on our equity plan. [We are] really looking at leadership, culturally relevant practices, families, and community.”

On a deeper level all respondents said that more staff have become committed to the goal of culturally responsive practices this year. As one respondent stated:

People have various levels of understanding, but the language of culturally relevant practices is becoming commonplace in the district. I just do not know to what degree everybody understands it and can apply it in practice and thinking. But the resistance of

talking about whiteness, for example, has significantly reduced, although it is not gone, compared to two years ago.

Another respondent, the staff member responsible for coordinating the district's equity work, also said that the work has gotten to a point where it would be sustainable beyond her involvement. She indicated that staff members are actively trying to incorporate culturally responsive practices into their day-to-day work: "We hear staff after they have gone to these trainings and they are doing curriculum writing, especially at the high school level. You will hear them [asking], 'Is that culturally and racially appropriate?'"

Two examples of changes in district policies and practices were mentioned by respondents. One respondent described the change in the district's expulsion policy:

We no longer have expulsions. We come up with alternative learning environments for students [who otherwise would have been expelled]. These [changes] are in place and we can document that, but it...required somebody in my role to say 'no, we are not doing this any longer.'...When I took this role and as we did this work we simply said some of those practices are going to change and it is not a negotiable type of thing.

A change in community participation in the district hiring process was also mentioned by two respondents. Last year, when an elementary school principal was being hired, the district decided to include a demographically representative group of parents in the hiring process, together with a group of teachers and administrators. The three stakeholder groups worked together to design the interview questions and score candidates on their qualifications. The groups did not always agree on who was qualified to lead the school. One respondent described the process and outcome in the following way:

It is so amazing. It gets heated. The staff want somebody who makes them feel good, who is going to let them do their own thing, not going to be authoritative. Parents are like 'no, this candidate never said they were going to hold staff accountable for achievement.'...Most of the time these parents, nobody has ever asked them to do anything. You are going to get your PTO presidents that are always at everything in the school. They are the ones telling the principal and everybody else what to do and they are the loudest, but there is this whole group. I want to hear parent voices.... If it was not for [them] we would not be here, so [their] voice is crucial in making a decision, in helping us pick the right candidate for the school.

School and Classroom Level. Respondents also reported that the CREATE initiative has affected school-level policies and practices. Schools have developed strategies for reaching out to community members and revised disciplinary policies and practices. As one respondent noted:

We have seen at some of our schools a specific intent to reach out to different communities of color within [the district] to do partnerships and mutual learning

activities. We have had principals rethink or challenge staff on certain disciplinary measures that were clearly racist...toward students of color.

An increasing number of teachers are also participating in the district training on culturally responsive instruction and have begun to incorporate culturally responsive practices into their day-to-day instruction. The district has worked to make its curriculum more culturally responsive, and changes in the curriculum are being implemented at the classroom level. Two elementary schools were recently awarded grants that will allow them to hire a halftime coach in each of their buildings to work with their staff on implementing culturally relevant instruction. The grant requirements also stipulate that everyone in the school, including custodians, cooks, and other noninstructional staff, will attend the Beyond Diversity training and the training on culturally relevant instruction.

Student Behavior and Performance. District 2 has also begun to see changes in student behavior and performance. Respondents mentioned that although disproportionality in special education referrals still exists, the district has seen a decrease in the risk ratio for students of color.

Respondents reported the following changes in student behavior:

- A significant decrease in out-of-school suspensions at the middle school and elementary school levels
- A decrease in office disciplinary referrals
- A significant decrease in student expulsions as a result of the change in the district's expulsion policy
- An increase in the attendance rates of some disenfranchised youth

One respondent said that there also has been an increase in the number of culturally diverse student clubs and activities within the district.

Respondents noted that many of these changes can be attributed to the district's PBIS initiative, which directly addresses student behavior. The district has integrated culturally responsive practices into its PBIS framework, however, and is now disaggregating data by race and ethnicity so that trends in student behavior, participation, and performance can be identified for specific groups of students.

Plans for Next Year

District goals in 2010–11 focused on embedding culturally responsive practices into district and school policies. For the 2011–12 school year, the district will continue to work towards the same goals. The district will continue its partnerships with the local university and with community

organizations, and additional staff will participate in Beyond Diversity and culturally responsive instruction trainings. Following are some of the activities that are planned for next year:

- Within the framework for postsecondary readiness, the district is working to define action steps, deadlines, and people responsible for accomplishing specific goals.
- The district is currently working on a grant with a local university that would provide opportunities for principals to receive training from university faculty on culturally responsive practices.
- District staff will look at the structure of the school day and how it can be changed to offer accelerated learning opportunities and interventions.
- The district plans to extend the Beyond Diversity trainings to the school board.
- Opportunities will be provided for district staff and principals to share student data and progress in implementing culturally relevant practices.
- Teachers who have received training on culturally responsive practices at the local university will continue to provide training to other teachers; teachers who have completed the training will be asked to share tips and strategies with colleagues at monthly staff meetings.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents were asked what factors have facilitated district efforts to reduce disproportionality and implement culturally responsive practices. They indicated that the district equity leadership team is key to their improvement process—a group committed to the mission, stable over time, representative of many departments in the district, and comfortable at challenging one another about questions regarding race. The opportunity for team members to participate in the CREATE consortium also mentioned as an important facilitator of the team’s work.

Respondents also said that, to varying degrees, staff are starting to understand and use a common language to talk about race and racial disparities in academic opportunities and achievement. As one respondent stated, “Slowly, but surely the staff are becoming conditioned to this, which then will ripen the opportunity to provide the more specific knowledge and skills relative to multicultural education.”

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

When asked to identify challenges to district improvement efforts, respondents mentioned two barriers—lack of support from the school board and from staff. All respondents said that getting the school board involved in the initiative has been a challenge. They noted that members of the board do not represent the diversity of the community and, although invited, no members have attended any of the Beyond Diversity trainings. Respondents said that to move forward they need the school board to be aware of the effects of ignoring race and culture on students.

Respondents also were concerned that not all staff members were onboard with the initiative, including some district and school-level staff. At the district level, two respondents stated that the work around culturally responsive practices would move faster if all district administrators were engaged in the work and were committed to establishing a set of common practices within the district. One of these respondents also mentioned lack of staff buy-in as a challenge. He observed that “we have too many staff who continue to deny [that people] have different experiences based [on their race].”

Sustainability of District Efforts

Respondents were optimistic about sustaining the district’s efforts to reduce disproportionality and to incorporate culturally responsive practices at the district, school, and classroom levels. They noted that these practices have become systematically embedded in district policies and professional development. One respondent added that there are administrators and teachers committed to moving the work forward, and they are lucky to have a local university working on racial equity. The respondent also commented on what the district would lose if the CREATE initiative did not receive continued funding:

If it were not for CREATE and other districts being forced to engage in these activities or choosing to engage in these activities, we [would] find it difficult to have face-to-face interactions with administrators and teachers and staff [from] more diverse environments. We gain from being able to do that. Emailing colleagues that I have met around the state is helpful and it has been invaluable, but it is not the same as sitting down and having a conversation with somebody.

Summary

District 2 has built upon its past work on culturally relevant policies and practices and embedded these policies and practices in other district goals and initiatives. Following are a few examples of the district’s commitment to this work.

- The district’s equity leadership team has maintained a consistent membership during the past three years and includes committed staff in positions to make decisions about district policy.
- Attending the Beyond Diversity training has become a district expectation, and there is a waiting list for each offering. Participation in the culturally responsive instruction training is strongly recommended.
- The district has formed partnerships with a local university and with community organizations and has actively worked to involve a culturally diverse group of parents in the district hiring process and in discussions about ways to improve education for their children.

District 3 Case Study

District 3 is participating in the following CREATE components and activities: the Needs Assessment, the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops, and the CREATE Leadership for Educational Equity training. The district is required to participate in the Needs Assessment and at least one professional development activity because it was identified by DPI as having disproportionate representation of African American students in special education. There is also a significant achievement gap between African American students and white students within the district. The evaluation team conducted three interviews with two building-level administrators and a teacher who have been involved in one or more of these activities. One of the building administrators is also a member of the district leadership team.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents indicated that in 2010–11 the district’s primary goals related to the CREATE initiative were to: (1) identify ways to meet the needs of all students, and (2) improve district staff members’ understanding and use of culturally responsive practices. The district has also established specific goals for closing achievement gaps and reducing disproportionality in special education referrals. An additional goal for 2010–11 was to develop a plan for implementing a continuous improvement framework at the district level. According to one respondent, district schools have a well-defined school improvement process that uses student performance data to inform instructional decisions. Student data are disaggregated by race, gender, and disability status and analyzed to determine how to address student academic and behavioral needs. There was no similar process in place at the district level. A district framework was developed in 2010–11 and will be implemented in 2011–12.

Respondents reported that district goals related to educational equity have become broader and more developed during the past year. One respondent noted that the district has progressed from looking at differences in student academic achievement to examining student behavioral data and extracurricular participation. For example, the district now regularly reviews student disciplinary data and has found that African American students have higher rates of disciplinary referrals than students from other racial or ethnic groups. Another respondent said that “I think our new initiative [the district’s continuous improvement framework] is looking at a more systemic level of how do we align things, [how do we develop a] district strategic plan to ensure that we are staying steady and focused on what we really want to be about for our students of color.”

In line with its goal of increasing staff awareness and use of culturally responsive practices, the district has provided a variety of professional development opportunities to school and district staff on the impact of culture and race on student engagement and learning. Several staff members from the district attended the White Privilege Conference in both 2010 and 2011. Participants who attended the conference last year made presentations to the school board and to all buildings in the district to share information from the conference. The district also allocated

staff development time for discussions of race, culture, and equity. Staff at all elementary schools in the district viewed and discussed the video *Mirrors of Privilege* this year. Staff at some schools also read and discussed the book *Courageous Conversations about Race*. In addition, teams from two district schools participated in the CREATE Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops this year; the district sent a team to the workshops last year as well. A team of district staff members also participated in the CREATE Leadership for Educational Equity trainings this year.

District staff members who participated in the Leadership for Educational Equity trainings recently formed a group called the Equity Alliance and will serve as the steering committee for this districtwide group. One of the respondents said the group's members include teachers, principals, and district personnel who are working to close achievement gaps and identify ways to address the needs of all students. At the time of the interview, the group was working to develop a mission statement for its work. One respondent described the purpose of the group in the following way:

We are looking at student data, and then we are going to put forth essential questions that we would like to infuse in our system. For example, if we did this initiative who would benefit from it and who would it marginalize? We are trying to create structures and processes in our district strategies, and even [define] what our work is overall. We are paying attention to if we did this what would it mean for a student of color, what would it not mean for a student of color, and also trying to bridge our current school district efforts to [increase family and community involvement].

This group will coordinate activities within the district that focus on issues of educational equity.

Respondents indicated that the CREATE initiative is well-aligned with other district initiatives. The district's RtI and PBIS initiatives were specifically mentioned by two of the respondents. One of them stated that "the RtI process has definitely been informed by the questions that you ask through the CREATE process to really get at if we're looking at all the factors." This respondent also indicated that implementation of PBIS has been informed by the district's involvement in the CREATE initiative.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

The district participated in several CREATE activities in 2010–11. Following is a summary of participant feedback on these activities.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. Four members of the district leadership team participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment in 2011. One participant described the needs assessment process as "a very extensive analysis" that has helped the district identify specific areas for improvement. He said that this process has been very useful in developing the annual improvement plan that the district is required to submit to DPI. He also

noted that the discussions that occurred among the team members who participated in the 2011 Needs Assessment resulted in the decision to form the Equity Alliance group. The district's improvement plan for 2011–12 includes a commitment to fund and support the group's work next year.

Leadership for Educational Equity. Seven district staff members attended the Leadership for Educational Equity trainings in 2010–11. Two of the district staff members who were interviewed participated in the trainings. In explaining how staff members were selected to participate, the respondents said that some individuals were selected based on their expertise in specific areas, such as curriculum and instruction, or their experience in working with specific populations of students, such as English language learners; others were selected based on their interest in and commitment to issues of educational equity. Both respondents provided favorable feedback on the trainings. One of them observed that the session facilitators were responsive to each district's needs without pushing them to “one right answer.” This individual also valued the time that was provided for team discussions:

[The facilitators] asked us where we were and what do we need, and we said we really need time, a good, long chunk of time, to plan out what we're going to do with these people who have this interest and who have already had professional development on [culturally responsive practices]. So the facilitators brought in some articles and information about professional development and they gave us about an entire morning that we could just simply work on what we're doing when we meet with these people.

This respondent did note that the first few sessions were somewhat frustrating: “We did a lot of work with the initial definitions and the background [and] it seemed to move fairly slowly.” She said that after that, however, “we really had time to dig into [the work] with our district-level team and there was really good guidance and tools...that were useful for us.”

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices. Twelve staff members from district schools participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops. Teachers who participated were recruited by their principals. One of the principals who attended provided feedback on the sessions. Although she said that the trainers were very knowledgeable, she voiced concerns about the lack of concrete information presented and the time commitment required of participants: “Any time we take four professional staff out of a building eight times a year I would like to get...some concrete knowledge.” She believed that the sessions focused too much on personal experiences rather than professional practices and that too much time was spent on group activities that could have been completed much more quickly. She offered the following example:

We spent four and a half hours on [a role playing game]. And it was mundane, it got old after awhile. I said, ‘Ok we get it. Now, let’s talk about why we did it and bring some understanding to it.’ We never did [that]. We basically just played the game and...then we went to lunch. We never came back to it.

She also noted that sessions often started late, ended early, and included long breaks, making it hard to justify taking teachers out of the classroom for an entire day. She added, however, that “I think [the CREATE trainers are presenting] good stuff, I really do, and we’re a district that needs to look at these things and we need to put some more things in place, we need to get the staff more aware.”

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents agreed that the district’s involvement in the CREATE initiative is having an impact at the district and school levels.

District Level. The district’s involvement in CREATE has helped to increase staff awareness and has facilitated district planning. As one respondent noted, the CREATE leadership trainings provided “concrete action plans, things to do, and [examples of] what to say.” He noted that the trainings also have been helpful in creating a focus for district efforts: “We actually have a group. We are setting aside time and resources for that group to meet... [and we have realized] that we have to embed culturally responsive practices and look at our systemic issues overall...I think that’s been a real [breakthrough for us, looking at] how can we carry this work out systemically, sustain it over time, and embed it into people’s practices.”

School and Classroom Level. The district’s participation in CREATE also has had an impact at the school and classroom levels. One respondent said that there has been an increase in staff awareness of cultural differences and biases. He said that the resources provided in the CREATE trainings have been helpful in initiating conversations about sensitive topics such as white privilege and institutional racism. Another respondent reported that some of the teachers who have participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops have begun to implement practices they have learned about in the trainings. She said she has also observed special education teams asking questions that few of them would have thought to ask in the past when assessing students who have been referred for special education services. She offered the following example:

I had one student who was referred for special education as a four year old who wasn’t speaking at all in either [English or her home] language....The administrator and the teachers, everybody was sitting at the table asking ‘What information don’t we have about the student? What strengths does she have that her parents see?’—things that could directly be tied to the culturally responsive practices that, when I had the same kind of student four years ago, nobody asked except me.

Awareness of the CREATE initiative has primarily been limited to staff who have participated in the CREATE trainings. One respondent believed that a large majority (80 to 90 percent) of district staff were aware of the need to address student achievement gaps, but only 50 to 60 percent were familiar with CREATE. School and district staff who have been involved in CREATE trainings have made efforts to share what they have learned with their colleagues at staff meetings. However, the district lacks a systematic process for disseminating information about culturally responsive practices to staff members.

Student Behavior and Performance. Respondents noted some changes in student behavior and performance that may be linked to district efforts to increase staff awareness and use of culturally responsive practices. One respondent said that more early intervening services are being provided for struggling students so that students are getting additional supports prior to being referred for special education services. She noted that overall referral rates for special education have decreased within the district. Another respondent reported that there has been a decrease in the number of disciplinary referrals for African American students during the past two years. Both respondents indicated that these changes may be due to other district initiatives such as RtI and PBIS rather than to the district's involvement in the CREATE initiative.

Plans for Next Year

District activities in 2010–11 focused on increasing staff awareness of culturally responsive practices and identifying ways to better meet the needs of all students. Respondents indicated that the district's efforts in 2011–12 will focus on clarifying district goals with respect to educational equity and developing a strategic plan to address those goals. A plan is already in place to implement a continuous improvement framework at the district level in 2011–12. Respondents also mentioned the following activities that are planned for next year:

- Holding quarterly meetings of the Equity Alliance group.
- Embedding culturally responsive practices in existing district initiatives such as RtI and PBIS.
- Sending another cohort of staff members to the White Privilege Conference.
- Sending another cohort of teachers and building administrators to the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops.
- Participating in the CREATE RtI and PBIS professional development academies.
- Increasing outreach to parent and community members.
- Improving processes for disseminating information about culturally responsive practices to district staff.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified a few factors that have facilitated district progress this year in achieving its goals related to the CREATE initiative. One respondent reported that support from both building and district-level administrators has been critical to the district's progress this year. She said that the elementary school principals "are completely on board with getting...information out to everybody, getting it into practice." She noted that, at the district level, the director of curriculum and instruction and the director of pupil services have been very involved, and they have not only attended the CREATE leadership trainings but also have found additional resources related to the trainings and shared them with other staff.

Another respondent said that teacher engagement has been a facilitating factor in the district's progress this year, particularly with respect to RtI implementation. She reported that "our teachers are really buying into the interventions that are being put into place...[and] are now familiar with the help that is available to them....There's a group of professionals...who we've identified as coaches...that are there to help out when they have an issue."

The third respondent said that having a structure and time to work on issues related to educational equity has really facilitated the district's progress during the past year. He said he appreciated the funding that DPI has provided through the CREATE initiative for district staff to participate in trainings. He also noted that the structures that have been developed through CREATE, such as the annual needs assessment, have helped district staff develop district improvement plans and engage in productive discussions around goal setting and action planning.

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified several challenges to district improvement efforts. A concern shared by two respondents is whether the district can sustain the progress that has been made. One respondent was worried that the momentum that was developed this year may be lost. She said that at the middle and high school levels there has been resistance to working on yet another initiative. She also noted that each of the schools in the district has a different culture, and it is challenging to identify the needs of each school and to reach to all teachers to make that sure that culturally responsive practices are being implemented in each classroom.

Two respondents also mentioned the challenge of convincing community members of the importance of district's work on educational equity. The district serves two different communities, so it is also difficult to get unified support from both communities. A related challenge is involving parents, particularly those from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds, in district improvement efforts.

Sustainability of District Efforts

Respondents provided mixed feedback on the sustainability of the district's current efforts to address issues of educational equity and to increase staff knowledge and use of culturally responsive practices. Two respondents believed that district efforts could be sustained if the district can begin to embed culturally responsive practices in its current initiatives and continue to build district capacity to engage in strategic planning. One respondent, however, noted that several members of the district leadership team who have been supportive of current efforts are leaving or will soon be retiring. He was concerned that without continued leadership at the district level, current efforts would not be sustained. Another respondent said that the CREATE initiative needs to demonstrate that it is having an observable impact on student learning outcomes to ensure the sustainability of current efforts.

Summary

District 3 has made progress in building the capacity to implement culturally responsive practices and develop a strategic plan for addressing issues of educational equity. Following are a few of these achievements:

- District staff members who participated in the Leadership for Educational Equity trainings have deepened their understanding of what is involved in implementing systemic change in the area of educational equity and have engaged in productive discussions about the district's goals and future direction.
- The Equity Alliance group has been formed and has developed a mission statement. This group will meet quarterly next year to engage in goal-setting and strategic planning.
- The district has made progress in increasing staff awareness of cultural biases and institutional racism.
- The district has made a commitment to provide continued professional development opportunities to school and district staff to increase their knowledge and use of culturally responsive practices.

District 4 Case Study

District 4 was required to complete the CREATE Needs Assessment and to participate in at least one CREATE-identified professional development opportunity because the district was identified by DPI as having disproportionate representation of students of color in special education. To meet its professional development requirement, the district sent a team to the Culturally Responsive Frameworks for RtI and PBIS training in April 2011. Three interviews were conducted with district staff members who have been involved in one or more of these activities.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents indicated that although the district is required to participate in CREATE because of the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education, the district is committed to equity for all students. As one respondent stated, “The overarching goal of the district is that there is no difference based on color in terms of student achievement, student participation, involvement, and discipline.” To achieve this goal, the district has been implementing a continuous school improvement process (CSIP) and PBIS. CSIP provides a tiered system of academic interventions and supports for students; PBIS provides a similar system of behavioral interventions and supports.

Respondents noted that the district has not made a substantial commitment to CREATE and that efforts to implement culturally responsive practices in the district have remained piecemeal and mostly at the individual building level. Consequently, district and school staff members are generally not aware of the CREATE initiative unless they have been involved in specific CREATE activities. However, they are aware of PBIS and CSIP. One respondent said that “the development of PBIS is creating a framework within which we can introduce and support and sustain culturally responsive practices, and that is our intent. CREATE has made it obvious that PBIS is, for us, the means of moving forward. We’re building a home for CREATE, so to speak, for culturally responsive practices.” In addition to efforts to integrate culturally responsive practices into PBIS, one respondent indicated that each building has CSIP groups that are responsible for increasing awareness of culturally responsive practices.

Coordination of district initiatives is handled primarily by the Office of Student Services and the Office of Assessment, Curriculum, and Instruction (ACI). To address issues of educational equity and disproportionality, the district has created three committees that include members from both Student Services and ACI: the minority achievement task force, the disproportionality committee, and the equity committee. These committees make recommendations to district leadership, which then decides whether to act on these recommendations and allocate resources for their implementation. Respondents noted that the committees have met a few times and made decisions regarding special education. For example, the disproportionality committee developed a checklist for school support personnel “to ensure that students’ cultures and races are being addressed during the evaluation process.” An important effort of the minority achievement task force has been to organize events that showcase the achievements of students of color in various areas (e.g., dance, music, written work, art). The district also prepares an achievement report that focuses on students of color and is disseminated to parents and community members. One respondent noted that in the previous years, information on culturally responsive practices was shared at monthly administrative meetings with principals, who then shared this information with building staff, but this practice was not continued this year.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

District staff participated in only a few CREATE activities in 2010–11. Following is a summary of participant feedback on these activities.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. A team of district administrators that includes the special education director, the director of curriculum and instruction, the special education and ELL coordinators, and an educational diagnostician participate in the CREATE needs assessment sessions, although two team members were not able to attend in this year. Respondents indicated that members of the team came together at the preconference session to review district goals, decide on their direction for 2011–12, and identify professional development activities that the district might participate in next year.

Professional Development. District involvement in professional development activities focusing on culturally responsive practices has been mostly limited to opportunities offered through the CREATE initiative. An exception mentioned by one respondent is a class typically taken by new staff members that includes some information on educational equity and culturally responsive practices. Two respondents mentioned that prior to the district’s involvement in the CREATE initiative, the district had arranged for PEG to offer two Beyond Diversity trainings for administrators and student services personnel.

A district team participated in the Culturally Responsive Frameworks for RtI and PBIS workshop in early April. All respondents reported that the CREATE training activities they have participated in, both this year and in the past, have been repetitive, providing similar broad content on the need for culturally responsive practices. One respondent said that “to the extent they focused on the message, identifying the need, we’ve heard it repeatedly. I think people are really hungry for the how-to. And that’s not the majority of the time that’s being spent. The majority of the time is making the case for how-to, and that we have heard.”

Several staff members participated the 2011 CREATE Conference. All respondents said that this year’s conference was better than in previous years. One respondent specifically mentioned Dr. Gay’s keynote presentation and said that “she has really established a framework for teachers to look at, and it’s kind of the next step for principals to be thinking about.” Another respondent added, “The speakers were phenomenal. They really made me think and want to do further research on some of their work.”

One of the respondents noted that several staff members “would like to get a little more involved in the CREATE initiative. The piece that Barb Van Haren is running [on culturally responsive classroom practices] I think is an important thing for us.” She noted, however, that district funding is not available to send a team to the training.

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents reported limited impact of the CREATE initiative, particularly because the district has not made a commitment to it, and efforts to implement culturally responsive practices have been limited to individual schools. Respondents did indicate that participation in the CREATE initiative has led to increased awareness and “tension around the need to get this into the classroom.” One respondent added that in making decisions about special education referrals, staff members have become more sensitive to race and culture and want to be sure that they are making referrals “for the right reason.”

Plans for Next Year

District activities related to the CREATE initiative were limited in 2010–11. Respondents identified a few steps that will be taken next year that focus on culturally responsive practices:

- Introduce culturally responsive practices within PBIS.
- Implement activities related to the priority areas identified in the district’s annual improvement plan (e.g., continue to implement CSIP procedures in all schools and develop and implement a multiyear plan for effective problem-solving practices).
- Incorporate culturally responsive perspectives into the new curriculum that the district expects to adopt in 2011–2012.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents were asked what has facilitated district efforts to reduce disproportionality and improve cultural responsiveness. The most common facilitator identified by respondents was the minority achievement task force. The Beyond Diversity trainings that were held in previous years were also mentioned as an important facilitator that “really helped in framing the issue.”

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents also were asked to describe challenges to implementing district improvement efforts related to educational equity. A shared concern was ensuring that teachers “not only [are] aware of the issue of disparity, which everybody pretty much is, in terms of achievement or participation, but their personal stake and their personal role in overcoming it.” Another concern was the limited resources available from the district for participation in professional development activities offered through the CREATE initiative.

Sustainability of District Efforts

Respondents generally agreed that the district will continue to implement its current initiatives, including the work being done by the minority achievement task force and the equity and disproportionality committees. One respondent pointed out the need to integrate CREATE with

the other district initiatives in order to sustain work on culturally responsive practices: “I think tying that into existing initiatives [is important] so that it isn’t one more thing on top of what we’re already doing, but it becomes an integral part of CSIP and PBIS.”

Summary

District 4 has made some progress in developing district capacity to implement culturally responsive practices and address disproportionality, although these efforts have not been systemic. Following are the district’s achievements:

- Implementing a continuous school improvement process and PBIS to provide both academic and behavioral supports to students
- Developing checklists for school support personnel to ensure that culture and race are considered in evaluating students for special education services
- Facilitating events to showcase the achievement of students of color
- Developing a report on the achievement of students of color to disseminate to parents and community members.

District 5 Case Study

District 5 has voluntarily participated in the CREATE initiative for the past three years. The district was identified by DPI in the past for disproportionate representation of African American students in special education, but it is no longer on the list of identified districts. In 2010–11, district staff participated in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops, and Beyond Diversity trainings offered through the CREATE initiative. The evaluation team conducted five interviews with staff members who were involved in these activities, including two district staff members, two building-level administrators, and one teacher.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents identified several district goals related to the CREATE initiative. Three primary goals were mentioned: (1) providing district staff with professional development that focuses on educational equity; (2) identifying key building-level staff who can support the efforts of principals to implement culturally responsive practices; and (3) hosting forums for family and community members to strengthen school–community relationships. In training staff, the district has used a top-down approach, beginning with district and building administrators, who have already received training. The district currently is identifying key building-level staff to participate in trainings on culturally responsive classroom practices. The district also is exploring ways for staff members to interact with families and community members to a greater extent. As one respondent explained, “We want to know how those families and [the] community would

like that to look. We're trying to be cognizant of the fact that we don't know best...So we're trying to do that through surveys and communication and contact.”

Another goal mentioned by respondents is identifying and addressing disparities in the learning opportunities and achievement of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. To identify these disparities, the district has examined data from multiple sources, including student disciplinary referrals, performance on the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE), and participation in honors and Advanced Placement courses and extracurricular activities. Data on high school graduation rates and college attendance also have been examined.

The district's equity leadership team is developing action plans to address these goals. Members of the team include the superintendent, a school board member, the director of community education services, a school psychologist, the school health and safety coordinator, an elementary school principal, assistant principals from a middle school and high school, and a school counselor. Parents and representatives from community organizations and local universities also serve as members. Among the community organizations represented are United for Diversity, the United Way, the Boys and Girls Club, and a local church.

Respondents noted that the CREATE initiative aligns well with the district's RtI and PBIS initiatives. One respondent observed that CREATE “falls under everything we've learned as best practice so I think it's a natural component of RtI.” Another respondent said the district has incorporated culturally responsive practices into its PBIS initiative: “Whatever we come up with as school expectations and even the school rewards around PBIS, we put through that filter—‘Is this equitable?’”

The district also has been engaged in efforts to increase staff awareness. For example, one hour of each monthly school administrators' meeting is devoted to issues related to equity and culturally responsive practices. Participants discuss readings that were assigned at a previous meeting or engage in a group activity. Two or three schools in the district have conducted book study groups. Books discussed include *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* and *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family and School Partnerships*. Participants have discussed how relationships with parents and other staff can be examined through a cultural lens.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

The district took part in several CREATE activities in 2010–11. Following is a summary of participant feedback on these activities.

CREATE Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education. Members of the district's equity leadership team have participated in the consortium for the past three years. Participants were initially selected by the superintendent and the director of community education services, but team members have since invited parents and community members to join the team. One

participant praised the consortium as being “definitely of high quality and high value to the districts.” This individual said that “now that we’re in our third year of participating...we see more of the direction [of where we need to go].” Compared to previous years, he said that this year’s seminars were “a little bit more refined.... It wasn’t as broad or vague as far as just equity and disparities. It was really specific to what was going on in our schools and we were able to define it very well.”

Consortium participants also discussed broader issues such as current economic conditions and the political climate in the state and country. These discussions have focused on how districts will be able to achieve their goals with fewer resources. Although these conversations have been helpful, one respondent said that discussions occasionally lacked focus:

We spent time on discussions about Obama, the first black president...It wouldn’t necessarily help us make our school better. So sometimes you’re really locked in and focused and it’s great. And other times you’re a little off that day and there’s not as much of a take home message.

Beyond Diversity Trainings. Participants in the Beyond Diversity trainings were selected by the superintendent and the director of community education services. This year teams from the five schools with the most diverse student populations were sent to the trainings. These teams included the principal, secretaries, custodians, and some teachers. One school board member also attended. One respondent explained that “we are trying to get the people that are on the front line, and really create schools that are much more welcoming to people of color.” One of the participants described the training as “eye opening.” A respondent who had previously participated reported, “When the teachers came back from Beyond Diversity, some were like ‘at first I was really offended.’ In that respect...[the trainings] are somewhat difficult. But they’ve all been excellent....It needs to be challenging.”

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices Workshops. Approximately 15 staff members participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops this year. Teachers were asked to participate by their building administrator; some teachers also volunteered. One respondent reported that the “quality of the sessions was good” and said that the topics that were covered were “relevant to any district’s needs.” Another respondent said that the sessions focusing on self-awareness were quite good but noted that the later sessions would have been more helpful if they provided teachers with specific strategies and examples:

I think the self-reflection was covered. It was very good. We had to look at ourselves and where we’re at. But now, it’s kind of like ‘Where do you go?’ I don’t know that we’re sure where to go next....We missed eight days of instruction with our kids. Eight of us did [from our school]. That was half of our staff. That was a huge thing and we thought we were going to be coming back with stuff that we could be giving to the faculty in the

next faculty meeting and things to try. And I think that was where the disappointment was in that last half.

Another participant said that the sessions could be improved by increasing the diversity of the facilitators and participants. She noted that with “two middle-aged white instructors and a class of white teachers and administrators” there was a limited range of viewpoints. She recommended that the workshop organizers increase the diversity of the group to broaden the perspectives shared during the sessions.

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents reported that the CREATE initiative is having an impact at the district and school levels.

District Level. The district’s participation in CREATE has helped increase staff awareness of the need for culturally responsive teaching practices. According to one respondent, this has led district personnel to examine how effective the current system is for students of color. Another respondent said that “we are really pretty good at educating white middle class kids....But we’re not so good at [educating] everybody else.”

Through participation in CREATE, district staff also have become more comfortable discussing racial and cultural differences. One respondent attributed this increased willingness to engage in conversations about race to the district’s use of the *Courageous Conversations* protocol written by Curtis Lipton. This approach has been used in addressing challenges with PBIS, RtI, staff development, and in meetings with parents and students.

The district’s involvement in CREATE also has influenced hiring practices. For example, interview protocols now include questions about cultural competence. One respondent said that “one of our expectations is that our teachers will use culturally responsive teaching methods and strategies. [We ask job candidates to] describe what...[they] know about this concept and what...[practices they] might have used in the past.”

School and Classroom Level. Most respondents noted positive changes at the school and classroom levels as a result of the district’s participation in CREATE. One respondent cited increased teacher awareness of cultural differences. Another noted that some teachers have begun to implement culturally responsive practices in their classrooms:

The individuals that I’ve worked with...[have tried] a few different things—strategies and how they structure the period of the day or the whole day if they’re elementary, how they are choosing to assess students, how they’re becoming involved with the families and the community.

A teacher who was interviewed described how she has made her classroom more inviting:

I've changed some of the different things to make it so that posters and pictures and things in my room represent more different cultures instead of just one culture of any certain kind, or one certain kind of student, to kind of represent people with disabilities and people with different ethnic backgrounds.

Respondents generally agreed that although district and building-level administrators are all aware of CREATE, most teachers are not familiar with the initiative. However, there is a growing awareness among teachers of the district's emphasis on educational equity, particularly among teachers who work in schools with diverse student populations.

Student Behavior and Performance. Respondents noted some changes in student behavior as a result of increased staff sensitivity to racial and cultural differences. One respondent said that students of color are “a little less defensive...I think we've done a much better job of helping students be positive about coming to school and being in school and letting their guard down.” Another respondent agreed, noting that students were “beginning to feel more validated and appreciated.” One district staff member said that he has noticed that “students of color at the high school level actually create relationships with our administrators, and that's something that has not happened [before].” He also noted that there has been an overall decrease in disciplinary referrals within the district but said that students of color still have higher referral rates than other students.

Plans for Next Year

District activities in 2010–11 focused on developing action plans based on analyses of student data and providing professional development for teachers and staff through the Beyond Diversity trainings and Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops. The district plans to continue these efforts next year. Members of the district equity leadership team also will continue to work on deepening their understanding of race, culture, and educational equity and will review district policies and practices to ensure that they are aligned with current improvement efforts. A major goal for 2011–12 will be strengthening relationships with families and communities and involving them in the district's work on educational equity.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified a few factors that have facilitated the district's progress toward achieving its goals related to educational equity. One respondent said that the support of key district staff, including the superintendent and a member of the school board, has been critical to the district's progress. The director of community education services also was singled out as “an outstanding role model and leader.” Two respondents identified the support and engagement of building administrators as key facilitators of district efforts. Some respondents also mentioned CREATE as a facilitating factor. They valued both the professional development and networking opportunities provided by the initiative and the support that has been available to the district from DPI and CREATE staff.

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified specific challenges to moving forward with district improvement efforts. A concern shared by three of the respondents was the ability of the district to involve more staff in the initiative. A core group of district administrators, principals, and teachers has been able to participate in CREATE professional development opportunities, but as one respondent noted, “a majority of people...[in the district have not been involved] in the CREATE initiative and we won’t have enough financial resources to give them the same opportunity that we’ve been able to get [through CREATE].” Entrenched teaching practices also were identified as a potential barrier to district improvement efforts.

Sustainability of District Efforts

Most respondents expressed optimism about the district’s ability to sustain current efforts related to educational equity. They noted the commitment of the equity leadership team to build on past work and the team’s systemic approach to district improvement. One concern was that if there are changes in district leadership, support for current initiatives may be weakened.

Summary

District 5 has made considerable progress in building district capacity to implement culturally responsive practices and address educational inequities. Following are a few of these achievements:

- There is strong district support for improvement efforts, including backing from the district superintendent, a member of the school board, and key district and building-level administrators.
- The district’s equity leadership team includes a variety of stakeholders from the community.
- By adopting a top-down training strategy, the district has ensured that all of its district and building-level administrators are participating in the CREATE initiative.
- The district has begun to identify and train key building-level staff to support principals in implementing culturally responsive practices.
- District hiring practices have been revised to include a focus on the cultural competence of prospective staff members.
- Culturally responsive practices have begun to be incorporated into the district’s RtI and PBIS initiatives.

District 6 Case Study

DPI required District 6 to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and at least one professional development opportunity because of a disproportionate representation of Native American students in special education, especially students identified as having an emotional or behavioral disability (EBD). The district met its professional development requirement by arranging for Dr. Lisa Bardon, a consultant for DPI, to meet with district staff to discuss ways to differentiate cultural mismatch from EBD. The district also sent a team to the CREATE workshop, “Culturally Responsive Frameworks for RtI and PBIS” in April 2011. One staff member from the district also participated in a meeting of tribal language teachers and program staff that was held by the American Indian Student Achievement Network in December 2010. The evaluation team conducted three interviews with staff members from the district who were involved in one or more these activities. Respondents included one district administrator and two building-level staff members.

District Goals and Activities

Each of the three respondents identified different goals that the district is pursuing related to the CREATE initiative. One respondent said that the district’s overarching goal is to ensure that Native American students are getting an adequate education and are participating equally in school programs. Another respondent said that a primary goal of district improvement efforts to increase the graduation rates of Native American students. The third respondent said that a primary goal is to reduce the disproportionate representation of Native American students in special education. Two respondents indicated that the districts’ goals have remained consistent, but that the approach to addressing them has changed during the past year. They noted that the district has been working to develop a centralized data system so that data can be more easily accessed and used to inform decision making. One of the respondents explained, “We had this information before, but we have not always acted on it in a systematic way. Now we are taking the data...[and] getting other people involved [in looking at it].”

Two of the respondents said that the CREATE initiative fits well with current district initiatives, although the third one was not aware of any connection between CREATE and district initiatives. One of the respondents said that the goals of the CREATE initiative are consistent with district efforts to strengthen relationships between adults and students. Another respondent noted that CREATE is well-aligned with the district’s RtI and PBIS initiatives. The district has begun to implement PBIS in two schools within the district and is just beginning to implement RtI. The respondent said that district involvement in CREATE has prompted staff to look at data on suspension and expulsion rates for Native and non-Native students and to question why the rates are higher for Native students.

Respondents’ reports of progress toward achieving district goals differed in part because each respondent focused on different goals and assessed progress in different ways. One respondent

noted that staff participation in the CREATE workshop on culturally responsive frameworks for RtI and PBIS and in trainings with Lisa Bardon on cultural mismatch have helped to increase staff awareness of disparities between Native and non-Native students. Another respondent said that there has been some progress in reducing disciplinary problems among all students, including Native American students. The third respondent said that the district has made no real progress in addressing educational disparities and has provided few professional development opportunities for staff on culturally responsive practices. This respondent noted there have been no in-service trainings on cultural awareness “for a very long time,” and added that “I do not think that [the district] wishes to see it as a racial problem.... [This] is what I think they are avoiding.”

Very few activities were offered by the district or by schools that focused on educational equity or culturally responsive practices. The high school did hold a book study group this year for staff that focused on *Courageous Conversations about Race*. The group was led by the high school principal and met five times during the year with about five to 10 teachers attending each meeting. One of the interview respondents participated in the book study group and described the types of conversations that occurred:

We talk about being non-Native, being relatively well to do...[that] how we look at things is way different than how our kids, especially our Native American kids, look at things. We pick a topic and...talk about how does poverty on the reservation affect us here at school—not just the Native American kids, but all kids....We talk about cultural sensitivity.

One respondent mentioned that powwows are held at the middle school and high school and help to raise awareness of Native American culture, although he said that the events are not really attended by Native American students. He also noted that the district’s alternative school, which has a student population that is approximately 70 percent Native American, holds several events that focus on Native American culture such as a drumming exhibition and presentations on different aspects of Native culture and noted that the district now offers first and second year Ojibwe language classes. However, no professional development activities focusing on cultural awareness or culturally responsive practices were mentioned other than the book study group and the opportunities provided through the CREATE initiative.

Respondents said that most staff members within the district, apart from members of the district leadership team, were not familiar with the CREATE initiative. According to one respondent, district administrators are aware that the district is working to address disproportionality in special education referrals and placements and is trying to identify ways to increase graduation rates among Native American students, but few teachers or other staff members know about the CREATE initiative or about culturally responsive practices. Dissemination of information about CREATE and culturally responsive practices is also limited. One respondent said that he

disseminates information selectively to members of the disproportionality team but not staff within the district as whole.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

District staff were involved in several CREATE activities in 2010–11. Most respondents provided positive feedback on CREATE activities as a whole, but offered few details about specific workshops or trainings. Following is a summary of participant feedback on CREATE activities.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. A district team has participated in the CREATE needs assessment for three years. Staff members who participated in the 2011 needs assessment preconference session either attended voluntarily or were asked to participate based on their roles. Participants included the special education director, the director of curriculum and instruction, principals, a school psychologist, the Native American home-school coordinators, and regular and special education teachers. According to one respondent, in developing the 2011–12 district improvement plan, the team “wanted to identify and utilize multiple approaches to support student engagement and academic success...[We] also wanted to make sure that our district’s curriculum is aligned with the state content standards and benchmarks—as well as research-based and comprehensive—so that it meets the needs of our diverse learners.

One of the respondents noted that the quality of the needs assessment sessions has improved over the past three years and said that CREATE staff have been responsive to participant feedback on the sessions. He said that he thought that

there was a very nice mixture of ‘Here is some information that we have been able to identify that may help you in your activities,’ but then they also provided another opportunity for us to then, as a group, to say ‘ok, how does this all affect us? Is this something that we want to take and run with or, no, this just doesn’t fit our situation?’ I really like that format—that we are getting information that we can think about and mull over and chew on, but then still given time to say, ‘Ok, this is a great idea that we’ve heard about, now how are we actually going to implement it back in our district?’

Technical Assistance on Distinguishing Between a Cultural Mismatch and EBD. Dr. Lisa Bardon from the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point met with the district team at the preconference needs assessment session and held two workshops for district staff members during the year that focused on differentiating cultural mismatch from disordered behavior. One of the respondents said that working with her has been helpful.

American Indian Student Achievement Network. Attendance records indicate that one staff member from the district participated in an AISAN meeting for tribal language teachers and program staff in December 2010, but no feedback was provided on the meeting.

Culturally Responsive Frameworks for RtI and PBIS Workshop. One respondent said that he attended the CREATE RtI/PBIS workshop in April 2011 with several building-level staff members who are implementing RtI or PBIS. The respondent did not discuss the quality of the workshop but noted that he encourages staff to attend events that best address a particular building-level issue or need.

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Two of the respondents reported that the CREATE initiative has had some impact at the district and school levels.

District Level. One respondent reported that staff members have become more culturally aware and culturally responsive, especially members of the leadership team. Another respondent said that district staff are assessing EBD students differently. He explained, “The kids may still be...identified [as EBD], but we are doing a better job of saying ‘Ok, the cultural issue may be involved here’ and then we make our decisions with that [in mind].” He also noted that participation in CREATE has helped members of the disproportionality team nail down some of the factors that may be contributing to overidentification of Native American students in the area of emotional and behavioral disabilities. He said, “I think we now are understanding that...there are things that we’re doing within our own district that we may need to change. But, I think it’s because of the activities and the information that we’ve been getting through the CREATE project that are getting people to think a little deeper, dig a little differently.”

School and Classroom Level. Respondents reported some changes in teaching practices. One respondent said that there are some teachers who have begun to implement culturally responsive classroom practices:

[These teachers] have learned to teach not from their culture, but from the culture of some of the students....For instance, the social studies teacher might be teaching... [about] civil disobedience and talk about what happened in the '50s and '60s or what happened to Gandhi. [This] does not make a lot of sense to some kids. But if you talk about...all of the things that have gone on between Native people and people who are a bunch of old Norwegians here in the area, that is a context they can understand.

Another respondent said that during the past year or two he has seen teachers “trying to include Native culture more in their daily practice....I’m seeing some additional kinds of things that are going up on the walls that are more identifiable with Native kids and their culture. So, I think from that standpoint, I think teachers are attempting to make that more a part of what they do every day.”

Student Behavior and Performance. Respondents generally agreed that it is too early to really see an impact of district’s efforts on student behavior or performance, although one respondent did say that the data indicates that there has been an increase in the number of Native American

students with special needs participating in regular education classes rather than special education classes.

Plans for Next Year

Respondents reported various plans for next year for continuing work toward district goals. One respondent said that the district administrative team will create a four-year strategic plan this summer that will include goals related to the implementation of RtI and PBIS within the district and presumably some of the goals the districts is pursuing related to the CREATE initiative. The plan will be developed after the current superintendent leaves in June 2011. A principal who has served on the district's disproportionality team has been selected as the new superintendent and will lead the team that drafts the strategic plan.

Another respondent said that next year the district plans to reassess all students identified as EBD: “[We] want to take all of the kids that we’ve identified as EBD in the district, and specifically our kids that are Native kids and...go back through the EBD criteria sheets” to determine whether students have been correctly identified.

The third respondent said that the district would be starting a new program at the high school next year, Students Accepting Success (SAS), which is designed to help students who are falling behind in their classes. The program requires these students to attend extra study sessions outside of the classroom until they have achieved a passing grade. The program is currently being implemented in the middle school with some success. However, the respondent noted that there is already a large group of Native American males at the high school who are not participating in regular classes but are instead in special education classes. The respondent thought that the program had the potential to further segregate these students.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

One respondent identified several factors that he believed have facilitated district improvement efforts thus far. He noted that the district administrator is very concerned about the low graduation rates of Native American students and has encouraged efforts to determine what the district can do to improve. The respondent said that one of the high school principals has been supportive of efforts to address disproportionality and has participated in IEP meetings and worked with teachers on strategies for helping struggling students. The home-school coordinators and Native language teachers also have been supportive of this work. He said that “I think they believe that we are trying to make some changes and working hard to improve our situation.” He also said that the financial support provided to the district for staff members to participate in professional development activities has been important in helping the district move forward with improvement efforts.

Another respondent said that another factor that may facilitate district efforts is an influx of new staff members:

We have a lot of folks retiring and we are hiring new people, and I think [the new teachers] coming in at the age of 25 probably are more culturally aware or more aware of inequalities than people who are [older]...The things that some of the folks my age see as being real earth shaking, they go ‘I do not see anything earth shaking about this, this is kind of normal course of business.’

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified four challenges to district improvement efforts—lack of staff development, lack of time, lack of money, and an absence of districtwide coordination. One staff member reported that the district has offered no in-service trainings on cultural awareness within the past eight years. Another respondent noted that if time is devoted to staff development, then there is less time for instruction unless funding is available to pay for substitute teachers. Given district budget cuts, the respondent said it is unlikely that the district will be able to fund professional development activities for staff. With regard to lack of district coordination, one of the respondent said that “I think [a challenge] is trying to get four buildings to all decide that we are going to work on the same thing.” The district also is implementing several different initiatives, and the respondent observed that “trying to infuse...cultural responsiveness...into all of those initiatives is somewhat challenging.”

One respondent was skeptical about whether the district was really committed to helping Native American students. This respondent said that district administrators have not been supportive of efforts to infuse Native culture into the schools and do not appear to view these efforts as important to helping Native American students succeed. The respondent observed that

Native American kids here are a little over a fourth of the student body. I would like to see some physical representation of culture in the school...There is nothing to indicate that these kids should be proud of their culture. We have suggested in the past doing [something] like a mural of a wall of heroes, which was rejected. We have suggested doing a recycling, love your Mother Earth, project, which was rejected. We have suggested putting signs in our native language, of which they have done one that I know of. It does not seem to be considered important by...the administration.

Sustainability of District Efforts

Two respondents believed that the districts’ improvement efforts can be sustained even if funding for the CREATE initiative ends because district staff now recognize both the problem and the need to address it. As one respondent said, “I think that we’re getting to the point where [district administrators] understand the issue and know that we cannot continue to have our kids have as much difficulty [as they’re currently having]. So, I think to a certain extent, that we will be able to maintain ...[our efforts] because the staff wants to do a better job of educating their native kids.” One of the respondents believed that so little has been accomplished in implementing culturally responsive practices that it was premature to talk about sustainability.

Summary

District 6 has made some progress in addressing the disproportionate representation of Native American students in special education. With respect to the broader goals identified by two of the respondents—ensuring that Native American students have an adequate education and increasing the graduation rates Native American students—the district appears to have made little progress. As one respondent noted, there is an increasing recognition of the disparities in the academic and behavioral outcomes of Native and non-Native students, but the district has as yet developed no coherent plan for addressing these disparities. There are small pockets of activity—participation in some CREATE professional development opportunities, a book study group at the high school, and a few dedicated teachers who have begun to implement culturally responsive practices—but there is no overall coordination of these activities at the district level and little financial or administrative support for providing professional development opportunities for staff focusing on culturally responsive practices. Following is a summary of district achievements thus far:

- Incorporation of cultural guidelines for differentiating cultural mismatch from disordered behavior into district special education identification, referral, and placement procedures.
- A reported increase in the number of Native American students with disabilities who participate in regular classrooms rather than more restrictive learning environments.
- Development of a centralized data system that allows staff to access student data more easily and use data to inform decision making.
- Recognition of disparities in the academic and behavioral outcomes of Native and non-Native students and the need to address those disparities.
- Beginning implementation of RtI and PBIS in schools within the district.

District 7 Case Study

District 7 was required to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and at least one CREATE-identified professional development opportunity because they were identified by DPI as having disproportionate representation of Native American students in special education. The district met its professional development requirement through participating in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops. The evaluation team conducted four interviews with school and district staff members who were involved in one or more CREATE components. Respondents included two district administrators and two building-level administrators.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents suggested that the main goal of the district’s work related to the CREATE initiative is to be more culturally responsive to all students and to use data to understand their “current state of affairs” and improve learning strategies and interventions. Specific goals include

improving the Building Consultation Teams (BCTs) and RtI process for referring students for special education, reaching out to Native American parents and students, and learning more about culture and poverty. Respondents indicated that the goals have remained the same during the past two years but were modified with new action steps for reaching outcomes. One respondent said that the goals have changed somewhat to focus on the “administration [taking] on a leadership role in getting some more information to staff.”

Respondents noted that three other initiatives taking place in the district are well aligned with the CREATE initiative. First, the district has restructured its BCTs for the RtI process. This process has become more “solution focused” and uses data for tracking interventions and monitoring progress. The BCTs have pushed for the inclusion of all students in the general classroom. The BCTs also have looked at data specific to Native American students and asked, “What interventions should we be offering? What does our data tell us that is unique about [these] students?”

Second, respondents said that 2010–11 was the second year the district had offered a prekindergarten program for four-year-olds at elementary schools. Most of the Native American preschoolers are participating in this program and have good attendance, noted as a challenge with Native American students in other grades. The prekindergarten program also includes a parent component. One respondent said, “We don’t know the benefits [of the program] obviously yet. Kids are getting exposure to school and other peers and all of that a year earlier than they had been. It is very play-focused. We think that’s going to yield some really good results.”

Third, a respondent said that teachers are using a new software program, Build Your Own Curriculum. This program allows a teacher to look at the curriculum and “make sure that it is meeting the needs of our students, but also our teaching styles—so we’re meeting all the different learning styles whether it be bodily, kinesthetic, verbal, or linguistic.”

Respondents reported outreach to the Native American community and students. The district holds meetings for Native American parents, providing a forum for determining how to better meet their student and community needs. These meetings are attended by the superintendent, student services director, and the curriculum director. District staff and teachers also took a tour of the local reservation to learn more about the culture of the tribal community, and the high school held focus groups for Native American students to discuss areas in which they do and do not feel supported by the school. The high school principal stated, “We talked and listened to [the students], and put some things in place.”

The district is offering professional development workshops for teachers to earn professional growth units (PGU). These trainings occur almost weekly and teachers can select trainings on many different topics. Training topics mentioned by respondents include culturally responsive practices, poverty, and student learning styles. For example, one principal described a poverty simulation training offered to district teachers this year.

With regard to participation in the CREATE initiative, respondents said that district staff meet once or twice a year to discuss the needs assessment and the development of the district's annual improvement plan. Teachers who participate in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops attend weekly staff meetings, where they are encouraged to share what they have learned from all trainings they have attended.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

Following are summaries of participant feedback on the CREATE Needs Assessment and the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. A district team has participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment for the past three years. Respondents provided positive feedback on the 2011 needs assessment session and stated that it was relevant to their work in the district. As respondent observed,

I think that...it gave us an opportunity, [to] hear some information, and then reflect. There was some good reflection time, but then it also gave us that time to create an action plan, and I think that's the important piece. [They] gave us a nice broad overview and some broad information about things, but then they allowed us time to really think [about] what we needed to work on in our district....There were people around that could offer us help as we needed, and I thought that really helped as well.

Respondents said that the needs assessment session has improved during the past three years. One respondent mentioned that this year was the best of the three; the first year the district team was still learning the process, and last year there were technical difficulties with the online needs assessment form. This respondent also said that working with the staff from DPI was helpful this year.

Respondents also said that the CREATE Conference has improved. One respondent noted that

[This year's] CREATE Conference...was the best that I had been to over the course of the last three years. I think the presenters were organized...[and] had a good message. I think they allowed for some quality team time, versus in the past I almost felt like...the topics were not always [applicable] to our issue, so I think you [lose] some of your focus if there is an angle that the presenters are sharing. I thought that the information that was presented, how they presented it, the structure of the day, was good and it gave us some good time to dialogue as a team. We had some time with some neighboring districts of ours to collaborate. I think that having that time to do that was beneficial.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices Workshops. None of the respondents who were interviewed had participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops this year. One respondent noted that “In listening to the principals and the teachers who are participating talk, I think they are taking things away. I think they would love it if 100 percent of [the trainings were] applicable and excellent. But there are some good takeaways.”

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents reported that the district’s participation in CREATE, together with the work on the BCTs and related initiatives, is having an impact. One respondent said that CREATE has provided them with background information that they could tie into their other work.

District Level. The main goals of the district in 2010–11 focused mostly on the BCTs and interventions provided to students. Although these goals were not directly related to the CREATE initiative, respondents reported progress in addressing these goals and said that the CREATE initiative has helped with this work. One respondent noted that

The people who I have on the team, I think they have become much more aware of culturally responsive practices. And I would say those people are impacting at a building level and at a classroom level in some cases....Last year we did a lot with poverty. I think that the people who participated in these things really were able to be leaders in that and really kind of bring the knowledge that they learned.

One respondent also mentioned that the district has provided more training, through CREATE and other avenues, for teachers to earn PGUs. These trainings focused on “meeting the needs of all learners,...working on learning styles, [and] working on practices we can use for all learning styles.”

School and Classroom Level. Respondents reported impacts on teachers because of their participation in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops and similar trainings. Most commonly, respondents reported on trainings for addressing the different learning styles of students. One respondent said that

I think when you talk about interventions for kids at the middle level...it really focuses on trying a multitude of different ways to reach kids. I think when it used to be a ‘fit and get,’ well that was just not working. So you look at the multiple intelligences and you look at the learning styles, and having more kids that are tactile or kinesthetic learners. I’m seeing teaching practices where teachers are getting kids up and active and moving. I think any time you are talking about anything that’s an intervention piece, it really does change the instructional practices for teachers to then help the learning for kids.

Student Behavior and Performance. Respondents indicated that there have been changes in student behavior and performance, but said that these changes are “partially [because of]

CREATE, partially [because of] what best practices are, and partially [because of] people [taking] professional growth, classes, and trying new things.” As one respondent stated, “Any time you improve the teaching in the classroom and the kids are more engaged because [of it], that’s a huge thing.” One respondent specifically mentioned changes in the behavior and performance of the district’s Native American students:

I think our MAP [Measures of Academic Performance] scores have improved with our Native American students. I think you would see a trend that our attendance is getting better [with these students]. We still have a ways to go, ...but we are getting better. The number of referrals of Native American students has decreased over the last couple of years.

Plans for Next Year

District activities in 2010–11 focused on developing a more culturally responsive environment for all students. Respondents said that the district’s primary goal in 2011–12 will be to continue to develop the district’s PBIS model and tiered interventions. The district has applied for a grant that would fund release time for teachers to work with a trainer from DPI to look at current interventions, research other options, and determine the best interventions for different students.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

All respondents attributed the success of district improvement efforts to the people involved—district and school staff. One respondent also mentioned that through the leadership of the superintendent, they are “doing” the work rather than “planning” the work: “I think our administrative team works extremely well together. I think when I talk about this stuff with our principals they understand [and] want to take action. They’ve been more than willing in whatever situation...to get things going and rolling.” Another respondent mentioned the district’s focus on increasing staff buy-in:

I think that...we’ve made people put [the work] on the forefront. We continue to revisit our goals as a district and where we’re headed and where we want to go—that everybody has buy-in. I think buy-in is key, and I think there has been a real shift in that... We need to meet the learning styles of all students. I think that those factors are instrumental, and the positive attitude, ...and really believing in our students, and believing in our staff, and believing that together we can all be successful.

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified three challenges to district improvement efforts: time, money, and staff turnover. Respondents most commonly said that time and money are a challenge. With regard to time, respondents mentioned the need to develop interventions, form relationships with parents, have teachers attend trainings, and make practices consistent across the district. One respondent

said that finances are always an issue, and another mentioned that the district has had a high turnover this year, with many teachers retiring.

Sustainability of District Efforts

Respondents were optimistic that work related to the CREATE initiative and similar initiatives could be sustained. They said that the interventions they have developed have become part of their practice. As one respondent noted,

I think that the goals that we've created will be ingrained in our thinking and our attitude. Once...our staff have some of these interventions in place it is going to become daily practice in what we do and how we know that we're meeting the learning needs of kids and realizing...through good assessment...[when] we are not. If we are not, then find a new way to teach or a new way to get information across to students.

Summary

District 7 has made progress toward reaching its goals in 2010–11. Although most of these goals are not directly related to CREATE, they are aligned with the initiative. Some of the highlights from the district's work this year include:

- Offering frequent training opportunities for teachers. These trainings included topics such as addressing different learning styles and culturally responsive teaching practices.
- Restructuring the BCTs for referring students for special education services and ensuring that interventions are the best fit for the student. The district also has focused on the inclusion of these students in the general classroom.
- Offering a second year of prekindergarten for four-year-olds. Respondents reported that this program helps them reach students and families earlier and prepare these students and families for kindergarten. This program was well attended by Native American preschoolers in the community.
- Reaching out to the Native American community. The district holds regular parent meetings, and the high school has held focus groups with students to get feedback on how they can better meet the needs of Native American students and their families. Teachers also have taken field trips to the local reservation to learn more about the culture of the community.

District 8 Case Study

DPI required District 8 to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and at least one CREATE-identified professional development opportunity because of the disproportionate representation of African American students in special education. The district met its professional development requirement by participating in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education and working with an equity leadership coach. The evaluation team interviewed four staff members involved in one or more of these activities. Respondents included two district administrators and two building-level administrators.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents identified the “longstanding goal” of reducing the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education. Additional goals identified by respondents included increasing the participation of students of color in extracurricular activities and promoting awareness of educational equity and culturally responsive practices among building administrators, teachers, and community-based agencies.

In 2010–11, the district engaged in several activities that advanced these goals. To address its goal of reducing the disproportionate representation of students of color in special education, the district established a subcommittee, DISPRO, to focus on disproportionality. This group has been conducting record reviews for all students of color who have been identified as having disabilities, specifically those students identified as having emotional or behavioral disabilities, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities. The subcommittee has looked at the identification process for these students, their school histories, how and when they were identified, and what kinds of interventions were used with them so that they can improve services to these students and continue to work to decrease disproportionality. The subcommittee also has been working to ensure that students with special needs are served in the least restrictive environment. As one respondent explained, “We want to make sure that if specially designed interventions are needed for students, that the environment in which they occur is as appropriate for them as possible, that we’re very mindful of what setting students are in and that they are hopefully as involved with their peers as possible.”

District staff also reviewed data on participation rates for AP courses, extracurricular activities, and field trips and are working on revising district policies to increase the participation of students of color in these activities. One respondent noted that last year, the district’s special education director worked on rules regarding student involvement in field trips and activities and asked that the board policy be revised to minimize restrictions on participation.

The district’s equity leadership team continued to participate in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education in 2010–11. Members of the team include the special education director, the special education coordinator, principals, and school psychologists. Within the district, the team

has held several meetings and has been working on a culturally responsive practices document for the district's RtI committee. Several goals and initiatives associated with CREATE are guided by the equity leadership team. The team has focused on disseminating information about CREATE and "creating learning experiences for other people in the district." The team also has worked closely with the district's executive committee to improve understanding of the CREATE initiative and "to grow the process" within the district. Team members held several meetings with the executive committee in 2010–11 to discuss changes in district leadership (the district has a new superintendent), district goals, and plans for educating the new superintendent about what the work the equity leadership team has been engaged in. The district's local equity coach has been involved in several of these meetings. The coach also works with the leadership team at CREATE consortium seminars.

The district expanded its training for staff on educational equity and culturally responsive practices. In the past, members of the equity leadership team and some principals had participated in the CREATE consortium and in Beyond Diversity trainings offered through the consortium. Two Beyond Diversity trainings were held within the district in 2010–11. The director of special education selected individuals who are leaders in their schools to attend the first training. Participants included principals, school psychologists, social workers, and teachers. Members of community-based organizations also were invited to attend the training; agencies represented included homeless shelters, Wisconsin Community Services, and the Department of Health and Human Services. A second Beyond Diversity training was held in June 2011 for building teams and individuals. One respondent described the trainings as "a foundation for the work that we need to do with our classroom teachers, with our leaders, with our parents, our school boards, about understanding how race and culture make a difference in how we learn and how we support students."

Respondents said that the CREATE initiative is well aligned with the district's RtI and PBIS initiatives. As one respondent noted:

Right now our district is looking at our RtI, looking at the way that we have universal systems of instruction that truly are evidence-based and appropriate and getting the good results that we expect to get. We are looking at how our instruction is done with fidelity and integrity, and central to that is the culturally responsive part of our education practice.

Another respondent said that CREATE "completely" supports the district's efforts for PBIS.

The district also has integrated culturally responsive classroom practices into mentoring sessions for new teachers. One respondent said that new teachers are "very aware" of the CREATE initiative because each new teacher attends trainings on culturally responsive practices and race awareness.

Although the district has sought to expand its training for staff, awareness of the CREATE initiative and the district's work on educational equity varies. One respondent indicated that teacher leaders are very aware. Another respondent noted teacher awareness "depends on how interested and involved the principal is, because some principals are in the consortium, while some aren't.... [W]e [also] have great differences in diversity of our schools. Some schools wouldn't be as involved in CREATE...because they might not see the need yet."

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

The district was involved in several CREATE activities in 2010–11. Following is a summary of participant feedback on these activities.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. The district has participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment for the past three years. During interviews, respondent did not discuss their involvement in the needs assessment process.

Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education. Members of the district's equity leadership team participated in consortium seminars in 2010–11. The seminars brought together participating districts to discuss and identify solutions for common challenges. Respondents who attended were pleased with the seminars. One respondent said, "I thought they were very high quality. I think that Glenn Singleton and the Pacific Educational Group...are very engaging and they bring a lot of knowledge to CREATE, to the consortium. I also think that our coach is very knowledgeable." Another respondent observed that "when we were at the consortium working with other districts..., [it] really helped us to progress faster with our learning and just being able to have more 'ah ha' moments."

Respondents reported two benefits of participating in the consortium. One respondent noted that the knowledge gained through participating was used by the equity leadership team in working on the culturally responsive practices document for the district's RtI committee. Another respondent said that during the consortium seminars, members of the equity leadership team discussed goals and plans for moving forward with district work on culturally responsive practices.

One respondent suggested that the consortium hold local meetings in the future so that "we could get more involved with districts closer to us." This respondent said it was challenging to maintain communication and conduct site visits with geographically dispersed districts.

Equity Leadership Coaching. A local equity coach who participates in the consortium has been working with the district to help build the district's capacity to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. According to respondents, the coach has offered informal learning opportunities to discuss culturally responsive practices, helped the district coordinate initiatives, and provided feedback to the executive committee. The coach received high praise from a number of respondents. He was described as "knowledgeable" and "phenomenal." One

respondent commented on the coach's ability to remain engaged with the district over the school year and motivate the district to move forward with its work.

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents reported that the CREATE initiative is having an impact, particularly for staff members who have been actively involved in the initiative.

District Level. The district has begun to integrate culturally responsive practices into many of its processes and structures. For example, one respondent said, "It has affected everything we do because it becomes part of the discussion. Any time we want to make any major move or change...we seek more feedback; we try to look at things from all perspectives."

Together with this foundational understanding, the district has begun to incorporate culturally responsive practices into district hiring practices, new teacher training, and RtI. With regard to hiring practices, one respondent described the district's approach as "looking for individuals who are aware of our part in the success or failure of students rather than expecting a student to fit into a white middle class value system."

School and Classroom Level. Some respondents said CREATE also has had an impact at the school and classroom levels. For example, one respondent said that teachers and administrators are more cognizant of different perspectives when developing common assessments, rubrics, and lesson plans. This respondent also stated that when teachers are selecting reading materials, they understand that these books "should not always be from the white middle class perspective."

Student Behavior and Performance. Two respondents indicated that the district's involvement in CREATE is beginning to have an impact on student behavior; two respondents were unsure whether there has been an impact yet on students. One respondent reported that the "numbers of referrals and disciplinary issues [in our building] have gone down dramatically over the last few years. I think that is in part because we are aware." This respondent noted, however, that there may be other factors contributing to the decline in disciplinary problems. Another respondent observed that "we have improved, I believe, on our identification of students with special needs—of black students with special needs.... We were significantly disproportionate and now we are...[just] disproportionate."

Plans for Next Year

District activities in 2010–11 focused on reducing disproportionality and expanding training on educational equity to building-level staff and community members. Respondents identified several plans for next year:

- Continuing to participate in professional development opportunities offered through CREATE.

- Offering several trainings on cultural responsiveness at the district’s annual summer professional development institute.
- Identifying processes and technology for disseminating the information learned at trainings.
- Identifying replacements for leaders who have retired (e.g., the director of special education).

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified a number of factors that have facilitated the district’s improvement efforts. One respondent said that CREATE has been a facilitating factor: “The CREATE initiative is kind of set up to feel like a family, especially for the district equity leadership team. We really feel like we’re valued and supported and that taking this work seriously is really important.” The equity leadership team also was viewed as a facilitating factor. Because of the team’s acquired knowledge and cohesive structure, it has been able to effectively guide the district’s work on educational equity. Two respondents mentioned the consortium seminars and district’s equity leadership coach as resources that allowed the district to continue to move forward.

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified three internal challenges to district improvement efforts: (1) finding the time to follow up with teachers and staff who have gone through professional development and provide opportunities for ongoing learning; (2) funding for ongoing professional development opportunities; and (3) increasing the involvement and engagement of all staff members. One respondent also commented on the current political climate in the state and the challenges it presents for educators:

[Our government] feels very anti-education, anti-child, and a lot of the political decisions that are happening in our state feel racist to me....Our knowledge, will, skill are great in our district and it is going to just keep on exponentially improving, but the challenge is that there are going to be many more barriers, especially as we move into a year from now where we are looking at multimillion dollar decreases in our budgets.

Sustainability of District Efforts

All four respondents were optimistic about sustaining the district’s current efforts related to educational equity and culturally responsive practices. Most respondents cited the high level of engagement by the equity leadership team, building administrators, and district administrators as the primary reasons for their optimism. As one individual stated, “Culturally responsive practices are at the core of our district values.”

Summary

District 8 has made considerable progress in developing its capacity to implement culturally responsive practices and address disproportionality. Following are a few of these achievements:

- Members of the district's equity leadership team are engaged and work well together.
- The district has been actively engaged in the CREATE consortium and has incorporated lessons learned from other districts in its strategic planning.
- The district expanded its training for staff on educational equity and culturally responsive practices.
- The district has begun to embed culturally responsive practices into its RtI and PBIS frameworks.
- There has been a decrease in the number of students of color who are referred for special education services.

District 9 Case Study

District 9 was required to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and to complete at least one CREATE-identified professional development opportunity because the district was identified by DPI as having disproportionate representation of Native American students in special education, especially students identified as having emotional or behavioral disabilities. The district met its professional development requirement by participating in the Beyond Diversity training in April 2011. Because the training conflicted with the CREATE preconference needs assessment session, the district made alternate arrangements to complete the needs assessment. District staff also have participated in the American Indian Student Achievement Network and the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project. Three interviews were conducted with district staff members who have been involved in one or more of these activities.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents described the district's primary goals as identifying the learning needs of Native American students and promoting culturally responsive practices that are sensitive to Native American culture. To help achieve these goals, the district is using data to monitor the academic performance and behavioral outcomes of students, particularly Native American students and students with disabilities. The district established three committees to review student data. One committee examines student achievement data, primarily WKCE scores. A second committee reviews data on students with disabilities. A third committee reviews data on school climate—youth risk behavior, student attendance, and disciplinary referrals.

More than 75 percent of the district's students are Native American. Addressing issues of race and culture has therefore been central to district efforts to improve the learning opportunities and outcomes of students. As one respondent noted, "When...between 75 and 80 percent of your students [are] Native American you have to look at how race impacts the whole process." Another observed that "There are some distinct cultural differences in the way Native American kids learn. [I want teachers] to be able to identify and then problem solve or teach with that perspective in mind—that Native American child's learning profile."

Because the district is small, only a limited number of staff members have been involved in implementing goals related to the CREATE initiative. According to one of the respondents, the superintendent selected individuals who "would be effective in at least looking at some of the district needs and also in the implementation process and programming" and those who were "high stakes individuals who are most likely, based on personality and position, to be able to implement some of the initiatives."

Respondents stated that most district personnel and teachers are not familiar with the CREATE initiative, although they are aware of the district efforts to reduce disproportionality and have participated in in-service meetings and other trainings where culturally responsive practices were discussed. As one respondent explained, "they kind of had an introduction to it and kind of know what it's about, but I don't think that most of the staff members really intimately understand what we're trying to do."

The district has been implementing PBIS to address districtwide behavioral challenges. One respondent noted that "PBIS is the specific program that's being implemented, but I think some of...[what] is driving it is the CREATE participation." Another respondent agreed, and described the CREATE initiative as the "catalyst in a lot of stuff that's going on." One respondent, however, expressed concern that the district is expected to implement too many initiatives:

There are too many initiatives. That's just the way it is. Sooner or later you have to pick and choose. Right now I feel like we have been spread so thin that we can't do anything effectively. If you want us to do PBIS, don't have us do anything else until we have everything figured out. If you want us to do common core standards don't have us do anything else until we have it figured out.

According to respondents, there is no structured process to address disproportionality, but there are a variety of efforts to increase cultural awareness and improve teacher practices. For example, the district has offered professional development to the majority of the district teachers and staff on conducting circle meetings, where students and staff gather in a circle to talk about and resolve issues that have come up. Although the professional development sessions did not specifically focus on cultural responsiveness, culturally responsive practices were among the topics addressed. One respondent noted that in-service trainings provide opportunities to discuss cultural responsiveness; materials also are disseminated to staff to improve teacher practice. In

addition, teachers have participated in out-of-district trainings on closing the achievement gap in mathematics for Native American students. Other opportunities are more sporadic and informal and take place “maybe three or four times a year, when people come upon an article or something like that is distributed around.”

One of the main accomplishments reported by respondents was improving relationships with members of the local tribal community and increasing parent and community involvement in students’ education. Respondents noted that the community has a general distrust towards the school because “the whole trust issue has been breached in the past.” The district has gradually been building relationships. For example, the district received external funding to support development of the local Native American language, offered tribal language courses, and has engaged community members to teach the language to staff members after school.

The district has a large percentage of younger children with a range of disabilities, and it has built a strong collaboration with the Head Start program to develop “continuity between their expectations of children and what our expectations are.” In fact, this collaboration was regarded by one respondent as one of the strengths of the district. The district participated in collaborative trainings and planning meetings with the Head Start staff and reached out to parents to involve them in their children’s education. One respondent observed that “when the parents are comfortable and they’re not coming in yelling at you, it’s a whole lot easier to build this togetherness.”

The district also administered the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to assess student perceptions. Survey findings indicated that many students believe they are “cared for” by their school.

Participation in the CREATE Initiative

District staff participated in several CREATE activities in 2010–11. Following is a summary of participant feedback on these activities.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality. The district was not able to participate in the 2011 preconference needs assessment session because it coincided with the Beyond Diversity training they attended. The district instead arranged to conduct its own needs assessment to review last year’s improvement plan and to develop the district’s improvement plan for 2011–12. One of the respondents said, “My suspicion is that the goals we had last year are going to be quite similar to the ones that we will have this year, with the exception of really taking the initiative to help the teachers become more culturally responsive in the classroom and be a little more racially sensitive.”

Beyond Diversity Training. District members participated in the Beyond Diversity training in April 2011. One respondent provided positive feedback on the training. He observed that the presenter “had some good thoughts about systemic racism..., and even though he was talking about African American boys, that was to me, directly transferrable to Native American boys in

our school. So, there were a lot of good things to think about and just to be aware of, that I hadn't been aware of before." Another respondent, however, said the content of the Beyond Diversity training did not relate to the group of students that the district serves.

American Indian Student Achievement Network. One of the respondents reported that staff members from the district have participated in AISAN meetings and conferences. She said that several staff members attended the AISAN conference and workshop that were offered in spring 2010 and two staff members attended the WIEA conference in April 2011, which was cosponsored by AISAN. She said the school psychologist, the high school guidance counselor, the home-school coordinator, and a special education teacher have been actively involved in AISAN meetings, but noted that "there hasn't been a lot going on with that this year."

Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project. Staff members from the district also have been involved in the tribal gatherings cohosted by the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project. There was no feedback on the tribal gatherings, although one respondent said that the activities offered through both AISAN and the Early Childhood Project are the most relevant to the district's needs because of the large percentage of Native American students served by the district.

Overall, district participation in CREATE activities was seen as valuable. Respondents reported that the CREATE conference and trainings have helped them better understand the causes of disproportionality and have provided strategies they can take back to their district. Respondents agreed that this year's conference was better than in previous years. As one respondent put it, "Last year, there were a lot of breakout sessions and I went to a couple of them and they didn't seem real interesting to me. But, this year, it seemed to be more scoped in and there were sessions that I could attend that really made some difference to me."

Another respondent said that an important part of attending the CREATE conference is the six-hour car rides to and from the conference. The team has used this time to share their reactions on sessions attended, reflect on district practices, and plan future steps. This respondent observed that "By default it's become a really neat thing. It's probably a more effective planning session. I look forward to the conference primarily because I'll be able to dialogue with my colleagues in a non-interrupted [environment]."

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents reported that some changes have taken place as a result of the district's participation in the CREATE initiative.

District Level. At the district level, respondents noted that the CREATE has helped to create an awareness and understanding of cultural issues. Although district activities are not systematic, respondents noted that participation in the CREATE initiative has helped them be more informed about their approaches to working with students and "do it on a more focused level." For

example, one respondent noted that “the CREATE conferences have helped us to establish somewhat of a protocol that we can use to...implement effective programming for these kids.” Another respondent stated that the presentation on systemic racism at the Beyond Diversity training has helped him understand why the district is facing so many behavioral challenges. He said, “Now I’m aware of something like that [systemic racism], and I understand that we need to do some work on that and we need to look specifically at that, to give equal opportunity to those kids so that they have a chance to compete with the white kids.”

School and Classroom Level. At the school and classroom levels, respondents said that teachers were becoming more sensitive to student needs, although it has been a slow process. One respondent gave specific examples: “The vast majority of the teachers are incorporating...cultural components to help the children understand their heritage. In math, some of the teachers are using manipulatives that may be culturally notable...[and are] giving examples of story problems that would incorporate Native American kids.” Another respondent mentioned teachers’ use of morning circle meetings. Respondents did not attribute this practice to the CREATE initiative; they noted that the retiring district superintendent had introduced it.

Student Behavior and Performance. Respondents did report some changes in student behavior. They noted that the number of suspensions has decreased in the past year. This change was attributed to district efforts to improve school climate. In addition, the strong collaboration with the Head Start program has had an impact on student behavior: “I’m seeing a difference in kids because there’s less anxiety, less fear. And what I’m hoping is...[that] as those kids get older then we’re going to see a difference. I think it’s going to be a decade-long change.”

Plans for Next Year

District guidance on implementing goals related to the CREATE initiative has been limited, and respondents did not provide a detailed plan for implementing goals next year. They indicated that the district will continue to review data to identify student needs and will work more closely with teachers to introduce culturally responsive classroom practices.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents noted several factors that have facilitated progress toward achieving goals related to the CREATE initiative. Committing district personnel to the initiative was highlighted as a significant facilitator of district progress. Staff members have worked to bridge the gap between the school and families and helped to resolve conflicts and obtain feedback from the community. Although the district is small and staff often have multiple responsibilities or are working in multiple districts, respondents noted that “[being small] makes some of the issues easier to deal with. There’s a stronger sense of community. Community involvement is easier to garner.”

The district also received a grant to implement the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program to support family and school relationships. Some of the activities implemented through

the FAST program were described as facilitating district progress. Although the program ended recently, the school has continued to provide family meals to bring families into the school.

One respondent also mentioned that the CREATE conferences have provided the district with opportunities to connect with other districts and “do some problem solving and brainstorming.”

Challenges to District Improvement Efforts

All respondents identified administrator turnover as the biggest challenge to district improvement efforts. In the last few months the district has lost multiple administrators, who retired or took other positions. Limited funding also was identified as challenge. However, one respondent noted that “the budget is not as big of an issue for us at the moment as the rest of the crazy bizarreness [with retirement] that’s going on. There’s been a pretty consistent overturning of staff, especially administrative staff. The teaching staff is fairly consistent.” Respondents indicated that staff turnover, particularly among district administrators, has created insecurity among teachers who ask, “Where are we going?”

Sustainability of District Efforts

Respondents were generally optimistic that district efforts to address the needs of the Native American students would be sustained. One respondent stated that district efforts would continue because “we don’t have a choice. . . . We have to sustain them. That’s where our issues are.” Another respondent observed that “there’s a real need to continue [this work]. The CREATE initiative is really nice because it kind of forces us to look at those things and forces us to make a plan, which I would hope continues.” However, there was some concern that the current political climate in the state could have a negative impact on district initiatives.

Summary

District 9 has made some progress in developing its capacity to address the needs of the Native American students, although there have been no systematic efforts to address disproportionality or to introduce culturally responsive practices. Following are some of the district’s achievements:

- Improving relationships with members of the local tribal community and increasing parent and community involvement in students’ education.
- Building a strong partnership with the Head Start program to help young children make the transition into school.
- Implementing PBIS to address student disciplinary problems.
- Administering the Youth Risk Behavior Survey to identify student perceptions of school climate.

Recommendations

Findings from both the district case studies and the evaluation surveys completed by participants in CREATE conferences and workshops indicate that most school and district staff members who have participated in CREATE events have found their participation beneficial. The CREATE initiative has enhanced personal and district awareness of racial equity issues and helped to provide school and district staff with strategies and supports for addressing disproportionality, closing achievement gaps, and increasing the learning opportunities of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds..

The following recommendations are based on a review of the findings from interviews conducted with staff in the nine districts included in the case study sample, interviews with the project coordinators of the CREATE components, and responses to evaluation surveys that were completed by participants in CREATE conferences and workshops.

Recommendation 1. Identify districts that are making significant progress in implementing culturally responsive practices and share their successes.

The case studies presented in this report indicate that some districts have made substantial progress in developing and implementing coherent district equity plans. For example, the districts that have participated in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education have made considerable progress this year in developing action plans and beginning to implement them. Other districts could learn from their successes. Consider having some of these districts present at the next CREATE Conference, if one is held in 2012, and ask them to discuss strategies they have used to move forward with implementation of districtwide initiatives, factors that have facilitated their progress, and challenges they have faced and how they have dealt with them.

Recommendation 2. Develop Web-based resources that can help districts and schools implement effective evidence-based teaching and school organizational practices that support successful outcomes for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Developing Web-based resources is a stated goal of the CREATE initiative but one that has not been fully implemented. Consider working with DPI to identify existing resources that could be shared with districts and schools through the CREATE website. The Equity Alliance at ASU has a library of resources (see <http://ea.niusileadscape.org/lc>) that may be of interest to districts participating in CREATE. The Equity Alliance website also provides a useful model for categorizing resources. Also consult with CREATE project coordinators to identify resources that are relevant to participants in specific CREATE components and that could be shared through the CREATE website.

Recommendation 3. Explore options for working remotely with districts (e.g., through videoconferencing or webinars) to provide professional development or technical assistance.

Several project coordinators and district staff members expressed concerns about district budget cuts that may make it difficult for district staff members to travel to workshops and conferences. Videoconferences or webinars will not be appropriate for some of the CREATE workshops and trainings, which can be emotionally charged and are better conducted in person with a skilled facilitator. However, such video and Web-based formats might be used in combination with other modes of delivery.

Recommendation 4. Consider developing regional communities of practices for districts that are participating in CREATE.

Several interview respondents have indicated that they appreciate the opportunities that CREATE provides to network with other districts, but they have expressed a preference for working with districts in their own region. CREATE could potentially help districts establish communities of practice and perhaps facilitate initial meetings, with the goal of having these communities of practice become self-sustaining.

Recommendation 5. Rethink the online community of practice for participants in the American Indian Student Achievement Network.

Neither the Moodle site that was established last year nor the chat room for home–school coordinators that was established this year have been very effective as a format for communication among Network members. The AISAN project coordinator has noted that the concept of an online community of practice has never been fully embraced and accepted by members of the Network. It might be more effective to ask members how they would prefer to communicate and in what format. An online community of practice may still be an option, but the goals of the online forum need to be clarified and the members themselves need to decide whether this format is an effective one for communication, what the goals of communication are, and what topics they would like to discuss. If the online community of practice continues, some guidelines for participating need to be established, preferably by the Network members themselves with assistance from the project coordinator.

Recommendation 6. Continue to collaborate with the Wisconsin RtI Center and PBIS Network to offer professional development opportunities for districts participating in CREATE.

Many of the districts that are participating in CREATE are implementing RtI and PBIS. Some of these districts have already begun embedding culturally responsive practices within these frameworks. Continued professional development on culturally responsive frameworks for RtI and PBIS is likely to benefit a number of districts. The collaboration between CREATE and the

Wisconsin RtI Center and PBIS Network in delivering professional development to districts also appears to have been successful this year, and both partners are likely to benefit from continued collaboration.

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