

Wisconsin CREATE Initiative

Year 1 Evaluation



Wisconsin Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement Report | October 2010

Wisconsin CREATE Initiative: Year 1 Evaluation

October 2010

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Contents

| | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Background and History of the CREATE Initiative | 1 |
| Purpose and Goals of the CREATE Initiative | 4 |
| Design of the CREATE Initiative..... | 5 |
| Overview of the Evaluation | 7 |
| Profiles of CREATE Components | 9 |
| Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education in Wisconsin (CESA 6) | 9 |
| CREATE Conference (CESA 9)..... | 12 |
| American Indian Student Achievement Network (CESA 12) | 14 |
| CREATE Monthly E-Newsletter (CESA 4) | 18 |
| Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices (CESAs 1 and 2) | 20 |
| Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project (CESA 8) | 22 |
| Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality (CESA 4)..... | 28 |
| CREATE Needs Assessment and Development of a Strategic Plan (CESA 11) | 30 |
| Professional Development Academies (CESA 7)..... | 34 |
| Connections Among the CREATE Components..... | 37 |
| CREATE Theory of Action | 39 |
| Feedback on Implementation of CREATE Components..... | 41 |
| Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education in Wisconsin (CESA 6) | 41 |
| CREATE Conference (CESA 9)..... | 46 |
| American Indian Student Achievement Network (CESA 12) | 48 |
| CREATE Monthly E-Newsletter (CESA 4) | 52 |
| Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices (CESAs 1 and 2) | 52 |
| Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project (CESA 8) | 54 |
| CREATE Needs Assessment and Development of a Strategic Plan (CESA 11) | 57 |
| Professional Development Academies (CESA 7)..... | 59 |
| District Case Studies | 64 |
| Sample Selection..... | 64 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Case Study Organization..... | 64 |
| Overview of Case Study Findings | 65 |
| District 1 Case Study | 68 |
| District 2 Case Study | 79 |
| District 3 Case Study | 85 |
| District 4 Case Study | 92 |
| Trend Analysis of Baseline Data | 100 |
| Demographics | 100 |
| Student Outcomes | 103 |
| Conclusions..... | 111 |
| Recommendations..... | 112 |
| References..... | 115 |

Introduction

Learning Point Associates is conducting an independent evaluation of the ongoing implementation and effectiveness of the Wisconsin Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement (CREATE) initiative that will 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 first year of the evaluation, which focused on documenting the implementation of the CREATE initiative. The background, history goals, and design of the initiative are first presented, followed by an overview of the evaluation. The sections of the report that follow those present findings from the first year of the evaluation and recommendations for possible improvements.

Background and History of the CREATE Initiative

The CREATE initiative should be understood in the context of recent research on disproportionality and culturally responsive education, relevant federal guidelines accompanying funding for students with disabilities, and previous state-led initiatives.

Disproportionality and Culturally Responsive Education

The disproportionate representation of certain racial and ethnic groups in special education in the public education system has been of concern to education stakeholders for at least three decades, and it may become increasingly important as the ratio of these students continues to grow in the nation's classrooms (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Although disproportionate minority identification into the categories of cognitive disability (CD), emotional disturbance (ED), and learning disabilities (LD) may not be problematic insofar as it reflects a matching of needs, there is concern that disproportionality results from mismatching (false positives) or failures in early general education for minority students (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

The literature on disproportionality points to accumulating evidence of two causes: structural factors, such as institutional discrimination, or sociodemographic factors such as poverty (Coutinho & Oswald, 2000). Although early studies established links between disproportionality and poverty, recent studies have begun to untangle these complex relationships. A consensus is emerging that both factors contribute to disproportionality individually and in interaction (Coutinho, Oswald, & Best, 2002; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, & Chung-Geun, 2005). Most important, race or minority status is not simply a proxy for poverty; institutional biases may be at work as well. Such findings have prompted the National Research Council to recommend that disproportionality be addressed through reform in the areas of teaching standards, professional development, and identification processes (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

These concerns have prompted a movement toward culturally responsive education practices. Numerous scholars have pointed out that African American males are the most likely group to be referred to special education, and that the vast majority of teachers are white and female. Such teachers may be likely to misinterpret culturally diverse students' performance when it does not

align with the educator’s normative parameters of competence (Klingner, Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, et al., 2005).

In the seminal book *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, Geneva Gay explains that “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” may contribute to improved academic outcomes (Gay, 2000).

Culturally responsive teaching includes the following:

- Explicit acknowledgement, reflection, and learning of different cultural norms and perspectives, including self-awareness on the teacher’s part, resulting in greater understanding of diverse learning styles (Montgomery, 2001)
- Incorporation of cultural and ethnic traditions, themes, symbols, and heritage into the classroom, for all subjects (Gay, 2002)

Other scholars have suggested this pedagogy may reduce disproportionality if it improves academic achievement early and reduces misidentification by increasing cultural understanding. A case study of 33 teachers who underwent a professional development workshop called CRISP—Culturally Responsive Instruction for Special Populations—found that the teachers who participated in the workshop were more likely than they were prior to participating to recognize that diverse cultural experiences contributed to the behavior and academic achievement of their students and to mention these experiences as being important considerations in the identification of culturally diverse students for special needs programs (Voltz, Brazil, & Scott, 2003). Another case study of a professional development initiative at Small College, a college with a primarily Hispanic student population, found that faculty practices did not change within a short time window (half a year) but some attitudes toward learning and teaching practices did change (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009).

Other case studies have suggested that culturally responsive teaching can improve early academic achievement. A popularly cited example is that of the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) in Hawaii, in which reading lessons based on the style of day-to-day Hawaiian conversation were found to improve reading achievement dramatically (Au, 1980).

Federal Guidelines

In 2004, the U.S. Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). The intent of the federal law was to improve the educational services for students with disabilities and to ensure the appropriate identification and evaluation of students for referral to special education services.

Under federal law, 13 categories of disabilities are used in identifying the needs of students: (1) mental retardation, (2) hearing impairment, (3) speech or language impairment, (4) visual impairment, (5) emotional disturbance, (6) orthopedic impairment, (7) autism, (8) traumatic brain injury, (9) other health impairment, (10) specific learning disability, (11) deaf-blindness,

(12) deafness, or (13) multiple disabilities (IDEA, 2004, §300.8).¹ (See U.S. Department of Education, 2006, for definitions of these categories.) In Wisconsin, the two most commonly occurring disabilities are specific learning disabilities and speech or language impairments (see <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/ld.html> and <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/speech.html>).

Students from specific racial or ethnic groups have a greater probability of being identified for certain categories of disability. For example, in 2003–04, black non-Hispanic students in Wisconsin were 2.32 times as likely as students in the state as whole to be identified as having a cognitive disability; Native American and Alaskan Native students were 2.64 times as likely as students in general to be identified as having an emotional or behavioral disability (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2006a).

Part B of IDEA 2004 authorizes grants to state and local education agencies to offset part of the costs of the K–12 education needs of children with disabilities. It also authorizes preschool state grants. States receiving Part B funds must determine whether significant racial or ethnic disproportionality in special education referrals is occurring at state and local levels. If a district is identified as having significant disproportionality, it must use 15 percent of its federal Part B funds “to provide comprehensive coordinated early intervening services to serve children in the local educational agency, particularly children in those groups that were significantly overidentified.” States must also “provide for the review and, if appropriate, revision of the policies, procedures, and practices used in such identification or placement to ensure that such policies, procedures, and practices comply with [federal] requirements” (IDEA, 2004, §618(a)(2)).

IDEA 2004 also 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 disproportionality resulting from inappropriate identification. Wisconsin developed a state performance plan in 2005 (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010).

Related Wisconsin Initiatives

The CREATE initiative is aligned with the Wisconsin State Performance Plan as well as two other state initiatives: New Wisconsin Promise and the Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System. Each of these initiatives is briefly summarized here:

¹ Wisconsin has 10 disability categories in contrast to the 13 federal categories. The Wisconsin categories are (1) cognitive disability, (2) hearing impairment, (3) speech or language impairments, (4) visual impairments, (5) emotional behavioral disability, (6) orthopedic impairments, (7) autism, (8) traumatic brain injury, (9) other health impairments, and (10) learning disabilities (2007–08 Wisc. Stats. §115.76(5)(a)).

New Wisconsin Promise was launched in 2002 to reduce barriers to learning and create opportunities for all students to experience academic success. Key priorities related to the CREATE initiative are the following:

- Promoting quality teachers in every classroom and strong leadership in every school.
- Improving student achievement with a focus on reading that has all students reading at or above grade level.
- Encouraging shared responsibility by increasing parental and community involvement in schools and libraries to address teenage literacy, dropouts, and truancy.
- Providing effective pupil services, special education, and prevention programs to support learning and development for all students while preventing and reducing barriers to student success (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2006b).

Wisconsin also has developed its Continuous Improvement and Focused Monitoring System to determine whether the state is meeting its goals of improving learning outcomes for children with disabilities and to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007). The system addresses those requirements under IDEA 2004 that are most relevant to improving educational results. Focused monitoring activities are as follows:

- Verification of accurate data reporting by districts
- Help for districts in identifying why students with disabilities are not achieving desired outcomes
- Help in identifying research-based strategies to address needs
- Help in identifying district and state resources
- Technical assistance (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007, p. 4)

Purpose and Goals of the CREATE Initiative

Funded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the CREATE initiative was launched by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in 2008. 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 IDEA 2008 request for proposals, p. 9; copy in the possession of the author). Specific goals of the initiative are

- 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 the performance on the following state performance plan indicators:

1. Percentage of youth with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma versus the percentage of all youth in the state graduating with a regular diploma
2. Percentage of youth with IEPs dropping out of school versus the percentage of all youth in the state dropping out of school
3. Percentage of districts identified by the state as having a significant discrepancy in the rates of suspensions and expulsions of children with disabilities for greater than 10 days in a school year, as well as discrepancies by race and ethnicity
4. Percentage of preschool children 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
5. Percentage of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities
6. Percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification
7. Percentage of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010)

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 one or more CESAs 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 2008–09 and 2009–10 funding years, the types of activities associated with each, and the CESA(s) involved. The components may change in future years.

Table 1. CREATE Components: 2008–09 and 2009–10

| CREATE Component | Type of Activity | CESA | Year(s) in Which Component Is Implemented |
|---|---|----------------|--|
| Initiative coordination | Coordination | CESA 6 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| Wisconsin Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education | Training; community of practice | CESA 6 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| Annual CREATE Conference | Training; dissemination | CESA 9 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| American Indian Student Achievement Network | Training; community of practice; tools and processes; dissemination | CESA 12 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| Monthly E-Newsletter | Dissemination | CESA 4 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices | Training | CESA 1, CESA 2 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project | Training; tools and processes; dissemination; community of practice | CESA 8 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| <i>Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality in Special Education</i> | Tools and processes | CESA 4 | 2008–09 |
| Needs Assessment and Development of Strategic Plans for Addressing Disproportionality | Training; tools and processes | CESA 11 | 2008–09; 2009–10 |
| Professional Development Academies | Training; community of practice; tools and processes | CESA 7 | 2009–10 |

Note: The Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality in Education was completed in 2008–09. The Professional Development Academies were not offered until 2009–10.

Overview of the Evaluation

Learning Point Associates is using 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 evaluation of the CREATE initiative is designed to address the following questions:

1. How are the components of the CREATE initiative being implemented, annually and over the course of the evaluation?
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 reduce disproportionality?
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 see reductions in achievement gaps and improvements on performance indicators specifically addressed by the CREATE initiative?
6. What relation or relations exist between instructional and administrative policies and practices and such improvements?
7. What are the major system challenges and constraints that influence the effectiveness of the initiative?

The first year of the evaluation focused on documenting the implementation of the CREATE initiative at the state and district levels (questions 1 through 4) and obtaining baseline data needed to assess the impact of the initiative on the performance indicators the initiative was designed to address (question 5). The goals for the first year of the evaluation were to (1) describe the implementation of the CREATE initiative during the initiative's first two years, (2) articulate the initiative's underlying theory of action—how the training and resources provided by each of the initiative's components are intended to help districts and schools eliminate race and ethnicity as predictors of special education referrals and improve the outcomes of students from culturally diverse backgrounds; (3) describe the ways in which school districts are interacting with and experiencing the CREATE initiative; and (4) collect and analyze baseline data related to the Wisconsin State Performance Plan indicators targeted by the initiative.

To accomplish these goals, the evaluation team (1) developed a profile of each of the CREATE components that document how the component has been implemented to date and identified connections with other components; (2) articulated the CREATE initiative's underlying theory of action from the information presented in the profiles; (3) conducted interviews with the coordinators of each CREATE component on successes and challenges in implementing planned activities and reviewed the results of evaluation surveys administered by CREATE coordinators to participants in several of the components; (4) developed case studies of four districts that have participated in the CREATE initiative from interviews with district and school staff who have participated in CREATE; and (5) analyzed baseline trends in state performance plan indicators targeted by the CREATE initiative and compared trends for districts that are and are not participating in the initiative, using data publically available on the DPI website.

The following section of the reports present the findings for each of these evaluation activities. Recommendations for possible areas improvement in implementing the CREATE initiative are then presented.

Profiles of CREATE Components

Profiles of the CREATE components (excluding overall coordination) are presented below. 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 2008–09 and 2009–10. 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 between CESA 6, Pacific Education Group (PEG), and West Wind Education Policy (West Wind) to address racial disparities in Wisconsin. The consortium is assisting six districts, nine CESAs, and DPI in analyzing their systems and exercising leadership to eliminate racial disparities.

The major activities of the consortium are workshops with district teams on how to conduct open conversations about the influence of race on educational opportunities. Participating district teams engage in follow-up work to analyze their systems and exercise leadership to eliminate racial disparities. Staff members from the participating CESAs are being trained to serve as local equity coaches to district teams. In 2009–10, the consortium also added seminars for principals from participating districts.

The consortium participants were these:

- Districts teams from Beloit, Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, Janesville, Kenosha, and Waukesha school districts
- Staff from the CESAs 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12 (both years); 4 and 7 (Year 1 only)
- DPI staff
- Principals from participating districts (beginning in 2009–10)

In 2008–09, 21 staff members from 11 CESAs, 32 staff members from DPI, and 68 district staff members participated in the consortium. In 2009–10, consortium participants included 15 staff members from nine CESAs, 25 DPI staff members, and 67 district staff members. In addition, approximately 30 principals from four participating districts attended principal seminars.

Most participants from the CESAs served as local coaches. In 2008–09, 19 staff members from the CESAs served as local coaches; in 2009–10, 14 local coaches from the CESAs participated in the consortium.

District teams ranged in size from nine to 15 staff members. Four of the teams were led by the district superintendent; the other two teams were led by other district administrators. The composition of the teams varied, but most teams included the district's director of special education and one or more principals. At least half the teams included teachers or other school

staff such as counselors, school psychologists, diversity specialists, youth mentors, and a few paraprofessionals. The consortium coordinator had asked districts to include parents and community members on their district teams, if possible. A local minister was a member of one district team; one or two teams included at least one parent.

District participation in the consortium was voluntary. At the 2008 Summer Institute on Addressing Disproportionality, districts were asked whether they would be interested in participating in the consortium. Ten districts initially expressed interest; six ultimately decided to participate. Four of the participating districts (Eau Claire, Janesville, Kenosha, and Waukesha) are among the districts identified as having significant disproportionality (i.e., disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services or in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification).

2008–09 Goals and Activities

The consortium's primary goals in 2008–09 were to deepen participants' understanding of race and of cultural and racial disparities in education and to enable participants to engage in open conversations about race. An additional goal for local apprentice coaches was to learn to facilitate such conversations with participating district teams.

To achieve these goals, the consortium hosted the following workshops and training sessions in 2008–09:

- Leadership Institute (November 6–7, 2008)
- Superintendents' Seminar (November 6, 2008)
- Local coaches training (January 8 and March 5, 2009)
- Equity Leadership Team Workshops (January 9, March 6, and May 8, 2009)

In addition to these workshops and training sessions, participants were asked to complete assignments during meeting intersessions.

The workshops and activities are grounded in a framework developed by PEG and West Wind to help consortium participants develop the skills, knowledge, and capacity to exercise leadership in addressing racial disparities and to improve the experiences and outcomes of all students. The framework is based on *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Singleton & Linton, 2006) and West Wind's Systemic Equity Leadership Framework (see <http://www.westwinded.com/whatwedo/leadershipdev.htm>). *Courageous Conversations About Race* is designed to help school and district teams engage in difficult conversations about race by helping them articulate the behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes that help to perpetuate racial disparities in achievement. West Wind's Systemic Equity Leadership Framework focuses on the importance of understanding systems and developing leadership skills to disrupt systems that produce inequitable results. During the consortium's first year, participants were introduced to the consortium framework, explored individual beliefs about race, developed and refined working definitions of race and equity, and worked to build cohesiveness, knowledge, and trust within teams. Each district team began mapping district

priorities and district and state initiatives with the goal of identifying issues to be addressed in equity planning.

2009–10 Goals and Activities

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

The following workshops and training sessions were offered by the consortium in 2009–10:

- Equity Leadership Team Workshops (October 7, 2009; January 21, March 17, and May 11, 2010)
- Four intersession coaching meetings (November 2009; February, April, and June 2010)
- Four local coach training sessions (October 6, 2009; January 20, March 16, and May 10, 2010)
- Four superintendent and team lead seminars (October 6, 2009; January 20, March 16, and May 10, 2010)
- A two-day Beyond Diversity Seminar for principals (December 1–2, 2009)
- A two-day Beyond Diversity Seminar for DPI staff and others (March 30–31, 2010)
- Three Principal Development Workshops (January 20, March 16, and May 10, 2010)

Some of the topics addressed in Equity Leadership Team Workshops were analyzing education through the lens of race; equity transformation plan development; small experiments and smart risks; 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.

The consortium continued to provide equity training to local coaches during the 2009–10 school year. A consortium consultant and the lead coach provided onsite training and continued to apprentice the local coaches using the consortium's model for equity leadership coaching. Local coaches participated in the four Equity Leadership Team Workshops as facilitators. Each local coach also attended the intersession meetings of her or his team. Local coaches team-coached these meetings with the lead coach, who took part by phone or video conference.

The seminars for superintendents and team leads were scheduled in conjunction with the full-day Equity Leadership Team Workshops. The sessions focused on strengthening and supporting the capacity of superintendents to lead systemic equity transformation in their districts. The workshops addressed equity policy development and governance, strategic alignment, systems accountability for identifying and eliminating racial disparities, and personal leadership development.

The consortium offered five days of professional development targeted specifically for principals of participating districts, beginning with PEG's two-day Beyond Diversity Seminar in December 2009. The seminar was designed to increase principal's awareness of the degree to which racism and other diversity issues are part of educational failure. Participants explored strategies for identifying and addressing policies and practices that negatively affect students' ability to meet rigorous academic standards.

The consortium offered three one-day principal seminars in January, March, and May 2010 (on the day preceding each Equity Leadership Team Workshop). The January seminar focused on *Courageous Conversations About Race*, leadership for racial equity, systems thinking, and organizational learning. The March focus was on racial identity development, equity and antiracist leadership, professional equity learning, transforming school culture, and how technology can be used to enhance work on racial equity. Participants were required to bring laptops and were shown how to locate online resources on the topics that were discussed. The May seminar focused on critical race theory and schooling.

Seminar resources are posted on the CREATE website (see <http://www.createwisconsin.net/districtpractices/seminarresources.cfm>). Additional resources, including model programs, resources for teachers, collaboration sites, blogs, and video and media resources are also available on the website.

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 schedules sessions on effective instructional practices and district and school practices that support successful educational outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students. The first CREATE conference was held on June 29–July 1, 2009, at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The second conference was held on April 27–28, 2010, at the same location. 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.

The 2009 Conference

Participants in the 2009 conference included one or more participants from 27 districts identified as having significant disproportionality. Other participants were CREATE coordinators from the CESAs and local coaches who took part in the CREATE Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, as well as representatives from other Wisconsin school districts, DPI, the Wisconsin State Human Relations Association (WSHRA), Native American centers, youth centers, other DPI-funded programs, and the University of Wisconsin System. Approximately 220 individuals attended the conference, including presenters.

CESA 9 established a planning committee for the 2009 conference that included representatives from DPI, CESA 6, CESA 8, CESA 11, WSHRA, the Wisconsin Indian Education Association, Lac du Flambeau and Prescott School Districts, St. Norbert College, the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh, and the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education. Ten planning meetings were held between October 15, 2008, and June 29, 2009. The conference planners began distributing save-the-date cards in November 2008. The cards were distributed at state conferences and CREATE events through April 2009.

CREATE conference coordinators worked with the coordinators of the CREATE Needs Assessment to hold both events at the same location. Districts identified as having significant disproportionality were specifically invited to the conference to address disproportionality in their districts. District team members attended preconference sessions on June 29 to complete a Needs Assessment designed to assist districts in developing a comprehensive district disproportionality improvement plan. DPI made a presentation to newly identified districts.

The second and third days of the conference consisted of 16 hour-long sectionals arranged into four strands: District Systems Change; Serving American Indian Students; Serving Students in a Larger, More Complex Environment; and Classroom Practices. The themes within these strands were parent/community involvement, culture, history, and education. Sectionals were presented four times during the CREATE conference.

Three keynote speakers were featured at the CREATE conference. Dr. Pedro Noguera presented the Tuesday keynote address and a sectional presentation, *Challenging Racial Inequality in Our Schools*. There were two keynote presentations on Wednesday: Kwabena Antoine Nixon and Muhibb Dyer presented *Flood the Hood With Dreams*, and Ruth Gudinas and Dorothy Davids gave the keynote/closing presentation, *Bias Is a Four Letter Word*.

On the evening of June 30, the conference presented the documentary movie, *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible*. The movie featured the experiences of white women and men who have worked to gain insight into what it means to challenge notions of racism and white supremacy in the United States.

The agenda of the 2009 CREATE conference as well as brief synopses of the presentations and conference handouts are available online at http://www.createwisconsin.net/events/create_conference.cfm.

The 2010 Conference

Participants in the 2010 conference included CREATE coordinators, representatives from DPI, districts identified as having significant disproportionality, Great Lakes Intertribal Council, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, private schools, universities, and other Wisconsin school districts. A total of 310 participants attended the conference.

Seven planning committee meetings were held between October 2009 and April 2010 for the conference. The 2010 conference was held in conjunction with the CREATE Needs Assessment

at the Radisson Hotel & Conference Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin on April 27–28, 2010. Save the Date cards and e-blasts distributions began in February 2010.

The 2010 CREATE Conference was directed toward general education and special education staff in all Wisconsin school districts, team members from the school districts with disproportionate representation, and members of WSHRA. Sectional presentations were chosen to address those focus areas of highest need as drawn from the 2009 Needs Assessment. These focus areas were organized by the CREATE Conference Planning Committee into the following strands: parent/community involvement, needs assessment/data collection, and diversity training/culturally responsive classroom practices. The session descriptions included in the conference agenda also identified focus areas that were addressed in each session.

The keynote address was presented by Dr. Samuel Betances, a sociologist, educator, and professor of 20 years, who has expertise in the areas of race relations, the U.S. Latino experience, education and reform, and gender issues. Based on feedback received on last year's conference, a Round Table Lunch was included to provide the CREATE Conference participants with a further opportunity to learn from other school districts in Wisconsin.

The agenda for the 2010 CREATE Conference and brief biographies of conference presenters are available online at: <http://www.createwisconsin.net/events/2010CREATEConf.cfm>.

American Indian Student Achievement Network (CESA 12)

The American Indian Student Achievement Network is designed to serve as a community of practice for Wisconsin school districts with the highest percentage of Native American students. The purpose of the network is to help districts identify and address barriers to learning that limit Native American students and to provide resources and training for school and district staff. CESA 12 is responsible organizing network meetings and providing training for staff from participating districts.

The major activities of the network are

- Providing opportunities for networking and discussion on ways to address barriers to learning for Native American students.
- Maintaining an online community of practice to facilitate discussion.
- Identifying and sharing resources (e.g., contributing articles, resources, and professional development opportunities to the CREATE newsletter and participating districts).
- Providing networking opportunities and training to instructional and noninstructional staff working in Native American language and culture education programs.

Participants

Twenty-six school districts are represented in the network, as Table 2 shows. Nine of the districts were identified by DPI as having significant disproportionality. Representatives from CESA 6, CESA 12, DPI, the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, and Chippewa Valley Technical

College also participate. Out of 117 members in American Indian Student Achievement Network, 32 percent are teachers and 32 percent are home-school coordinators.

Table 2. District Affiliates in the American Indian Student Achievement Network

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ashland School District | Milwaukee Public Schools |
| Bayfield School District | Seymour School District |
| Black River Falls School District | Shawano School District |
| Bowler School District | Siren School District |
| Crandon School District | Superior School District |
| Cumberland School District | Tomah Area School District |
| Freedom Area School District | Unity School District |
| Green Bay Public Schools | Wabeno Area School District |
| Gresham School District | Washburn School District |
| Hayward School District | Webster School District |
| Lac du Flambeau No. 1 School District | West de Pere School District |
| Lakeland Union High School | Winter School District |
| Menominee Indian School District | Wisconsin Dells School District |

2008–10 Goals and Activities

The primary goal of the network is to facilitate discussion among participating districts on effective ways to reduce barriers to learning for Native American students. Specific objectives are assessing and prioritizing district needs for improving educational opportunities for Native American students, assisting districts with the development of district improvement plans (particularly for districts identified as having significant disproportionality), establishing an online community of practice to facilitate networking among participants, and identifying resources and providing training opportunities for district and school staff. Specific activities related to these goals and objectives follow:

Meetings and Conferences. An initial conference call for participating districts was held December 15, 2008, to explain the purpose and goals of the American Indian Student Achievement Network (AISAN). Topics of discussion were establishing networking opportunities for American Indian Language and Culture Education teachers and reinstating a home-school coordinator/liason network; supporting the attendance of participating districts at the Wisconsin Indian Education Association conference; identifying and sharing resources; and reviewing needs and challenges of participating districts that were identified at a 2004 conference. Participants agreed that the identified needs and challenges were accurate but needed to be prioritized. The decision was made to meet face to face to further discuss and prioritize district needs. The AISAN coordinator requested contact information for district American Indian Language and Culture Education teachers and home-school coordinators from each district to facilitate networking.

In the group's first face-to-face meeting, on January 27, 2009, 35 people from 21 school districts throughout Wisconsin met in Wausau and identified three priority areas for the group:

1. Belonging—Participants observed that that it is often difficult for Native American students to feel they belong in a school setting.
2. Culture and curriculum—The group is interested in seeing how Native American culture can be infused into the curriculum.
3. Wisconsin Educational Act 31 enforcement—This act specifies the teaching of Native American issues, but the act has not been enforced.

To address these issues, the group devised a three-pronged approach:

1. Identify what districts can do to create a sense of belonging for Native American students and ensure their culture is included in the curriculum.
2. Bring together Native American teachers to understand the resources they can provide to districts with significant populations of Native American students. Because they have a strong understanding of the needs of Native American students, this group of teachers may be able to provide classroom instruction, professional development, coaching, or other resources.
3. Work with home-school coordinators. Home-school coordinators are important links between families and schools. They may be able to help Native American families better connect with their children's classroom and school resources.

Additional topics of discussion were establishing an online community of practice using Moodle, an e-learning software platform.

After the meeting, the network coordinator developed a planning template to help districts develop improvement plans based on the priorities identified at the meeting. The planning forms were sent to participating districts with instructions to complete them by September 2009. Districts were to select one of the three priority areas as their focus, identify district team members, identify the objectives, activities, and resources they need, and timelines for completion of activities related to each priority area.

The first American Indian Student Achievement Network meeting of the 2009–10 funding year was held in conjunction with the National Indian Education Association Convention, held October 22–25, 2009. The American Indian Student Achievement Network met on October 21, 2009, the day before the convention. Thirteen people were registered for the meeting. Attendance sheet signatures indicate that nine people attended. The following districts were represented: Ashland, Bayfield, Green Bay Area, Siren, Tomah Area, Washburn, and Webster. Topics discussed were how district staff attending the National Indian Education Association Convention would share information with other participating districts; completion of each district's improvement plan; the timeline for network activities; the scheduling of two networking meetings for native language and culture teachers during 2009–10; finalizing contact information of teachers; scheduling home-school coordinator/liaison/advocate networking meetings during 2009–10; and funding for these activities. A follow-up meeting was scheduled

for October 27, 2009, to update other districts on the conference, but the meeting was canceled due to lack of district participation.

The network hosted the Wisconsin Tribal Language Network and American Indian Student Achievement Network Conference on March 1–2, 2010, at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. The network coordinator, a consultant from DPI, and two independent consultants planned the conference with support from a staff member from CESA 12. The conference focused on establishing a community of support for Native American students and infusing Native American language and culture into the curriculum and classrooms—the network’s three priority areas. A total of 123 participants attended from more than 30 school districts, including 24 of the 26 districts that are members of the network. Participants from several tribal communities also attended.

Dr. Thomas Peacock, associate professor of education at the University of Minnesota–Duluth and member of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, presented the keynote address, “The Role of Education in Promoting Hope in Native Students.” Sectionals focused on: understanding and eliminating racism, increasing attendance and reducing truancy, creating change in Native American education, best practices in Title VII, tribal language planning, assessment of tribal language learners, and the new DPI Tribal Language Revitalization Grant Program. In addition, the conference held two discussion sessions focusing on next steps for the network and on a proposed Wisconsin tribal language consortium. A language technology demonstration was also presented.

On June 14–15, 2010, the network hosted a workshop on the dropout and graduation crisis among Native American students. The coordinator of the network had applied for and received a \$3,000 grant from DPI to help fund the workshop, which was a follow-up to the state superintendent’s Graduation Summit, held on March 2, 2010. Several of the districts participating in the network had not been invited to the summit. The purpose of the workshop was to assist schools in working with Native American students. Districts participating in the network were invited to attend. A total of 55 individuals registered for the workshop; 15 school districts or tribal schools were represented. Other participants were staff members from DPI, CESAs 11 and 12, and the University of Wisconsin System.

Dr. Susan Faircloth, assistant professor of educational leadership at Pennsylvania State University, and Wendell Waukau, superintendent of the Menominee Indian School District, served as workshop presenters. Dr. Faircloth presented findings from her research on dropout and graduation rates from five states with significant Native American student populations and discussed what these states have been doing to increase the success of their of their Native American students. Superintendent Waukau shared the history and results of Menominee Indian School District’s efforts during the last five years to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout in the district.

Several small-group sessions provided opportunities for member districts to share information about graduation and dropout rates, efforts schools and districts have been taking to address these issues, and possible joint initiatives between districts. Districts were asked to provide a plan on how they will use and act on information from the workshop (e.g., how they will share information and who they will involve in developing an initial plan of action).

Online Community of Practice. CESA 12 created a Moodle site that contains an online discussion board for network members. The network coordinator created instructions for accessing the website; use of the online discussion board was also discussed at the network meeting held on October 21, 2009. The Moodle site is accessible only to members of AISAN. A username and password are required to access the site. After logging onto the site, online members can choose to participate in a discussion by answering questions posted by the network coordinator.

The site has had little activity. As of June 2010, visitors posted only four brief responses to questions posted by the coordinator (two in fall 2009 and two in spring 2010).

Identifying and Sharing Resources. The network coordinator is responsible for contributing articles or identifying resources and professional development opportunities related to Native American students for the CREATE newsletter. Each issue of the CREATE newsletter has provided either resources or professional development opportunities that pertain specifically to Native Americans.

Professional Development and Training Opportunities. In addition to hosting conferences and meetings for network participants, the network has provided funding for several individuals from member schools to attend the following conferences:

- The Minnesota Indigenous Language Symposium, May 18–19, 2009 (4 grants)
- The 13th Annual American Indian Studies Summer Institute, June 22–26, 2009 (6 grants)
- The CREATE Conference, June 29–July 1, 2009 (14 grants)
- The NEIA Convention, October 22–25, 2009 (14 grants)

CREATE Monthly E-Newsletter (CESA 4)

The CREATE e-newsletter is designed to keep teachers, administrators, community members, and parents up to date on CREATE projects and related news from across the nation. The newsletter's audience is all individuals who work with students in Wisconsin, particularly those who work with students from diverse backgrounds, as well as parent and community members.

The newsletter connects educators with resources such as grants, instructional strategies, and literacy materials that focus on increasing cultural awareness among educators. Each newsletter contains a CREATE feature article and national resources, research, and professional development opportunities relevant to culturally responsive education.

The e-newsletters are posted on the CREATE website; a synopsis of resources and professional development opportunities featured in each issue are also posted. Five newsletters were published in 2008–09 (each month from February through June). For the 2009–10 funding year, the CREATE newsletter was published each month from September 2009 to June 2010; ten issues were published in 2009–10.

Newsletter Recipients

Newsletters were disseminated to approximately 170 recipients during the first year of the CREATE grant (2008–09). The recipient list was determined in conjunction with the CREATE initiative coordinator and included key individuals at DPI, representatives from parent–teacher organizations, and others in the state invested in culturally responsive education. Individuals must be subscribers to receive the newsletter via e-mail. Requests to be added to the subscription list can be submitted on a request form that is available on the CREATE website. The number of newsletter recipients increased in 2009–10; as of April 2010 there were 332 subscribers.

Content of the Newsletter

According to grant guidelines, each published newsletter must contain the following:

- A feature highlighting CREATE projects and events
- A calendar of events related to disproportionality and culturally responsive education
- National research, resources, and professional development opportunities

Each CREATE newsletter has three sections:

- CREATE News
- CREATE Resources
- Professional Development

“CREATE News” highlights upcoming CREATE events or other CREATE-related information such as contact information for the coordinators of the different CREATE components. E-newsletters have featured the 2009 and 2010 CREATE conferences, the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project, and the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education.

“CREATE Resources” provides links to various articles focusing on diverse student populations. The articles provide links to a variety of websites that have addressed closing achievement gaps, English language learner student needs, as well as cultural awareness among diverse groups. Most newsletters have included at least five informational resource articles related to disproportionality, student achievement among diverse students, or cultural awareness.

The “Professional Development” section announces upcoming conferences, trainings, or seminars in Wisconsin or nationally. The professional development opportunities included in the section pertain to cultural awareness as well as improving teaching practices in general. The trainings and conferences in the section are directed toward teachers and administrators.

Each CREATE newsletter also features a “Quote of the Month” and indicates whether the month honors a particular group of people (e.g., February—Black History Month). Each newsletter has provided either resources or professional development opportunities that pertain specifically to Native Americans.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices (CESAs 1 and 2)

This component of the CREATE initiative provides a series of training workshops for district teams who 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 four two-day training sessions assists participants in identifying new ways to reach students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Graduate-level course credit is provided for participants who complete the course and make arrangements to pay course fees through Cardinal Stritch University.

Staff from CESAs 1 and 2 are responsible for coordinating the training sessions. Dr. Shelley Zion and Dr. Elizabeth Kozleski serve as trainers for the sessions. Dr. Zion is executive director of Continuing Education and Professional Development at the University of Colorado–Denver, where her responsibilities include helping teachers to understand the influence of culture, class, power, and privilege on curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom practices. Dr. Kozleski is a professor at Arizona State University and has expertise in the areas of systems change, inclusive education, and professional development for urban education. Dr. Kozleski is currently a coprincipal investigator at the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt); Dr. Zion was formerly a project coordinator with NCCRESt.

Participants

Training sessions have been offered to two cohorts from the following school districts:

- Ashland
- Waukesha
- Fond du Lac
- Monona Grove

The first cohort of participants included teams from Ashland and Waukesha. Training sessions for cohort 1 were offered in February, May, September, and November 2009. Because of the late start of the training series, it was not possible to complete all four sessions during the 2008–2009 school year. The second cohort included teams from Waukesha, Fond du Lac, and Monona Grove. Training sessions for cohort 2 were offered in September and November 2009 and February and April 2010.

A total of 34 participants have attended the workshops during the past two years. Ashland and Fond du Lac each sent five staff members to the training, and Monona Grove sent six staff members. A total of 18 participants from Waukesha have participated; five participated in cohort 1, and 13 participated in cohort 2. Two staff members from DPI and the CREATE coordinator from CESA 6 also participated.

The coordinators of the Classroom Practices workshops requested that districts send school-based teams so that team members could work together to implement culturally responsive practices within their school. Only one district team, however, has included staff members from

the same building. Members of other district teams were either from different buildings or were district-level staff. Although the coordinators requested that an administrator be a member of the district team, not all teams have included a building- or district-level administrator.

2008–10 Goals and Activities

The primary purpose of the training sessions 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 two workshops focused on understanding culture and diversity, on recognizing the role of power and privilege in both individual and institutional interactions, and on developing a philosophy of social justice and equity. The focus of later workshops was on how to implement culturally responsive practices in five areas: classroom environment, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and classroom management. The following features of culturally responsive classrooms were emphasized:

- The culture, language, heritage, and experiences of students and families are valued and used to facilitate learning and development, and access to high-quality teachers, programs, and curricula is made available to all students.
- Ethics of care, respect, and responsibility for all students from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds are evident.
- Every student benefits academically, socioculturally, and linguistically.

In addition to attending the workshops, participants were given materials to read prior to attending sessions, as well as list of books and articles focusing on culturally responsive pedagogy. Team members also participated in an online forum and met between training sessions to complete assignments and activities. Throughout the training, participants kept a journal in which they were expected to answer questions designed to elicit their thoughts on diversity, privilege, and social justice. The training also included an on-site training component. Courtney Bauder, a local coach from CESA 1, visited cohort 1 participants after they had completed the workshops to provide ongoing support for their work. Coaching also was offered to cohort 2 participants after they completed the training.

The dates and locations for each of the training sessions are presented below by cohort.

Cohort 1 Trainings (Ashland and Waukesha)

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| February 11–12, 2009 | Ho-Chunk Convention Center | Wisconsin Dells |
| May 26–27, 2009 | Oneida/Radisson Convention Center | Green Bay |
| September 22–23, 2009 | Ho-Chunk Convention Center | Wisconsin Dells |
| November 3–4, 2009 | College of Menominee Nation | Green Bay |

Cohort 2 Trainings (Fond du Lac, Monona Grove, and Waukesha)

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| September 24–25, 2009 | Ho-Chunk Convention Center | Wisconsin Dells |
| November 5–6, 2009 | College of Menominee Nation | Green Bay |

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| February 23–24, 2010 | Potawatomi Casino | Milwaukee |
| April 14–15, 2010 | Potawatomi Casino | Milwaukee |

Required readings and supplemental materials for the sessions were as follows:

Collins, P. H. (2000). Toward a new vision: Race, class, and gender as categories. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, C. Castañeda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X Zúñiga (Eds.), *Reading for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge, pp. 456–462.

Cross, W. E. Jr. (1991). Rethinking nigrescence. In *Shades of black: Diversity in African-American identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 189–226.

Johnson, A. G. (2006). *Privilege, power, and difference* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pollack, M. (Ed.). (2008) *Everyday antiracism: Getting real about race in school*. New York: New Press.

Gorski, P. C. (2007). Good intentions are not enough: A decolonizing intercultural education. Retrieved October 26, 2010, from <http://www.edchange.org/publications/intercultural-education.pdf>

Spring, J. H. (2006). The purposes of public schooling. In *American education*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 3–30.

Tatum, B. D. (1999). *“Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?” And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project (CESA 8)

The goal 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, the Wisconsin Inter-Tribal Early Childhood Association, and CESA 12, CREATE staff from CESA 8 are working to build relationships and strengthen partnerships between tribal communities, school districts, and government agencies. The purpose of this work is to ensure appropriate identification and provision of special education services to young Native American children and their families.

The Early Childhood Project has established the following objectives for accomplishing this work:

- Development of an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition to guide the work of the project and to serve as an advisory group at the state and local levels
- Collaboration with tribal partners, school districts, and county agencies to strengthen relationships in providing services to young Native American children with disabilities
- Development and dissemination of culturally responsive early childhood practice resources to CESAs and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in Wisconsin; and coordination of efforts with other early childhood initiatives to ensure that these initiatives are culturally responsive

- Increasing public awareness of culturally responsive practices through presentations at conferences and other meetings, providing training and technical support to tribal early childhood partners, and continuing to build relationships among tribal partners, school districts, and government agencies

Partnerships

The Early Childhood Project is working to establish partnerships between each of Wisconsin’s eleven tribal nations and the school districts and county agencies that serve children from those tribal communities. Table 3 lists the tribal nations and neighboring school districts with which the project has begun to build relationships.

Table 3. Wisconsin’s Tribal Communities and Neighboring School Districts

| Tribal Community | County | School District or School Community |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Bad River Band | Ashland | Ashland |
| | | Odanah ^a |
| Oneida Tribe | Outagamie | Seymour Community |
| | | Freedom |
| | Brown | Ashwaubenon |
| | | Green Bay Area |
| | | Howard-Suamico |
| | | Pulaski Community |
| | | West De Pere |
| Red Cliff Band | Bayfield | Bayfield |
| | | Washburn |
| Potawatomi | Forest | Crandon |
| | | Laona |
| | | Wabeno |
| Sokaogon (Mole Lake) Community | Forest | Crandon |
| | | Laona |
| | | Wabeno |

| Tribal Community | County | School District or School Community |
|------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Ho-Chunk Nation | Jackson | Black River Falls |
| | Monroe | Tomah |
| | Sauk | Baraboo |
| | | Wisconsin Dells |
| | Shawano | Wittenberg-Birnamwood |
| | Wood | Nekoosa |
| Wisconsin Rapids | | |
| Menominee | Menominee | Menominee Indian |
| | Shawano | Shawano |
| Stockbridge-Munsee Community | Shawano | Wittenberg-Birnamwood |
| | | Bowler |
| | | Shawano |
| | | Gresham |
| | | Tigerton |
| Lac Courte Oreilles | Sawyer | Hayward Community |
| | | Winter |
| Lac du Flambeau Band | Vilas | Lac du Flambeau |
| | | North Lakeland |
| | | Northland Pines |
| | | Phelps |
| | | Woodruff |
| St. Croix Band | Barron | Barron |
| | | Cumberland |
| | | Luck |
| | | Frederic |
| | Burnett | Clayton |
| | | Siren |
| | Polk | Webster |
| | | Unity |

^a There is no Odanah school district, but there is a Head Start located in Odanah that is run by the Bad River Tribal Community.

Audience for Technical Assistance and Dissemination Efforts

The project's technical assistance and dissemination efforts, including conferences and other meetings, are intended to serve the following groups:

- Tribal service providers, disability coordinators, health directors, Head Start directors, child care providers, school administrators and teachers, and tribal representatives involved with child and family programs
- Native American parents
- County Birth to 3 service providers and coordinators
- CESA early childhood and special education support staff
- Early childhood (regular and special) education care providers and teachers
- School district staff
- College and university early childhood faculty

2008–10 Goals and Activities

The Early Childhood Project has completed several activities to advance each of its major objectives. Most of the activities begun in 2008–09 were continued in 2009–10. Project activities are summarized below by objective.

Development of an Early Childhood Tribal Work Group or Coalition to Guide Project Work. Project staff worked with the state Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team² to obtain commitments from tribal representatives to serve as members of an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition. In 2008–09, staff from CESA 8, CESA 12, and GLITC planned an Early Childhood Tribal Service Provider Workshop to explain the purpose of the Early Childhood Coalition and to engage participants in discussion of ways in which services are currently provided to young children and their families and how such services could be improved. The goal of the workshop was to establish the coalition and to create action plans for future work. The workshop was originally scheduled for August 2009 but was rescheduled because enrollment was low. The event was instead held in February 2010 in conjunction with the Third Early Childhood Tribal Gathering, which is described in more detail later in this report.

The purpose of the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition is to serve as a system of support for counties and tribes and to facilitate interactions between agencies. If formed, the coalition would

² The State Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team includes tribal representatives from GLITC, tribal schools, tribal Head Start programs, the American Indian Technical Assistance Network, and representatives from a variety of state programs that provide services to young children and their families. Although the team's stated purpose is to develop interagency agreements on services to children with disabilities, its broader goal is to build relationships among tribal communities, school districts, and government agencies. In 2007, the team hosted the first statewide early childhood tribal gathering to promote awareness of this work. Since then, the team has enlisted the help of external ambassadors to establish and maintain connections with each tribal nation. The team has also worked to identify contacts at school districts and county organizations. The Early Childhood Project is assisting with this work.

provide information, professional development, and resources for organizations and individuals serving young Native American children with special needs. In addition, it 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 in Wisconsin. The coalition would also facilitate information exchanges between school districts and tribal communities.

To date, the Forest County Potawatomi Community is the only tribal community that has agreed to participate in the coalition. Project staff have enlisted the help of Don Rosin, the Native American Center Coordinator for the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training, and Support to assist them in establishing relationships with members of tribal communities who could speak for the community and make decisions about membership in the coalition.

Collaboration With Tribal Partners, School Districts, and County Agencies. Project staff have worked with the state Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team to plan and host the Second and Third Early Childhood Tribal Gatherings.³ The Second Tribal Gathering was held on December 4–5, 2008, at Mole Lake, Wisconsin. The purpose of the gathering was 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 gathering organized working sessions to help service providers begin developing interagency agreements about services to young Native American children with disabilities. A parent session also was held to engage parents in discussions about the challenges they face with raising and educating a child with special needs and to identify strategies for addressing these challenges. A total of 95 participants attended, including 40 representatives from seven tribal nations (service providers, teachers, and parents). Other participants were representatives from GLITC, regional and county service agencies, school districts, universities, CESAs, the Department of Health Services, and DPI.

After the Second Tribal Gathering, project staff held follow-up meetings with members of the tribal nations who had attended the gathering and their respective county and school district partners to help to strengthen services to young Native American children and their families. This work is ongoing.

In 2009–10, project staff helped to plan and host the Third Early Childhood Tribal Gathering, held February 23–24, 2010, in Wabeno, Wisconsin. A primary goal of the gathering was to strengthen existing partnerships, build new collaborative relationships, and develop interagency agreements to improve developmental outcomes for young Native American children with disabilities. The Early Childhood Tribal Service Provider Workshop was held during the gathering to facilitate the formation of an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition. Other sessions focused on special education identification and screening procedures, coordination of county Birth to 3 programs and school-based special education services, natural to least restrictive environments, and the implications of these issues for interagency agreements. A session focusing on interagency agreements provided a framework for developing action plans for ongoing work (e.g., setting up an electronic mailing list, identifying or developing culturally

³ An earlier tribal gathering was held in September 2007; that event was planned by the State Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team.

responsive curriculum materials and resources for use in professional development programs, and educating tribal leaders on early childhood).

Representatives from each tribal nation, county agency, and school district who attended the gathering were encouraged to display materials and resources showcasing their efforts to serve young children and their families. The purpose of the displays was to help participants learn about each other's programs and to generate ideas for future collaboration and partnerships. Approximately 80 participants attended the gathering, including 20 representatives from eight tribal communities. The majority of participants were from regional or county service agencies, school districts, or CESAs. Participants from GLITC, DPI, and the Department of Health also attended. Approximately 30 participants attended the Early Childhood Tribal Service Provider Workshop.

Development and Dissemination of Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Practice Resources. Project staff have engaged in the following tasks related to the development and dissemination of culturally responsive resources:

- Developed and disseminated guidelines for culturally responsive early childhood education and care practices to child care resource and referral agencies in Wisconsin.
- Engaged in ongoing review of culturally relevant studies, articles, reports, documents, policy statements, and curriculum and program models to identify resources pertaining to the education and care of young Native American children with and without disabilities.
- Disseminated resources to CESA Early Childhood Special Education Program support teachers and Birth to 3 coordinators. Resources included information on best practices and materials for young Native American children and their families in both general and special education. The materials selected can be incorporated into existing professional development activities that address state performance plan indicators.
- Worked in partnership with the state Interagency Agreement Team, GLITC, and members of an early childhood tribal focus group to obtain commitments from tribal communities to take part in data collection and analysis of current policies and practices related to screenings, referrals, assessments, and eligibility and placement options in these communities. The purpose of this effort is to obtain baseline data to inform decision making. Data collection with the Forest County Potawatomi tribe began in July 2009 and with neighboring school districts in September 2009.
- Began to coordinate efforts with other state early childhood initiatives to ensure projects are culturally responsive. In 2009–10, project staff planned to contribute information and resources to websites such as the following:
 - *Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners* (screening and early identification) <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/screening-early-identification-resources.php>
 - *Preschool Options Project*: least restrictive environments www.preschooleoptions.org/
 - Child Find <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/disabilities-child-find.php>

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: *Working With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children and Families* www.dpi.wi.gov/ec/ecinr.html

Increasing Public Awareness of Culturally Responsive Practices. The Early Childhood Project coordinator has engaged in the following activities to increase public awareness of culturally responsive practices:

- Gave a presentation at the Healing Our Communities Conference (October 2008) and the Wisconsin Preserving Early Childhood Conference (March 2009).
- Coordinated a 12-hour training, “Inclusion of Young Children With Disabilities,” on the Oneida Nation reservation for tribal and nontribal early education and care teachers (January 2009).
- Participated in the Wisconsin Inter-Tribal Early Childhood Association annual conference and bimonthly meetings.
- Participated in the Bureau of Indian Education Special Education Conference and the National Indian Education Association Convention.
- Posted materials from the 2008 Second Tribal Gathering on the CREATE website (e.g., PowerPoint slides and Webcasts of specific sessions).
- Contributed an article on the 2010 Third Tribal Gathering to the spring 2010 issue of the *Birth to 6 Events* newsletter
http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/birthto3/EVENTS_Spring10.pdf.
- Served on the 2010 CREATE Conference Planning Committee and set up the webcasting for the conference.

Ongoing activities include identifying professional development opportunities relevant to the Early Childhood Project and consulting with state and national experts on culturally responsive services for young Native American children with and without disabilities.

Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality (CESA 4)

The *Annotated Checklist for Addressing Disproportionality in Special Education* is designed as a tool to aid districts as they analyze special education data. Specifically, it is intended to help educators analyze their practices for identifying students for referral to special education, form hypotheses about likely contributors to disproportionality as it arises in the context of their districts, pinpoint areas for improvement identified in the data, and design proactive early interventions to reduce such disparities, even where specific causes are not identified.

Working with Daniel Losen, an independent researcher from Harvard University, CESA 4 staff revised and simplified the *Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality in Special Education* that Losen created in 2008 with DPI. Printed copies of the redesigned checklist were disseminated at the 2009 CREATE conference to districts identified as having significant disproportionality and have also been distributed at other conferences as well as at CREATE workshops. An online version has also been developed for all districts to use.

The annotated checklist guides districts through three areas where policies, practices, or circumstances may lead to racial disparities in the education of diverse students. The booklet has three checklists to help districts pinpoint which area(s) may be contributing to disproportionality:

1. District and school resource issues
2. System policy, procedure, and practice issues at the district, school, and classroom levels
3. Environmental factors

Resource inequities among districts and schools often flow along lines of race and class. The district and school resource checklist assesses whether districts have adequate resources to educate children from diverse backgrounds in the following five areas:

1. The extent to which adequate trained staff and programs are available to students (e.g., school psychologists, effective programs for English language learners, and access to highly qualified teachers)
2. The extent to which districts support inexperienced teachers and have teachers trained in prereferral interventions, working with English language learners, or those who are traumatized
3. The level of awareness and training among administrators on least restrictive student support, sensitivity to racial bias in education, serving diverse student populations
4. The level of collaboration and communication among special and regular educators
5. Collection and use of data on racial disparities in special education

The second checklist on system policies and practices measures several specific policies, procedures, and practices that either contribute to or minimize disproportionality:

1. Special education referral and placement in restrictive settings and criteria for special education referral
2. A reflection on findings from any data collected on racial disparities and disproportionality
3. Teacher–parent relationships and parental awareness and empowerment of their child’s educational rights, particularly among minority and low-income parents
4. The attitudes and practices of educators that may reflect negative racial bias toward students from minority or low-income backgrounds

The third checklist on environmental factors measures the extent to which the physical environment may be causing higher incidences of disability among certain groups of children (e.g., lead paint exposure, poor air or water quality), available resources and supports to aid students, and how schools evaluate students transferring from other districts.

Most of the items on the annotated checklist reflect a legal requirement and are derived from research on factors that contribute to disproportionality in special education. A version of the checklist with endnotes has references to relevant legal provisions and research findings. This version of the checklist is available on the DPI website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/spp-disp.html>.

The redesigned checklist developed by CESA 4 is available online on the CREATE website: http://www.createwisconsin.net/districtpractices/addressing_disproportion.cfm. This version does not contain endnotes.

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

School districts identified by DPI as having significant disproportionality are required to participate in an annual Needs Assessment process that includes a review of policies and practices that have been shown to contribute to disproportionality. The districts are also required to develop a comprehensive disproportionality improvement plan based on the results of this review. CESA 11 is coordinating the work related to the district Needs Assessments. The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) is assisting districts in completing the Needs Assessment.

The major activities of this component are these:

- Organizing a daylong meeting in conjunction with the annual CREATE conference to assist identified districts in completing the initial Needs Assessment or updating the previous year's assessment.
- Developing Needs Assessment tools, or modifying existing tools, to assist districts in completing the Needs Assessment and developing district disproportionality improvement plans.
- Developing and administering a Needs Assessment survey to participating districts to obtain recommendations for future professional development offerings and technical assistance services related to disproportionality.
- Summarizing and disseminating the results of the Needs Assessment survey to coordinators of other CREATE components to use in planning future professional development offerings and to districts participating in the Needs Assessment.

Participants

In 2009, 27 districts identified as having significant disproportionality were invited to attend the CREATE conference and to participate in preconference sessions designed to assist district teams in completing the Needs Assessment.⁴ In 2010, 37 districts were invited to attend; eight of these districts were newly identified as having significant disproportionality.

District teams, consisting of the following team members, were asked to attend:

- Directors of special education
- Curriculum and instruction coordinators and assessment coordinators

⁴ Districts identified as having significant disproportionality are required to attend the CREATE preconference needs assessment unless they made prior arrangements with DPI. In 2009, two districts that had been identified as having significant disproportionality did not attend the CREATE preconference sessions.

- School psychologists
- At least one elementary school teacher (general education or special education)

2008–10 Goals and Activities

The Needs Assessment process is intended to help districts review policies and practices that may be contributing to disproportionality and to use the results of this review to develop comprehensive disproportionality improvement plans. CESA 11 has worked with NCCRESt to develop resources and provide assistance to districts in completing the Needs Assessment. What follows is a summary of activities and resources designed to assist districts with this work.

Assistance in Completing the Needs Assessment Process. A daylong training was held in conjunction with the 2009 and 2010 CREATE Conferences to assist districts in completing an evidence-based Needs Assessment. Coaches and DPI staff were available to assist teams in completing the assessment. In addition, work sessions were set aside for district teams during the conference. The Needs Assessment process was organized into six steps that were designed to guide districts through the development of a comprehensive district improvement plan:

Step 1—rate standards and focus areas: Using a rubric developed by NCCRESt, district teams reviewed those of their policies and practices that have been shown to be related to disproportionality and used local data to assess their progress in 23 focus areas related to the following standards:

- **Core functions:** Educational systems are designed to ensure that equitable educational opportunities are available and accessible to all students, including those from diverse cultural, linguistic, and ability backgrounds.
- **Instructional service:** All grade levels are designed to support and produce academic achievement for diverse learners.
- **Individualized instruction:** Children with disabilities are ensured access to, participation in, and progress in the general curriculum.
- **Accountability:** Student performance on state and district assessments is analyzed and used to guide instructional and school improvement.

For each focus area, teams were asked to review relevant data and to rate their progress using the following rating categories: *beginning*, *developing*, or *at standard*.

Step 2—prioritize standards and focus areas: From their ratings of each focus area, teams identified focus areas that were the highest priorities for the district (those rated as *beginning* or *developing*). These areas would be the focus of the district’s disproportionality improvement plan. Questions were provided within the assessment rubric to help teams determine their priorities (e.g., the likelihood of success in addressing the challenge or the extent to which addressing the challenge would prepare the district to take on more systemic challenges).

Step 3—asset mapping for priority standards: Teams identified which organizations and agencies would either be affected by the district improvement plan or would collaborate with the district to address the standards and focus areas identified in the plan.

Step 4—needs planning and outcomes: Districts developed a statement of need that indicated how different organizations identified in Step 3 would address the priority areas identified in Step 2. Teams then listed activities intended to meet the needs cited in the statement of need.

Step 5—activity planning for identified needs and outcomes: For each activity listed in Step 4, districts completed an activity planning sheet which proposed details for when and how the activity would be completed.

Step 6—evaluation plan: Districts outlined how they would evaluate the design, implementation, outcomes, and impact of activities identified in Step 5.

Districts also were given access to the Needs Assessment website, which requires a username and password for log-in. On the website, districts are provided with several resources to further assist them with planning:

- A Needs Assessment overview
- An NCCRESt slide presentation that includes an overview of the steps involved in completing the Needs Assessment rubric
- A copy of the NCCRESt Needs Assessment rubric
- A list of data sources that might be used to address focus areas
- A list of rubric definitions and examples
- Instructions and blank worksheets for each step of the Needs Assessment process

Once districts completed the Needs Assessment rubric, they submitted their district improvement plans. In 2009, districts could submit the plans in one of the following ways: (1) a paper or electronic copy of the Wisconsin State Performance Plan and the annual disproportionality improvement plan; (2) a paper or electronic district improvement plan with related (and highlighted) goals and activities; (3) completion of the online Needs Assessment, which generates the district's improvement plan for addressing disproportionality. In 2010, districts were required to complete and submit the online Needs Assessment.

CESA 11 staff provides ongoing technical support to districts in completing the Needs Assessment. The feedback received from districts that had difficulty using the 2009 online Needs Assessment prompted the staff from CESA 11 to redesign the online system. The changes made to the system make it easier for districts to view and update their district improvement plans. In 2010, districts that used the online system last year were able to access their 2009 ratings and enter progress ratings. The redesigned online system makes it possible for districts to track goals, changes, and successes and use this information to set future goals.

Identification of Technical Assistance Needs. A technical Needs Assessment survey was administered to districts that participated in the Needs Assessment process. The survey asked districts to identify their professional development and technical assistance needs for the next two years and to indicate how this assistance could best be provided. Of the 26 districts that participated in the 2009 CREATE conference, 25 completed surveys. Needs clustered into four broad categories. Examples are provided here by category:⁵

Classroom Practices/Instructional Strategies

- Inclusive teaching practices
- Successful learning environments for all students
- Speakers, trainers, or consultants on intervention strategies or transitions

Differentiated Instruction, Diversity Training, Disproportionality

- What does a culturally responsive classroom look like? What should an administrator see/hear?
- Best practices for reducing disproportionality
- Staff development sessions on differentiation of instruction, awareness of native cultures, and how culture affects academic and behavioral functioning
- Professional development sessions for all staff members on culturally responsive classroom practices

Needs Assessment, Data Collection and Use, Technical Assistance

- A comprehensive Needs Assessment for schools to address unique needs
- Professional development and technical assistance in disaggregating and using districtwide data to drive instructional practices
- A comprehensive data-collection system that identifies gender, least restrictive environments, progress on individualized education programs (IEPs), attendance, transfer students, and performance

Parent Education, Family Involvement, Community Involvement

- Methods and models for gathering input from families, with examples of efficient ways to do this and get a response
- Parent education opportunities to help parents learn about IEPs

Additional Considerations

- Districts are looking for ongoing professional development rather than one-shot trainings.

⁵ The summary of survey results was provided by CESA 11.

- They want experts in their topics of interest, model schools to visit, and print and on-line resources they can go to when needed.
- They asked that the CREATE conference and workshops continue, and for ongoing support from DPI and the CREATE coordinators.
- They are seeking guidance in changing perspectives to develop diverse cultural practices for all staff and administrators, and for information to support for families and students in their communities.

Sharing Survey Results With Other CREATE Coordinators and With Participating Districts. Results of the 2009 Needs Assessment surveys were summarized by CESA 11 and shared with the coordinators of other CREATE components. Coordinators have been able to use these results to plan future professional development activities. For example, the CREATE Conference Planning Committee used the 2009 survey results to plan conference sessions that addressed areas in which districts reported needing the most help with staff development: parent and community involvement, Needs Assessment and data use, and diversity training and culturally responsive classroom practices.

The survey results were also used to plan the Professional Development Academies for 2010–11. At the 2010 preconference sessions, districts participating in the Needs Assessment process were informed of the requirements for participating in the Professional Development Academies in 2010–11 and the options that would be available to districts for meeting these requirements. The requirements and options also have been posted on the Needs Assessment website. A summary of 2009 Needs Assessment survey results also was posted on the website to make them available to districts participating in the Needs Assessment. Results of the 2010 Needs Assessment surveys also will be shared with CREATE coordinators and districts required to complete the Needs Assessment.

Professional Development Academies (CESA 7)

The purpose of the CREATE Professional Development Academies is to help districts reduce disproportionality by improving district policies and practices for special education referral, assessment, placement, and service delivery. To accomplish this goal, the academies provide training on best practices for addressing the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The academies were offered for the first time in 2009–10. Districts identified as having significant disproportionality were required to send teams to the academies; academy workshops were offered only to staff members from these districts.

CESA 7 was responsible for scheduling and coordinating the 2009–10 academies. Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Hasan and Carl Hasan of Pearlmaker Educational Consulting served as the academy trainers and facilitators. Both have expertise in parent and community involvement and the disproportionate representation of students from culturally diverse backgrounds in special education. Dr. Webb-Hasan is an associate professor in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. Carl Hasan has been a member of the school board of the Bryan, Texas, Independent School District for more than 10 years and recently served as the school board president.

The major activities of this component were two daylong professional development workshops for participating district teams—one in September 2009 and one in February 2010. Originally, four workshops were planned. Districts objected to the number, however, and only two workshops were held. Two optional webinars also had originally been planned but were not offered.

Participants

Participating district teams were assigned to one of two groups at each workshop. Workshops were offered on two consecutive days: September 23 and 24, 2009, and February 24 and 25, 2010. District teams assigned to group 1 attended the first day, and teams assigned to Group 2 attended the second day.

Group 1. The following districts were in group 1: Appleton, Ashland, Bayfield, De Forest, Eau Claire, Glendale-River Hills, Green Bay, Hayward, Janesville, Kenosha, Monona Grove, Pulaski, and Waukesha.

Group 2. Districts in group 2 were Crandon, Jefferson, Lac du Flambeau, La Crosse, Lakeland Union High School, Madison, Menominee Indian, Oshkosh, Racine, Seymour, Sheboygan, Sun Prairie, and Verona.

Overall, 126 participants attended the September 2009 workshops, and 109 participants attended the February 2010 workshops. Teams from all 26 districts participated. District teams varied in composition but typically included principals, special education directors, school psychologists, at-risk specialists, interventionists, and district administrators. On average, five staff members participated from each district. The size of district teams ranged from 1 to 14. A minimum of 4 to 5 district team members was recommended by the academy organizers.

2009–2010 Goals and Activities

The primary goals of the 2009–10 Professional Development Academies were to provide district teams with effective strategies for reducing disproportionality and enhancing the academic engagement and outcomes of students from culturally and racially diverse backgrounds. Each district team was expected to incorporate strategies from the workshops into their district's plan for addressing disproportionality.

Professional Development Academies. The September 2009 and the February 2010 workshops both were held at the Ho-Chunk Hotel and Convention Center in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Workshop sessions were scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The September workshop focused on eliminating race as a factor in disproportionality and offered sessions on the following topics:

- National and state perspectives on disproportionality
- A review of data on disproportionality from each of the participating districts
- A presentation of the academy trainers' approach to addressing disproportionality focusing on professional development and community engagement

- A working lunch that offered opportunities for participants to discuss and share district needs and concerns
- The introduction of a framework for sustained district improvement in addressing disproportionality that focused on the following topics:
 - Family and community engagement
 - Special education prereferral and referral policies and practices
 - Special education placement policies and procedures (IEP meetings)
 - Culturally responsive positive behavior supports and tiered interventions
 - Culturally responsive lesson plans in specific subject areas
- A demonstration of a culturally responsive lesson

For the February 2010 workshop, morning sessions were devoted to small-group discussions and a report of themes discussed in each group. Discussion groups were organized around the following topics:

- Culturally responsive engagement (what it means, what it looks like)
- Race and culture (differences among African American, Latino American, Native American, and Hmong students)
- Instructional services and assessment (the relationship between student outcomes and how districts teach)
- Core content (curriculum and standards)
- Disciplinary/behavioral challenges and practices for addressing them—Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports and culturally responsive behavior management
- Special education referral and placement (prereferral, referral, placement, and tiered intervention models)
- Emotional disturbances
- Second language learners

Afternoon sessions focused on parent and community involvement. The trainers presented findings from research on family engagement (e.g., when families should get involved, characteristics of involvement, impact of involvement, and strategies for involving parents and community members). Participants from the Green Bay and Madison school districts shared examples of practices being implemented in their districts to promote family engagement. Participants then broke into small groups to discuss strategies that participating districts could use to promote family engagement. The day ended with feedback from districts on challenges and next steps at the district level.

Related Activities and Resources. Prior to each September workshop, the academy trainers facilitated a town hall meeting for district participants. The meetings focused on the need for active family and community engagement in district efforts to provide culturally responsive

supports and instruction for students from diverse backgrounds. The trainers distributed reading lists to participants that included articles relevant to the topics discussed in the workshops. An online blog was developed by the trainers to allow participants to post questions or comments on workshop content or district concerns, but very few participants used the online blog.

Connections Among the CREATE Components

The CREATE components share a focus on increasing an understanding of cultural contexts and differences and an awareness of how power and privilege shape personal and institutional interactions and contribute to disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes. Awareness of such disparities is a first step toward identification of policies and practices that contribute to educational inequities.

A primary focus of the CREATE initiative is to identify district policies and practices that contribute to the disproportionate representation of students from specific racial or ethnic groups in special education. Districts identified as having significant disproportionality are required to review existing policies and practices that may be contributing to disproportionality. Both the *Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality in Special Education* and the CREATE Needs Assessment are designed to help districts identify such policies and practices and to develop comprehensive district improvement plans for addressing disproportionality. As part of this process, districts are asked to identify their staff development and technical assistance needs.

To assist districts in implementing these plans, professional development and technical assistance are provided to districts on the basis of identified needs. Teams from districts with significant disproportionality are required to participate in the Professional Development Academies, which are designed to help districts eliminate disproportionality by providing evidence-based strategies for improving special education referral, assessment, placement, and service delivery. Districts incorporate strategies learned through the academy workshop into their district improvement plans.

Additional staff development and technical assistance services are provided to districts through other CREATE components. Districts with significant disproportionality are not required to participate in these other components, but several have chosen to do so. The Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education provides equity leadership training that is designed to help district teams analyze their policies and practices, provide leadership in eliminating racial and ethnic disparities, and introduce culturally responsive policies and practices. The Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component assists district or school teams with identifying and implementing culturally responsive practices in the following areas: classroom environment, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and classroom management.

Two of the CREATE components focus specifically on addressing the needs of Native American students or young children. The American Indian Student Achievement Network provides networking and professional development opportunities to Wisconsin districts with the highest percentages of Native American students. These opportunities are designed to assist districts in identifying and addressing barriers to learning for Native American students. Support also is provided to districts in completing district improvement plans. The Culturally Responsive Early

Childhood Project is helping to build the capacity of early childhood providers and teachers to provide culturally responsive services to Native American children from birth to age six. Additional goals of the project are building relationships and strengthening partnerships between tribal nations, school districts, and governmental agencies; identifying and sharing state and local resources; and increasing awareness of culturally responsive practices.

The annual CREATE conference helps participants to recognize connections among these other CREATE components and develop a more systemic approach to district and school improvement. The conference includes sessions on institutional barriers to learning and achievement for students from diverse backgrounds, the efforts of districts to identify and remove those barriers and replace them with equitable policies and practices, and the efforts of teachers and service providers to identify the individual needs of students and young children and to work with parents and community members to address these needs through culturally responsive practices that support and promote student learning and engagement. The CREATE newsletter and website in turn provide resources and information on professional development opportunities that can be used by districts and schools to build their capacity to provide culturally relevant and responsive education.

CREATE Theory of Action

The CREATE initiative is designed to build state and district capacity to close achievement gaps among students from diverse backgrounds and to eliminate race and ethnicity as predictors of special education referrals. The following types of assistance are provided to school districts and other stakeholders (e.g., state, regional, and local government agencies) to assist them in developing the organizational structures and processes needed to achieve these goals:

- Increasing awareness and knowledge of cultural differences and culturally responsive practices (all CREATE components).
- Assisting districts with significant disproportionality to complete an annual review of district policies and practices that may be contributing to disproportionality and in developing comprehensive district improvement plans to address disproportionality on the basis of a review of local data (CREATE Needs Assessment).
- Assessing the staff development and technical assistance needs of these districts and provide training and technical assistance on the basis of identified needs (CREATE Needs Assessment, Professional Development Academies, American Indian Student Achievement Network).
- Providing equity leadership training to district teams (Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education).
- Assisting districts in identifying state and district resources, including existing technical assistance networks, to implement district and school improvement plans (all CREATE components).
- Synthesizing and expanding research-based practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students in general and special education (all CREATE components).
- Providing opportunities for collaboration and shared discourse at all levels of the educational system (all CREATE components).
- Helping district, schools, and service providers implement effective and evidence-based practices that support successful educational and developmental outcomes for students and young children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (all CREATE components).

The resources and training provided to school districts and other stakeholders are intended to promote the following types of district and school improvement efforts: creation of district and school equity leadership teams; implementation of continuous district and school improvement processes designed to ensure that policies and practices are meeting the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students; ongoing staff development and training focused on the implementation of culturally responsive practices; and establishment of school–community partnerships to provide opportunities for parents and community members to be involved in and support their children’s learning. A primary goal of the CREATE initiative is to help districts develop the structures and processes needed to sustain improvement efforts.

Changes at the school and district level are intended to lead to improvements in student outcomes, including outcomes measured by the State Performance Plan indicators that the CREATE initiative is specifically designed to address. The desired outcomes are to eliminate race and ethnicity as predictors of special education referrals (State Performance Plan indicators 9 and 10), increase the graduation rates, and decrease the dropout rates, of students with disabilities (State Performance Plan indicators 1 and 2), reduce discrepancies in the suspension and expulsion rates of students with disabilities (State Performance Plan indicator 4), and improve the social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills of preschool children with disabilities (State Performance Plan indicator 7). Increasing parent involvement as a means of improving services to children with disabilities is another intended outcome of the CREATE initiative (State Performance Plan indicator 8).

Feedback on Implementation of CREATE Components

In April and May 2010, follow-up interviews were conducted with the coordinator of each of the CREATE components, with the exception of the coordinator of the Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality, which was completed last year. The interviews focused on successes and challenges in implementing planned activities in 2008–09 and 2009–10. The coordinators of several of the components provided the evaluation team with the results of evaluation surveys that had been completed by participants in CREATE workshops, seminars, and conferences. These surveys were developed and administered by the CREATE coordinators or other CESA staff members rather than Learning Point Associates. A summary of interview and survey findings is presented here for relevant CREATE components.

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

The coordinator for the Consortium on Racial Equity on PK–12 Education reported that the consortium had been successful in implementing all workshops that were planned for 2008–09 and 2009–10. He noted several successes and challenges in conducting consortium workshops for district equity leadership teams and principals and training workshops for local equity coaches.

Consortium Successes

The consortium was successful in accomplishing its primary goal—to increase participants’ understanding of racial equity. As the coordinator of the consortium observed, “If [participants] didn’t have a clear understanding of what equity looks like, they do now. When they met in December 2008, they were not clear at that point.” The coordinator also noted that the consortium has been successful in facilitating communication between teams from different districts. Some of the district teams are collaborating on district planning.

Responses to participant surveys confirmed that most members of the district teams found the consortium’s equity leadership workshops thought-provoking and useful. Principals from participating districts who took part in the Beyond Diversity seminar in December 2009 and attended the principal seminar in March 2010 provided more mixed feedback, but the majority of those who completed feedback surveys provided favorable ratings of the seminars. Feedback from local coaches who took part in the coaching seminars was somewhat mixed but overall was quite favorable. A more detailed summary of feedback from these three participant groups follows.

District Equity Leadership Teams. The evaluation team received feedback surveys that were administered to district team members at the end of Year 1 and at the October 2009 and March

2010 district equity leadership workshops.⁶ Only the Year 2 surveys asked participants to provide ratings of the quality, usefulness, and organization of the seminars. Of the 23 participants who provided feedback on the October 2009 seminar, more than 90 percent rated the quality of the seminar as *good* or *excellent*, 83 percent rated the usefulness of the seminars as *good* or *excellent*, and 87 percent rated the organization of the seminar as *good* or *excellent*. Between 40 and 50 percent of participants gave ratings of *excellent* on all three indicators. The ratings of the March 2010 seminar were more positive. Of the 31 participants who provided feedback, all rated the quality and usefulness of the seminar as *good* or *excellent* and 97 percent rated the organization as *good* or *excellent*. Between 80 and 90 percent of the participants gave ratings of *excellent* on all three indicators.

Aspects of the seminars that participants most liked were within-team and cross-team discussions, the chance to move forward with district work (goal-setting and vision and mission statements), and the presenters. Almost 60 percent of participants in the March 2010 seminar provided favorable comments on the presenter, Courtland Butts.

Principal Seminars. Feedback surveys were provided to the evaluation team for the December 1–2, 2009, Beyond Diversity training for principals and the March 2010 principal seminar. Principals were asked to rate the quality, usefulness, and organization of the seminars, to report what they like most and least, and to provide suggestions for other ways CREATE could support their work. Approximately 30 percent ($n = 9$) of the participants provided feedback on the December training. All rated the quality, usefulness, and organization of the sessions as *good* or *excellent*. Almost 80 percent rated the quality and usefulness as *excellent*, and 67 percent rated the organization as *excellent*. Of the 23 participants in the March 2010 seminar who completed feedback surveys, 78 percent gave favorable ratings (*good* or *excellent*) of the quality of the seminar; 65 percent gave favorable ratings of the seminar’s usefulness, and 96 percent gave favorable ratings of the organization of the seminar.

Aspects of the Beyond Diversity training that participants liked most were the frank discussions, learning about the importance of establishing relationships between minority families and the school, and interactions with other participants. For the March 2010 seminar, several participants reported that they liked the hands-on format and use of technology, the resources and websites that were shared, and the expertise of the presenter.

Local Coaches Training. Survey results for the local coaches training were provided to the evaluation team for Year 1 (end-of-year feedback) and for training sessions held in October and November 2009 and March 2010. Only the Year 2 surveys asked participants to provide ratings

⁶ The Year 1 (2008–09) surveys asked only for feedback on what participants liked most about the seminars, suggestions for structuring the Year 2 seminars, and expectations of the Consortium in Year 2. These surveys were completed by approximately 24 percent of participants ($n = 16$). The Year 2 (2009–10) surveys asked participants to rate the quality, usefulness, and organization of the seminars on a 1 to 4 scale (poor, fair, good, and excellent) and to provide feedback on what they liked most and least, topics they would like to see covered in more depth, and suggestions for additional support. Approximately 34 percent of participants ($n = 23$) completed surveys in October 2009; approximately 46 percent ($n = 31$) completed surveys in March 2010. Response rates were calculated on the basis of the overall participation of district leadership team members, local coaches, and principals in the 2008–09 (68 participants) and 2009–10 (67 participants) seminars. Participant rosters for the seminars were not provided.

of the quality, usefulness, and organization of the trainings. Six of 14 coaches provided feedback on the October 2009 training; 9 provided feedback on the November 2009 coaching clinic and the March 16, 2010, training, and 10 provided feedback on the March 17, 2010, training.

For the October 2009 training, all coaches rated the quality, usefulness, and organization of training as *good* or *excellent*. Approximately half rated the usefulness of the training as *excellent* and a third rated the organization as *excellent*; only 17 percent rated the quality as *excellent*. Ratings of the November 2009 coaching clinic were somewhat mixed. Although 90 percent of participants rated the quality of the training as *good* or *excellent*, only 67 percent gave favorable ratings (*good* or *excellent*) of the usefulness of the training, and 78 percent gave favorable ratings of the organization. Approximately a third of respondents rated the quality of the training as *excellent*, 56 percent rated the usefulness as *excellent*, and 44 percent rated the organization as *excellent*.

Ratings of the March 2010 trainings were the most positive. For the March 16 training, all but one participant rated the quality, usefulness, and organization of the training as *good* or *excellent*, with most (78 percent) providing ratings of *excellent* on all three indicators. For the March 17 training, ratings of the organization of the training were omitted from the summary provided to the evaluation team. All respondents rated the quality and usefulness of the training as *good* or *excellent*, with 90 percent providing ratings of *excellent* on both indicators.

Aspects of the 2009–10 training sessions that participants most liked were discussion of the role of the local coaches, direction for their work with districts, learning various coaching techniques and having them modeled, and opportunities for fellow coaches to work with and learn from each other. Comments on the March 2010 sessions emphasized the opportunities provided for discussion and work with other coaches and the quality of the presentation by Courtland Butts on the second day.

Beyond Diversity Seminar for DPI Staff and Others. Feedback from participants in the March 30–31, 2010, Beyond Diversity seminar was very favorable. A total of 23 participants provided feedback. All but one participant provided ratings of *good* or *excellent* on indicators of quality, usefulness, and organization; the remaining participant rated the quality of the seminar as *fair*. More than 70 percent of participants provided ratings of *excellent* on all three indicators. Feedback on the facilitator, Courtland Butts, was overwhelmingly positive. Other aspects of the workshop that respondents most liked were the content, the frank conversations about race, and the personal stories that were shared.

Consortium Challenges

Several challenges were mentioned by the consortium coordinator and were reflected in feedback from participants. These challenges are summarized by topic.

Participant Turnover. Several consortium participants who had attended seminars in Year 1 did not return in Year 2. Of the 19 local coaches who participated in Year 1, only 14 returned in Year 2. Seven DPI participants also left at the end of Year 1; the three teams from DPI that had participated in the first year were consolidated into one team in Year 2. Although there was also

some change in district team membership between Years 1 and 2, a core group of district team members participated from all six districts in both 2008–09 and 2009–10.

Organization of Year 1 Workshops. A few of the participants who provided feedback on the Year 1 equity leadership workshops reported that the workshops were not well organized. Information was often repeated from one session to the next, particularly early in the year, and the objectives of the workshops were not clearly communicated to participants. These issues appear to have been addressed to a large extent in Year 2. Most participants in the Year 2 workshops provided favorable ratings of the organization of the workshops and indicated that workshop objectives were communicated more clearly.

Negative Reactions to the Consortium Presenter. A few participants had negative reactions to Glenn Singleton from Pacific Education Group, who led the equity leadership workshops. In open-ended comments, these participants indicated that they thought the presenter was too confrontational and lectured rather than facilitated discussion among participants. In Year 2, new presenters were brought in to lead some of the workshops in an effort to diffuse negative feelings and keep participants focused on the issues rather than the presenter. Overall, there were fewer negative comments about the presenters/facilitators in Year 2.

Focus and Pace of the Workshops. Some participants were frustrated with the pace of the workshops and wanted to move more quickly to district planning, which was a focus of the Year 2 workshops. The consortium organizers, however, intentionally focused on increasing participants' awareness and understanding of racial equity in Year 1 to provide a foundation for district equity planning. The consortium coordinator noted that "Some people felt they were ready to go forward after a couple of seminars. But they didn't understand the work."

Lack of Communication Within Districts. The consortium coordinator noted that one of the major challenges of working with district teams has been the lack of communication within districts about work on equity and culturally responsive practices. Participants in different CREATE components were not talking with one another. He noted that this situation has improved and that one of the district equity teams has developed a plan to facilitate communication among school and district staff who are participating in the different components.

Local Coaches. The consortium coordinator commented on two issues relating to the local coaches. The first was the lack of diversity among the coaches; none of them are people of color. Because of the CREATE initiative's focus on racial and cultural diversity, the coordinator would prefer that the CREATE coaches reflect this diversity. The second issue was that many of the coaches were not effective coaches or facilitators. He noted that coaches are supposed to work with district teams and push them to address difficult issues. Some district teams did not think the coaches were effective at facilitating team discussions. The consortium coordinator said that the districts may be allowed to choose their coaches next year, to ensure that they receive adequate support.

Suggestions for Additional Help and Support

District team members, local coaches, and principals provided several suggestions for improving the workshops or providing participants with additional help and support:

- Provide more time for participants to work in teams to do action planning.
- Identify districts that have been successful in developing equity policies and practices, share these best practices with participants, and identify factors that have contributed to the success of these districts.
- Provide more concrete examples of equity activities and practices that educators can implement at the community, district, and classroom levels.
- Provide more topics and sessions that focus on the populations that district teams are working with (e.g., Native American).
- Help participants organize small local workshops to develop awareness of equity issues among school and district staff (e.g., provide a framework and set of strategies for conducting similar workshops at the school or district level).
- Provide opportunities for district teams to share progress on work in their districts with other teams.
- Help district teams with goal setting and assessing progress.
- Provide a roster of consortium participants so that participants can contact each other outside consortium activities.
- Provide a list of discussion points or goals to provide a focus for team discussions.
- Discuss how the CREATE components are related and can work together to further district improvement efforts.
- Provide opportunities for coaches to observe good facilitation at conferences such as the Wisconsin Response to Intervention (RTI) Summit.
- Provide more time for local coaches to talk with one another about their work with district teams.

Next Steps

The consortium coordinator noted that CREATE made a two-year commitment to provide equity leadership seminars to district teams. As of April 2010, the consortium coordinator and DPI were still deciding what activities would be offered by the consortium next year. The coordinator indicated that collaboration with Glenn Singleton of Pacific Education Group and David Davidson of West Wind Education Policy will continue in 2010–11. The coordinator indicated that the consortium would not provide the same level of support for local coaches next year. In 2010–11, the number of coaches will be reduced from 14 to approximately five. Equity leadership teams will have one coach per district. The CREATE coordinator and DPI are exploring the possibility of having some coaches trained to become Pacific Educational Group

affiliates (Courageous Conversations facilitators) in order to increase the capacity of CREATE to continue to offer the Beyond Diversity seminars statewide.

CREATE Conference (CESA 9)

The coordinator for the CREATE conference reported that planning had gone well for the 2010 conference, that conference attendance had increased this year, and that conference participants provided positive feedback on conference organization, sessions, and presenters. The planning committee for the 2010 conference used the results of the 2009 Needs Assessment survey to identify areas in which districts with significant disproportionality reported needing the most assistance with staff development. Results of the feedback surveys from the 2009 conference also informed the planning for this year's conference. The conference coordinator indicated the results of the Needs Assessment surveys were helpful in planning the 2010 conference. She also noted that the planning committee had worked well together. Committee members included a representative from DPI as well as the coordinators of several CREATE components who were able to bring different perspectives to the planning process. The only challenges mentioned were the earlier conference date (April rather than June) in 2010, which shortened the time available for planning, and a somewhat late start in planning the conference.

Participant Feedback

The conference coordinator provided the evaluation team with the results of feedback surveys that were completed by participants in both the 2009 and the 2010 conferences. A total of 55 participants (approximately 25 percent) completed feedback surveys for the 2009 conference; 78 participants (25 percent) completed feedback surveys for the 2010 conference.

Participant Ratings. Overall, survey results for the 2010 conference were more positive than those for the 2009 conference. More than 90 percent of participants who complete the 2010 feedback survey *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were very satisfied with the conference. In contrast, only 83 percent of respondents provided favorable ratings (*good* or *excellent*) of the 2009 conference. Ratings of the presentations were similar for both conferences, with approximately 80 percent of respondents providing favorable feedback.

Questions about the organization of the conference, the variety of presentations, the usefulness of posting handouts and slide presentations on the CREATE website, and the ease of online registration were topics on the 2010 feedback survey, but were not included on the 2009 survey. Responses to these questions were very favorable. Almost all respondents (99 percent) *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the conference was well organized, and more than 80 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that there was a reasonable variety of presentations and that posting the handouts and presentation slides on the CREATE website was very helpful to them. Approximately 70 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the online registration was easy to navigate.

Only 10 percent of respondents *disagreed* that there was a reasonable variety of presentations and that the quality of the conference presentations was superior. A smaller percentage (5 percent or less) indicated disagreement with other survey items. A few respondents (4 to 10 percent) reported that they were “uncertain” in responding to specific survey questions.

Several participants provided feedback on the preconference Needs Assessment sessions. These results are presented later, in the section on the Needs Assessment.

Positive Comments on the 2010 Conference. In open-ended comments, several respondents noted that the conference has improved from those of previous years, and some were very complimentary about the conference sessions and the overall organization of the conference. As one participant commented, “I have been to this conference about four times, and by far this was the best one.” Another wrote, “Well done. It’s great to know the comments are being listened to.” Additional comments included positive feedback on the breakout sessions, the presentations by Dr. Samuel Betances and Dr. Lisa Bardon, and the visit to Oneida Turtle School.

Suggestions for Improving Future Conferences. Respondents to the 2010 evaluation surveys provided several suggestions for improving future conferences. A summary of the comments is presented below.

- Provide more sessions on Native American issues (e.g., breakout sessions focusing on Native American culture, the current tribal political system, an antiracist approach that involves Native Americans, the future of Native American education); provide more Native American speakers, more resources about Native Americans, and encourage districts to increase the representation of Native Americans on district teams.
- Provide sessions focusing on the Hmong and other groups.
- Provide sessions on classroom-based strategies and resources.
- Include presentations by districts that have been successful in narrowing achievement and opportunity gaps
- Increase the number of presentations by local experts.
- Include sessions focusing on social justice, white privilege, and Critical Race Theory.
- Present student perspectives, experiences, and feedback.
- Continue to focus on Response to Intervention.
- Include more breaks, particularly for two-hour sessions, and display session length in session descriptions.
- Post more conference handouts and slide presentations on the CREATE website.
- Provide sessions for participants with different levels of knowledge and experience and include this information in session descriptions.
- Provide specific strategies and tools for working with at-risk students.
- Provide a greater focus on disabilities and race in special education sessions.

Comments on the roundtable lunch were mixed. Some participants found the discussions useful, although a few suggested that guiding questions be provided to keep discussions on topic. Several respondents noted that they did not participate in the roundtable because they needed “down time” or preferred to spend time talking with other participants from their district about

what they had learned in the morning sessions. A few thought the roundtable was not successful, in part because participants from the same district often chose to sit together.

Next Steps

As of May 2010 when we spoke to the conference coordinator, planning for the 2011 conference had not yet begun. The coordinator did indicate that a new co-conference coordinator had been hired who has experience in conference planning as it relates to equity issues. This change was made at the request of DPI.

American Indian Student Achievement Network (CESA 12)

Both the AISAN coordinator and the CESA 12 administrator were interviewed to obtain feedback on successes and challenges of AISAN in the past two years. The AISAN coordinator also provided the evaluation team with the results of feedback surveys that were completed by participants in the Wisconsin Tribal Language Network and American Indian Student Achievement Network Conference, held on March 1–2, 2010, and the workshop on the dropout/graduation crisis among Native American students, held on June 14–15, 2010. AISAN successes and challenges are summarized here.

AISAN Successes

The AISAN coordinator noted that AISAN comprises members from the 26 Wisconsin districts that have the highest percentage of Native American students. Although attendance at some of the early AISAN meetings was relatively low, the March 2010 AISAN conference was well attended, with 123 participants from more than 30 school districts and several tribal communities. The June 2010 workshop on dropout and graduation rates also was well attended; 55 individuals registered for the workshop, and 15 school districts were represented. The coordinator said that AISAN has helped to increase networking among participating districts and noted that some networking has occurred outside AISAN. Feedback on both the March 2010 conference and the June 2010 workshop was very positive, as the following summaries indicate.

March 2010 Conference Feedback. A total of 58 participants (47 percent) provided feedback on the March 2010 conference; respondents included home-school coordinators ($n = 26$), culture/language teachers ($n = 14$), tribal members ($n = 13$), and tribal elders ($n = 5$). The summary of results provided to the evaluation team averaged responses rather than presenting percentages by response category. Respondents rated survey items on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = poor to 5 = excellent). The average rating for the overall quality of conference was 4.5. Ratings of individual sessions also were high. Only five of the 12 sessions received average ratings lower than 4.5, and only two received average ratings lower than 4.0. The two sessions that received the lowest ratings were the technology demonstration, which received average ratings of 3.9 for quality and 3.9 for usefulness, and the discussion of next steps for AISAN, which received average ratings of 3.9 for quality and 3.6 for usefulness. The session on assessment of tribal language learners received the highest ratings, with average ratings of 4.9 for quality and 5.0 for usefulness.

In open-ended comments, respondents reported what they found most helpful about the conference. Here is a summary of these comments:

- Networking, contacts, and resources
- Assessment tools
- Action plans
- Speakers (Thomas Peacock, Ron Dunlap, and Don Rosin were specifically mentioned)
- Information on attendance and truancy
- Information and contacts from the Title VII presentation (T7 Chicago)
- Implementation strategies
- Grant opportunities

Respondents also reported how they would use information from the conference. Several said that they would use some of the resources in their classrooms; a few noted that they would be involved in grant writing, sharing information and resources with colleagues, working with members of the community, and working on action plans. A few mentioned that they planned to invite Don Rosin come to their districts to talk about special education or truancy.

June 2010 Workshop Feedback. The feedback from participants in the June 2010 workshop on the dropout and graduation crisis among Native American students was also very positive. Of the 24 participants who completed feedback surveys, 96 percent gave ratings of *good* or *excellent* for overall program quality, program content, and program materials; 88 percent gave ratings of *good* or *excellent* for the program's process. Almost half (46 percent) rated the program content, process, and materials as *excellent*, and 38 percent rated the overall program quality as *excellent*. All participants agreed that the information presented was relevant. More than 90 percent agreed that the program objectives were clear and the program content had improved their understanding and said they would recommend the program to a colleague. Most (79 percent) also agreed that the program objectives were met. In open-ended comments, a few participants provided positive feedback on the topics and speakers, the use of a flash drive to provide participants with presentation materials, and the inclusion of Menominee students in the workshop.

AISAN Challenges

Several challenges were mentioned by the AISAN coordinator and were reflected in feedback from participants. The challenges are summarized by topic.

Communication With AISAN Members. The administrator of CESA 12 noted there needs to be more regular communication with network members and suggested weekly contacts with various districts, perhaps dividing the districts into cohorts and rotating through the list of district contacts. He also recommended frequent e-mail updates to AISAN members and greater use of the Moodle website by both the AISAN coordinator and AISAN participants. Few AISAN participants have used the site to post comments or respond to questions. The AISAN

coordinator said that he had sent out numerous e-mails on how to access the site but had gotten little response. He acknowledged that more needs to be done to promote use of the Moodle and suggested that alternative forms of communication with AISAN members, such as an electronic mailing list, be explored. He noted that he had initially contacted participants through district administrators, who sometimes failed to share information with staff members. He began sending e-mails directly to AISAN members once contact information was available to ensure that members were informed of upcoming events.

Establishing Relationships With Tribal Communities. A major challenge for the AISAN coordinator has been involving tribal members. The eleven tribal communities in Wisconsin have different governance structures and different protocols and procedures for contacting tribal leaders. Knowing whom to contact has been problematic. The coordinator suggested that a tribal liaison be hired who could help develop relationships with the tribal communities and invite their participation in AISAN. Conflicts between tribal communities have also been a challenge; if one community participates, another may be reluctant to do so. For the most part, the coordinator has left it up to school districts to decide whether to invite tribal members to participate in events, but this strategy may be limiting the participation of tribal members.

Event Planning. Another difficulty has been providing sufficient notice to participants about planned events. School districts and tribal communities need time to approve travel plans and arrange substitutes for teachers or other staff who participate in the events. More advanced planning of events is needed. Forming an AISAN planning committee might help with advanced planning and provide opportunities for AISAN members to provide input on upcoming events. The AISAN coordinator noted that Andrew Gokee, Chair of the Native American Center at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, Katherine Baerg, coadviser of a Native American student group at the University of Wisconsin–Stout, and J. P. Leary, DPI consultant for Native American studies, helped plan the March 2010 AISAN conference and helped generate interest in the conference among colleagues.

Travel and Related Issues. The coordinator noted that some tribal communities and school districts have placed restrictions on staff travel, which has limited attendance at some events. He said that AISAN does provide reimbursement for some travel costs, but negotiating with school districts on reimbursement of travel costs has been time-consuming. For the March 2010 conference, AISAN had agreed to pay for mileage for two vehicles per district, but some districts wanted to send more than two vehicles. The AISAN coordinator compromised and agreed to pay for half the mileage if more than two vehicles were used. Booking hotel rooms has also proved problematic. A credit card is required to secure a room, but some participants do not have credit cards. The coordinator resolved the problem by having the rooms billed to AISAN.

Suggestions for Additional Help and Support

Participants in the March 2010 conference provided feedback on their expectations for AISAN and offered several suggestions for additional activities or support that might be provided by AISAN. Suggestions included the following:

- Regional meetings and workshops (e.g., two or three regional meetings throughout the year and then a statewide conference)

- More frequent updates (e.g., a monthly newsletter)
- More input from Native Americans in AISAN planning
- Better promotion of AISAN goals and activities
- Continued staff development and financial support, including scholarships for the American Indian Summer Institute
- Continued networking opportunities with other districts (and other states)
- Resource sharing (e.g., online curricular resources)
- Presenters for the CREATE annual conference
- A focus on language revitalization and a culturally sensitive curriculum
- Strategies for increasing public awareness of Native American culture
- Mandate 31 training for school districts (through DPI)
- Training for teachers and parents
- Training on best practices
- Student participation in some workshops and conferences
- Additional information on Title VII
- Representation in fighting institutionalized racism

Participants in the June 2010 workshop on the dropout/graduation crisis also provided suggestions for future AISAN activities. The following suggestions were made:

- Cultural sensitivity training for school staff
- Poverty sensitivity training for school staff in rural areas and on reservations
- Strategies and tools for parents to use in communicating with school officials
- Greater participation in AISAN events by school districts in the Ho-Chunk area (few if any staff from these districts participated in the workshop)
- Provision of resources to Native American programs in public schools
- An Internet site focusing on Native American educational successes
- Strategies for helping tribes collaborate in working with at-risk students and their families
- Information and workshop sessions on transitions to college
- More opportunities for school administrators and tribal education leaders to work together on planning
- More opportunities for school districts to collaborate and share information

Next Steps

After conversations with the AISAN coordinator, the CESA 12 administrator, and several AISAN participants on the future direction of AISAN, the CREATE coordinator and DPI decided to bring in a new project coordinator for AISAN. The new coordinator, Andrew Gokee, was recently hired. Don Rosin has also been selected to serve as a tribal liaison and will work with AISAN, the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project, and CESA 6 to develop relationships with leaders of Wisconsin's eleven tribal communities.

CREATE Monthly E-Newsletter (CESA 4)

The coordinator of the CREATE newsletter was interviewed in May 2010 to learn about successes and challenges in developing and disseminating the newsletter. Overall, the coordinator said that the development of the newsletter has gone well and that all newsletters that were planned for 2009–10 were created and disseminated on schedule. She said that she and the webmaster have developed a fluid process for creating the newsletter and have a good feel for what they want the content to be and what the newsletter should look like. She noted that the CREATE project coordinators have been good about submitting articles, resources, and announcements for the newsletter. The number of newsletter subscribers increased last year, from approximately 170 in 2009 to 330 in 2010, but the coordinator said that she would like to see circulation continue to grow. To avoid sending unsolicited e-mails, the project coordinator requires individuals to submit a request to be put on the subscription list. Newsletters also are posted on the CREATE website and are available to nonsubscribers.

The coordinator indicated that there have been few challenges in producing the newsletter during the past year. She said last year was quite challenging because she was given little direction before Ron Dunlap was hired as the CREATE coordinator. The work has gone much more smoothly since then. A continuing concern is that many newsletter subscribers are not actually accessing or reading the newsletter. The newsletter is sent out through *i-Contact*, a program that allows the sender to monitor whether recipients open e-mails, view the newsletter, and click on embedded links to access additional information on specific topics. The tracking program produces statistics on each indicator. Tracking statistics from February through April 2010 indicated that fewer than half of newsletter recipients actually viewed the newsletter, and only 15 percent clicked on embedded links within the newsletter. The CREATE coordinator and DPI are aware of the problem and have discussed options for increasing dissemination and use. The project coordinator reported that CESA 4 will not be producing the CREATE newsletter in the future. CESA 4 and CREATE are both going in different directions next year, and CESA 6 will assume responsibility for producing the newsletter in 2010–11.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices (CESAs 1 & 2)

An interview was conducted with the coordinator of the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component in May 2010. The coordinator also provided the evaluation team with a summary of responses to feedback surveys completed by participants in the 2008–09 and 2009–10 classroom practices workshops. The coordinator reported that the workshops had gone well in

both years and that feedback from participants has been very positive. There have been some challenges, however. Project successes and challenges are summarized below.

Workshop Successes

The project coordinator said that the major success of the workshops was “seeing the growth of 80 percent of the participants. They gain so much insight into themselves and how it impacts their students.” This growth in participants’ awareness, knowledge, and skills was reflected in responses to the evaluation surveys. For each of the workshops, participants were asked to provide feedback on what they had learned, what they could do with what they had learned, what they would like to know more about, and what they would do differently if they were leading the training. For the February 2009 workshops, 15 participants provided feedback; 7 provided feedback on the May 2009 workshops. A total of 21 participants provided feedback on the September 2009 workshops; 28 provided feedback on the November 2009 workshops; 26 provided feedback on the February 2010 workshops; and 20 provided feedback on the April 2010 workshops. Response rates were relatively high for most workshops.⁷

Overall, feedback was very favorable for all the workshops. Participants reported an increase in awareness of personal biases, an increase in understanding of power and privilege; a familiarity with features of culturally responsive classrooms, an ability to use specific classroom practices and strategies, and an awareness of the importance of language in facilitating change.

Workshop Challenges

Despite the success of the workshops, there were some challenges. The project coordinator noted that the training sessions were designed for school-based teams, but 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. The trainers also recommended that an administrator be a member of the team, but some of the teams did not include a building or district administrator. Because initial interest in the workshops was limited to a few districts, and to a few staff members within those districts, the trainers did not insist on school-based teams or require an administrator to be a member of the team.

The workshop schedule was challenging for many of the participants. Many found it difficult to attend four two-day workshops during the school year, and there was some attrition in workshop attendance. Several participants suggested that the schedule for the workshops be changed to reduce the amount of time that teachers had to be out of the classroom. Some suggested that the workshops be offered for one day rather than two or that workshops be offered during the summer. A few participants also suggested that the workshops be offered regionally to reduce travel time to workshops and to provide opportunities for trainers to visit participants’ schools.

⁷ There were ten cohort 1 participants and 24 cohort 2 participants who participated throughout the training. A few other participants attended some of the early workshops but did not participate in the full series of workshops.

Next Steps

The project coordinator said that she was planning to make changes in the schedule of workshops next year in response to participant feedback and had discussed the possibility of offering regional workshops with the CREATE coordinator. She reported that several districts had expressed interest in participating in the workshops in 2010–11. With the increasing interest in the workshops, she thought that districts could be required to send school-based teams to the training. She said she was also thinking of asking districts and schools to complete surveys next year so that she could assess the extent to which districts that had participated in the trainings were implementing culturally responsive classroom practices. Dr. Shelly Zion was expected to continue to serve as the lead trainer for the workshops next year.

Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project (CESA 8)

The coordinator of the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Project was interviewed in April 2010 with follow-up in May. She discussed project successes as well as the challenges in trying to improve the coordination of services to young Native American children and their families. Such services are typically provided by county Birth to 3 agencies, school districts, and tribal communities. The coordinator also provided the evaluation team with summaries of feedback surveys that were completed by participants in the Second and Third Early Childhood Tribal Gatherings, which project staff helped to plan and coordinate.

Project Successes

Project successes have included organizing the Second and Third Early Childhood Tribal Gatherings in partnership with the State Early Childhood Interagency Agreement Team. Both gatherings included participants from tribal communities, school districts, and state and county agencies. A primary goal of the gatherings was to encourage participants to work together to develop interagency agreements to improve services to young Native American children with disabilities. Such agreements were authorized by the Wisconsin state legislature in 1994 and allow local agencies—including local education agencies, CESAs, county handicapped child education boards, and county Birth to 3 agencies—to collaborate in evaluations of young children.

Participant feedback on Second and Third Tribal Gatherings was very positive, although response rates were low for the first event. Of the 17 participants (18 percent) who provided feedback on the Second Tribal Gathering, all *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the information presented at the meeting was clear and easy to understand, the materials were relevant and useful, and participants were given a chance to participate in sessions through questions, discussion, or other ways. Approximately half the respondents *strongly agreed* that the information was clear and that the materials were relevant and useful, and 71 percent *strongly agreed* that they were provided with opportunities to participate in sessions. All respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that there was a need for a third tribal gathering, with 82 percent indicating strong agreement.

Participants in the Second Tribal Gathering were asked to indicate what parts of the meeting they had found most helpful. Comments included the following:

- Small-group discussions and activities
- Networking
- Overview of laws and programs
- Learning about resources
- Learning about cultural issues and differences
- Learning about FACETS, IEPs, and parent rights
- Hearing participants' stories and successes

Participants in the Third Early Childhood Tribal Gathering were asked to indicate how far along their agencies were in developing interagency agreements. Of the 41 participants who provided feedback, the majority (61 percent) reported that they had fully developed agreements with all partners, and 22 percent reported that they were in the process of developing agreements. Only 10 percent reported that they had not yet begun to develop agreements; 7 percent indicated that the question was not applicable. Respondents were also asked to indicate how many of their partners were attending the Third Tribal Gathering. More than 80 percent reported that a few of their partners were in attendance, and 13 percent reported that most of their partners were attending; the remaining two respondents indicated that the question was not applicable.

Participants were also asked how the Third Tribal Gathering had advanced the process of establishing or enhancing interagency agreements. Respondents noted the following resources or opportunities that were provided by the gathering that had assisted with this process:

- New ideas and information about whom to work with
- Help with developing actions plans and identifying next steps for continuing the work
- New formats for establishing or revising agreements
- Opportunities to build or strengthen relationships with partners and state agencies
- Good discussions and planning

Participants in the Early Childhood Tribal Services Provider Workshop, which was held in conjunction with the Third Tribal Gathering, were asked to indicate how useful the workshop had been. Of the 12 participants who provided feedback, 67 percent reported that the workshop was *useful* or *extremely useful*; most of the remaining participants (25 percent) reported that it was *somewhat useful*. Participants also were asked to provide feedback on what they had found most useful about the workshop. Respondents reported that they had found the following workshops activities or presentations to be most useful:

- Sharing ideas and creating a shared vision
- Group interaction and discussion
- The explanation of the need for and purpose of the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition
- Access to the information, resources, and connections needed to improve the flow of information between tribal communities and school districts or county service agencies

In addition to their success in organizing the Second and Third Tribal Gatherings, project staff have developed and disseminated guidelines for culturally responsive early childhood education and care practices to Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in Wisconsin; disseminated resources to CESA Early Childhood Special Education Program support teachers and Birth to 3 coordinators; begun to coordinate efforts with other state early childhood initiatives to ensure that projects are culturally responsive; and promoted awareness of culturally responsive practices through conference and workshop presentations.

Project Challenges

The project coordinator noted that the major challenge for the project has been establishing relationships with tribal communities and securing commitments from tribal leaders to participate in the Early Childhood Tribal Coalition. Because the governance structures of the tribal communities differ, project staff are not sure whom they should be talking with or at what level. Getting the right people to the table has been an ongoing challenge. Other challenges were distrust of government agencies by tribal members, conflicts between tribes that make them reluctant to work together, and longstanding traditions of tribal sovereignty and noninterference with other tribes. For all these reasons, efforts to establish an Early Childhood Tribal Coalition have proceeded slowly. The Forest County Potawatomi Community is the only tribal community that has made a commitment to serve in the coalition. The project coordinator has enlisted the help of Don Rosin, the Native American Center coordinator for Wisconsin FACETs, to help develop contacts and establish relationships with other tribal communities.

Suggestions for Additional Help and Support

Participants in the Second and Third Tribal Gatherings were asked to provide feedback on their needs for additional assistance and support in developing interagency agreements. A summary of these suggestions follows:

- Provide opportunities for participants from the same region to work together
- Organize a panel of parents who are willing to share their experiences
- Invite more tribal leaders to meetings and encourage their participation
- Set specific goals and provide clear agendas for meetings
- Provide more opportunities for sharing success stories
- Provide more opportunities for tribal representatives to participate in planning
- Provide additional information on available resources and how to access those resources
- Identify funding and grant opportunities to support ongoing work
- Ensure that the right people—those who have the authority to make decisions—are at the meetings (e.g., *local* county agency and public school representatives)
- Identify a trusted individual who can serve as liaison to tribal communities
- Ensure support from county and tribal governments

- Communicate more frequently with partnering organizations and identify ways to facilitate such communication (e.g., electronic mailing lists, online resource sharing, blogs)

Next Steps

The project coordinator said that a Fourth Tribal Gathering is planned and that work on developing interagency agreements and strengthening relationships among tribal communities, school districts, and county agencies will continue next year. In the June 2010 issue of the CREATE newsletter, the CREATE coordinator announced that Don Rosin has been selected to serve as a tribal liaison and will work with CESAs 6, 8, and 12 to build relationships with tribal partners.

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

The coordinator of the CREATE Needs Assessment component was interviewed in May 2010 and provided feedback on successes and challenges in helping districts complete an annual Needs Assessment. A summary of participant feedback on the 2010 preconference Needs Assessment sessions was provided to the evaluation team by the CREATE conference coordinator. A summary of project successes and challenges is presented below.

Needs Assessment Successes

Major successes during the last year were the redesign of the online Needs Assessment system. Many district team members who used the online Needs Assessment last year reported that it was difficult to use and that the directions were hard to follow. Acting on feedback from districts, project staff redesigned the Web-based Needs Assessment to make it more user-friendly; new features also were added. Districts can now enter ratings for all 23 focus areas in the assessment rubric and track their performance over time in each focus area. The Needs Assessment website also lists districts' options for fulfilling DPI professional development requirements. The options also were presented at the preconference Needs Assessment sessions held in conjunction with the 2010 CREATE Conference. The project coordinator said that participants who had used the new system reported that it was much easier to use than the earlier version.

In response to feedback on last year's preconference sessions, an overview of the CREATE components was presented at the 2010 preconference sessions, and the relationship of the components to the professional development options being offered to districts in 2010–11 was explained. A site visit to the Oneida Turtle School was arranged as part of the preconference activities. The school combines regular school programs with traditional Oneida culture and serves as a model of culturally responsive education.

Using the results of 2009 Needs Assessment survey to inform the development of future professional development offerings was viewed as another project success. The CREATE Conference Planning Committee used the results of the survey in planning the 2010 conference. The results also were used in planning the 2010–11 Professional Development Academies.

Participant feedback on the 2010 preconference Needs Assessment sessions was generally positive. Of the 72 participants who completed the survey, more than 70 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they had adequate time to work with their district team, that the day was useful in reviewing the current year’s district plan and in planning for 2010–11, and that the structure of the day was a good use of district time and resources. Almost 70 percent of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that the new Needs Assessment website is easy to use. In addition, nearly 85 percent of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they had a better understanding of the CREATE components after attending the preconference sessions. The majority of respondents (64 percent) did indicate, however, that they would like to have more district teamwork time in the future.

In open-ended comments, one or two participants provided positive feedback on the preconference sessions. One wrote that “I thought the preconference was excellent...due to the fact our district was able to get away from their classrooms, buildings, and everyday life. So that gave us a chance to really focus on what we had to do.” Another said that “This conference was more useful to me as an educator and my school team than conferences have been in the past. Perhaps we are seeing more clearly the need to decrease disproportionality.” A few participants also provided favorable feedback on the visit to the Oneida Turtle School.

Needs Assessment Challenges

The project coordinator said that Needs Assessment planning and implementation went relatively smoothly. Redesigning the online Needs Assessment system was challenging but was manageable because she had worked closely with two or three district teams to help them address technical problems they were having with the earlier system; this work helped her identify specific problems to be addressed in redesigning the system. She said that one of the things that she found personally challenging was understanding the larger context and purpose of the CREATE Needs Assessment. She spent time reviewing IDEA legislation and the Wisconsin State Performance Plan indicators to gain a better understanding of disproportionality and how DPI is addressing it. She noted that understanding the CREATE components and how they fit together also was challenging. Serving on the CREATE Conference Planning Committee helped her get a better understanding of the focus of each of the components and the relationships among them.

Suggestions for Improving the Preconference Sessions

Several participants offered suggestions for improving the preconference sessions:

- Provide more time for district teams to work together
- Provide better direction to newly identified districts on the Needs Assessment process
- Consider developing a podcast or webinar to review the Needs Assessment focus areas
- Provide districts with more thorough information on how they can meet their goals
- Organize the preconference morning sessions better to avoid delays between presentations

A few respondents indicated that they would have preferred starting the preconference sessions earlier but acknowledged that they lived relatively close to conference site and could easily get to the meetings early in the day. One or two participants did not think the preconference keynote address was very helpful or well organized. One commented that the presentation “lost me”; another said that it offered little of substance.

Next Steps

Next steps for completing the 2010 Needs Assessment are to analyze the 2010 Needs Assessment survey results, sharing those results with other CREATE project coordinators, and reviewing participant feedback from the 2010 preconference sessions. The project coordinator noted that she also has been asked to help coordinate next year’s Professional Development Academies. Planning for the 2010–11 academies was informed by the results of last year’s Needs Assessment survey; the Needs Assessment and the Professional Development Academies are closely linked, or should be, because the academies are intended to help district teams implement their district plans for addressing disproportionality.

Professional Development Academies (CESA 7)

The evaluation team conducted an interview with the project coordinator for the 2009–10 Professional Development Academies in May 2010 to learn about the successes and challenges in planning and coordinating the academies. The project coordinator also provided the evaluation team with a summary of participant feedback on the September 2009 and February 2010 academies. Academy successes and challenges follow.

Academy Successes

The project coordinator noted that participants provided mixed feedback on the 2009–10 Professional Development Academies. Some comments were very positive, and others were quite negative. Participants in the September 2009 academies were asked to provide open-ended feedback on what they found most helpful about the workshops, how they planned to use what they had learned, and what suggestions they had for improving the workshops. A total of 47 participants provided feedback. Several commented on specific aspects of the workshop that they found helpful. Topic addressed included the following:

- The presenters’ knowledge and presentation style (entertaining, dynamic, and engaging)
- The networking and dialogue among participants
- The discussion of cultural differences and undisturbed time to think about cultural diversity
- The demonstration lesson, which focused on positive teacher feedback and student engagement
- The culturally responsive infrastructure model
- Sharing district data

- Learning about the *Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality in Special Education*
- Examples of other districts' strategies for addressing disproportionality such as the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program
- Learning about the role of culture, experience, and racism in shaping the behavior of black male students and the disproportionate identifications of students from culturally and racially diverse backgrounds as emotionally or behaviorally disabled
- The Jonathan McCoy video

Ways in which participants planned to use what they learned included the following:

- Working with team members on a district action plan
- Hosting a town hall meeting within the district
- Talking with district staff members about programs for at-risk students
- Forming a student committee to meet with the principal to discuss ways of creating a more positive and supportive school environment
- Providing professional development for teachers and sharing workshop resources with them
- Encouraging schools within the district to implement PBIS
- Having the district team complete the *Checklist for Addressing Racial Disproportionality*
- Incorporating information and lessons learned from the workshop into existing district initiatives
- Investigating how some of the strategies presented might be implemented with African American and Native American students
- Providing cultural sensitivity training for school staff
- Applying information and strategies learned in day-to-day interactions with students
- Updating district policies and professional development opportunities for staff members

For the February 2010 academies, participants were asked to provide ratings of the quality of the presentations, the pace of workshop activities, the handouts and slide presentations, the group discussions, and the amount of time allotted for questions and answers. A total of 34 participants provided feedback on the February academies. The overall ratings were mixed. Approximately half the participants (47 to 54 percent) rated the presentations, pace of activities, handouts, slide presentations, and time allotted for questions and answers as *good* or *excellent*. The percentage of respondents who provided ratings of *excellent* on these indicators ranged from 7 percent for workshop pace and slides to 24 percent for time allotted for questions and answers. Almost 75 percent of respondents, however, provided positive ratings of group discussions (*good* or *excellent*), with 36 percent giving ratings of *excellent*. Participants who attended the workshop on February 25 (group 2 participants) provided more positive ratings on all indicators than those who attended the February 24 workshop (group 1 participants).

Participants also provided feedback on ideas or activities that they learned about in the February academies that they thought were particularly beneficial to their district's work on equity, diversity, and disproportionality. A summary of these responses is provided below:

- Learning what other districts are doing (e.g., Madison, Green Bay, Menominee, West Allis) and what effects they are seeing
- Breakout sessions on PBIS and the need to modify PBIS to make it culturally responsive
- The idea of holding open forum nights with a mediator to discuss the status of the school
- Discussions and networking with other districts on specific topics (e.g., English language learners, special education, Response to Intervention)
- Parent involvement strategies (e.g., involving parents in district efforts to increase literacy, home visits or teacher/parent conferences in the home to increase parent involvement)
- The presenter's emphasis on high expectations and the ways educators miss opportunities to reinforce high expectations
- The links between culturally responsive practices and behavior
- The emphasis on rigor, relevance, and relationships

Academy Challenges

The project coordinator mentioned several challenges in planning and coordinating the 2009–10 Professional Development Academies. The challenges are summarized by topic.

There Was Little Advanced Planning for the Academies. Planning for the academies did not really get started until June or July 2009; the first workshops were scheduled for late September. According to the project coordinator, the contract for coordinating the academies was awarded fairly late in the year, which limited the time available for planning. The dates for the academies were determined largely by the availability of the workshop presenters.

In addition to the late start in planning the academies, there was a change in the academy schedule during the summer. DPI decided that district teams would be required to participate in only two workshops rather than the four that had originally been planned. This change required revision of timelines for workshop presentations and activities and a reduction in the time allotted to specific topics.

Several Planned Activities Were Not Implemented. Dr. Webb-Hasan had proposed activities both prior to and during the workshops that ultimately were not implemented, such as distributing summer reading packets to parents in some of the districts that would be participating in the workshops, establishing an online blog that would facilitate ongoing discussions among academy participants, and producing a monthly newsletter that was based on these online discussions. Although an online blog was created, it was not used by academy participants and provided no material for monthly newsletters. Similarly, summer reading

packets were not distributed to families. Two optional webinars for academy participants had also been proposed but were not offered and reading packets were not distributed to academy participants between the September and February academies, as was originally proposed.

It is unclear why these activities were not implemented. The late start in planning the academies and the need to revise the workshop schedules shortly before the first academy may have derailed plans to distribute summer packets. A monthly newsletter based on contributions to the online blog proved infeasible because there were very few responses to the blog, which may have been due to participants' lack of interest in contributing to the blog or the presenters' failure to promote use of the blog.

The presenters did serve as independent consultants to the Green Bay and Madison school districts on projects that focused on increasing family and community involvement and implementing culturally responsive practices. These projects served to some extent as demonstration sites for academy participants. Staff members from both these districts shared examples and strategies from work being done in their districts at the February academy.

Academy Workshops Were Not Well Organized. The project coordinator noted that the presenters did not always cover the topics on the agenda or adhere to the workshop schedule. Several participants made similar observations. As one participant commented, "We were given an agenda at the start of the meeting, but the presentation did not address any (but one) of the items on that agenda." Another participant observed that "Dr. Webb-Hasan and Mr. Carl Hasan were entertaining and did present a good lesson regarding how to teach race/culture. However, they did not follow the agenda at all. We had no time to meet with other school districts as small groups [and] we did not discuss...[district] policies and processes."

The Majority of Participants Did Not Find the Academies Relevant to Their District's Needs. For the February workshops, participants were asked to indicate whether the presenters had addressed the needs of their district with respect to work on equity, diversity, and disproportionality. Only 39 percent of respondents reported that the presenters had addressed their district's needs. Several participants in the September workshops explicitly commented on the workshop's lack of relevance for their district. As one participant wrote,

This was really not the kind of training we needed at all. I really enjoyed meeting the presenters and thought they did a nice job, but it was not applicable to our district at all. What we really need is time to meet with the Tribe, time to meet with our leadership team, and time to execute our [district plan] (which for the first time ever we feel is on the right track). Please, if the next training is more of the same, reconsider having us come to a conference and allow us to plan.

Suggestions for the Improving the Academies

Participants offered several suggestions for improving future academies:

- Provide opportunities for districts with similar student populations (e.g., Native American, Hmong, African American, Latino) to work together to discuss challenges and

share strategies for reducing disproportionality, closing achievement gaps, and increasing the learning opportunities of students in these populations.

- Provide more differentiated professional development for districts that more directly addresses their specific needs.
- Coordinate the academics with the other CREATE components, particularly the Needs Assessment, to support the work that districts are already engaged in (specifically, developing and implementing a district plan for addressing disproportionality).
- Provide examples of districts that are achieving success in closing achievement gaps, reducing disproportionality, and increasing student learning opportunities and identify the strategies and practices that are contributing to their success.
- Provide more time for district teams to work on their district improvement plans.
- Provide specific strategies and practices that team members can apply when they return to their districts (e.g., strategies for differentiating instruction).
- Provide an explicit framework for improvement to help districts focus their work and engage their staff in improvement efforts.
- Provide more time for structured activities and discussions and spend less time on lectures and presentations.
- Include student perspectives on equity, diversity, and disproportionality.
- Provide more specific examples of cultural norms and speech and gestures that may be misinterpreted by individuals from other cultures.
- Consider offering regional workshops.
- Involve the CESAs in providing professional development and technical assistance to districts.

Next Steps

To address the feedback received from participants in the 2009–10 Professional Development Academies, the CREATE coordinator and DPI have decided to provide multiple options for fulfilling district professional development requirements next year. These options were presented to districts teams at the 2010 preconference Needs Assessment sessions and have been posted on the Needs Assessment website. Districts with significant disproportionality are required to send a district team to at least one of these Professional Development Academies. Districts are allowed to choose the option or options that best address their specific needs. CESA 7 will not be coordinating the Professional Development Academies next year. CESA 11, which is coordinating the Needs Assessment, will also coordinate the academies. This change may help to create better alignment between the annual Needs Assessment and Professional Development Academies.

District Case Studies

As part of its evaluation of the CREATE initiative, Learning Point Associates conducted interviews in April and May 2010 with school and district staff members from four districts that participated in the CREATE initiative during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years. Districts also were asked to provide copies of their district plan to address disproportionality or their district equity plan, as well as a list of staff members from the district who had participated in specific CREATE components. Three of the districts provided either district equity plans or district disproportionality plans; two provided lists of participants in each of the components in which the district was participating. Interview responses and district equity or disproportionality plans were used to develop case studies of each of the districts.

Sample Selection

Case study districts were selected according to their participation in specific CREATE components and their geographical distribution within the state. The number of CREATE components in which districts participated ranged from two to five. Three of the four districts were identified by DPI as having significant disproportionality; these districts are required to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and the Professional Development Academies. In addition, three of the districts participated in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, three participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component, and one participated in the American Indian Student Achievement Network.

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 protect the identity of the districts described in the case studies, districts have been designated as Districts 1 through 4 for reporting purposes. The case studies are based on interviews with both district and school staff who participated in specific CREATE components. Each case study provides descriptions of the following:

- The CREATE components in which districts staff members have participated, reasons for district and staff participation, and participant feedback on the quality, relevance, and utility of professional development workshops and technical assistance provided by CREATE
- District goals and activities related to the CREATE initiative
- Facilitators of district improvement efforts
- Barriers to district improvement efforts
- The perceived impact of the CREATE initiative
- Suggestions for additional professional development and technical assistance that might be offered to districts through the CREATE initiative
- Perceptions of the sustainability of district improvement efforts

Overview of Case Study Findings

This section summarizes information from the case studies on three topics: what districts have gained through participation in CREATE, overarching concerns with the initiative, and concerns about specific CREATE components. In general, opinions from respondents in the case study districts have been positive. Respondents reported that they had benefited from participating in the initiative and said that the initiative can change district and school practices. The concerns expressed about the initiative are focused and do not suggest general dissatisfaction or concerns.

What Districts Have Gained Through Participation

Respondents from all case study districts said that participation in CREATE has been beneficial. The initiative has enhanced personal and district awareness of racial equity issues and, for two districts, has provided a framework for setting goals, planning, and allocating resources. At the same time, the current impact on district administrative and instructional plans and practices has been described as minimal or slight in all the districts, mainly because the case study districts are in the early phases of implementation.

In three districts, interview respondents said that CREATE has affected the individuals who participated in the components, heightening their awareness of personal issues and practices that might contribute to disproportionality. Respondents reported that CREATE is having an effect in a number of classrooms. One respondent said that participation in CREATE “has had a huge impact on my teaching. It just allowed me to think about everything that I do, even student engagement, and be a reflective practitioner.” Similarly, in another district, participants in the Classroom Practices workshops said they are more aware of their own cultural biases and have learned more effective strategies to instruct students from other cultures and to communicate with parents and students.

Respondents in all four case study districts said that at the district level there is a greater understanding of and a shared language about equity and disproportionality, resulting in part from reviewing data. For example, when a district examined its data on advanced placement tests, the district came to realize that few minority students took the tests. The group of students who did “doesn’t match at all the demographics of our school,” a district administrator said. In other cases, greater awareness of racial equity is due to the conversations on race that are now being held. An administrator said, “For so long, people have been socialized not to talk about it, and in our district, we have very little representation of faculty and staff of color, so it has been difficult.”

In two districts, one or more respondents said CREATE has provided districts with a planning framework. For example, CREATE has helped one district more clearly formulate its goals and set its direction. A respondent said, “It really gave us the framework and the common language and common tools to use to get where we need to go... [I]t has provided a very nice framework for us.” In another district, a respondent said that without CREATE, the district would have taken much longer to develop a planning model and find appropriate resources.

The overall impact of CREATE on awareness and planning constitutes appropriate success for the early implementation phases of a new initiative. Overall, the current impact of CREATE was described as minimal but as having the potential to affect future district and school practices. Respondents expressed optimism, some of it cautious, about the future impact of CREATE on district work. In one district, a respondent said that in the future the district will be “more ready and willing to challenge an evaluation of a [minority student], less likely to identify a student [for referral to special education services],” and more open to trying more interventions.

Respondents from other districts were less specific about impact, citing school change and overall attention in the district and the community to racial equity. In one district, a respondent suggested there might be an impact, but first, district efforts would have to be better coordinated and stronger leadership provided by the district team.

Concerns at the Initiative Level

Districts that participated in the case studies expressed several overarching concerns with the CREATE initiative. One concern is that the CREATE framework is unclear. A second concern is that district capacity is not addressed, and, in a related concern, that more differentiated support is needed. A fourth concern, identified in only one of the four case study districts, is that coaches who work with the districts do not have adequate expertise and training.

Unclear and Undefined Framework. Respondents from three of the four case study districts said the CREATE initiative as a whole is not clear. It is not evident how the CREATE components fit together. The districts need more information on the framework. A principal from one district said, “You will detect moderate, mild to moderate, or severe confusion on my part” on the structure of CREATE. A respondent from another district said, “I don’t think there was ever a time when somebody said, ‘this is the larger CREATE schema and this is what you should communicate to all your CREATE teams.’” An administrator from a third district said that not having a framework makes it difficult to coordinate district efforts: “I think that is something that we are trying to do as a district and we haven’t received a whole lot of guidance on that.”

Addressing District Capacity Issues. Several of the case study districts said that the CREATE components are not addressing their capacity to implement the initiative at the district level. Limited capacity has caused frustration in the districts in the early phases of implementation, and it is evident in two major areas: data management and use and strategic planning.

Data management and use was described as a challenge by two of the four case study districts. An interview respondent from each district said the district has data, but districts find it difficult to manage the data, identify the most useful data sources, and interpret the data. One district has “many, many sources of data, but nobody knows where it is and nobody knows how to use it. There is no easy way to get to it.” This disorganization has led to inefficiencies in the district: “Everybody ends up starting over” when information is needed, a respondent said. It has also led to problems in the community because families become annoyed when they are surveyed on “many similar issues many times a year.”

A respondent from another district said the district needs help in “sorting through all of the data.” The district plans to conduct a school equity audit, but respondents said that because the district is not on top of data management and lacks experience in using data, the audit will require some technical support through CREATE.

Another district said its district team has little experience with strategic planning and goal setting. Although the district has agreed upon goals, it does not have a systematic plan for achieving those goals. There are pockets of activity in the district, but very little coordination across different district initiatives, a respondent said. For example, there has been little communication or coordination between the district CREATE team and the elementary school CREATE team.

Need for Differentiated Support. Respondents from two districts said that more differentiated support for the districts is needed. One of the respondents said differentiated technical assistance would be helpful for administrators at different levels (district level and building level). In another district, participants in the CREATE initiative recommended that the CREATE events include more time for districts with similar priorities—such as building school and community relationships, serving specific student populations, or student engagement—to work together in small groups.

Expertise of Coaches. Respondents from one of the four case study districts said that the coaches who have supported the district lack expertise. A principal said the coaches provided to the district by the CESA did not have the training or expertise to effectively help the district, and said, “If I were to offer [a] suggestion, I think getting...the coaches more training so that they can work with the different school districts in a more productive way...would be really helpful.”

Concerns at the Component Level

Respondents identified several concerns about specific CREATE components—the Consortium on Racial Equity, the Classroom Practices component, the Professional Development Academies, and the American Indian Student Achievement Network. Some of these concerns reflect the overarching concerns described earlier, and others are specific to the component.

Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education. Criticisms about the consortium focused primarily on organization. Respondents in three of the four case study districts said the organization was confusing. One respondent said it was difficult initially to understand the purpose of the consortium, although “over time there was more of an understanding of where they [the consortium] were trying to take us.” One person said much of the information was repeated from one session to another and that a meeting one month resembled a meeting that had taken place three months prior. A third concern related to organization, which might stem from not understanding the overall purpose of the consortium, is the amount of time devoted to discussion at the expense of information related to implementation. When sessions focused on implementation, a respondent said it was confusing to then go back to earlier phases that emphasized reflection and transformation.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices. The Classroom Practices sessions were favorably assessed by nearly all respondents. In two districts, however, participants suggested that either the component be shortened or scheduled differently so participants do not have to spend so much time out of their classrooms and buildings. Suggestions were either to have the workshops cover fewer days or to schedule sessions in the evenings or on weekends.

Professional Development Academies. Three of the four case study districts participated in the CREATE Professional Development Academies. Members of one of the participating district teams, however, could not remember whether they had attended the academy and could not provide feedback. (Academy attendance rosters indicated that they had attended.) Participants from one district that serves a large percentage of Native American students said that the workshops were not directly relevant to their district because the focus was primarily on urban districts that serve African American students. Another district would like more follow-up activities to the academies—either on-site training in the district or formal opportunities to collaborate with other districts or with the trainers.

American Indian Student Achievement Network (AISAN). Only one of the four case study districts participated in the AISAN component. A participant in AISAN had several criticisms of the component: One was the long time between meetings, 10 months, which likely affected attendance. Participation in the October meeting was much lower than participation in the meeting held earlier, in January. There was little communication between sessions. A participant said more follow-through was needed to keep network participants aware of upcoming activities and to keep them informed of what other districts were doing. Another criticism was that the Moodle site that had been set up to encourage online networking was not user-friendly, and a participant said it was much easier to use e-mail than to log onto the site.

Case studies of the four districts are presented in the next sections of this report. As was mentioned, to protect the identity of the districts, they have been renamed Districts 1 through 4 in these reports.

District 1 Case Study

Staff members from District 1 are participating in the following CREATE components: the CREATE Needs Assessment, the Professional Development Academies, the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component, and AISAN. Eight interviews were conducted with school and district staff members who have been involved in one or more of these components. Learning Point Associates spoke with two district staff members, four staff members from the district's elementary school, and two staff members from the high school.

District Participation in the CREATE Initiative

District 1 is required to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and Professional Development Academies because the district was identified by DPI as having a disproportionate representation of Native American students in a specific disability category. According to staff members, the district had been cited for disproportionality prior to the CREATE initiative and had already taken steps to reduced disproportionality before it became involved in CREATE. As

one of the staff members from the high school noted, “Even before we were actually flagged as disproportionate [three years ago], there was a trend that we were heading down that way, so the district had opted to participate in” state efforts to address disproportionality.

Staff at the high school had established a task force to build relationships with members of the Native American community. Other activities have included an antibullying initiative at the high school; an annual Pow Wow to celebrate Native American students as well as other students, staff, alumni, and families; a Native American student newsletter, and a youth open house that brings together schools, social agencies, and other programs that provide services to youth. At the elementary school, IDEA Part B funds have been used to hire two resource coordinators to work with Native American students and their parents. When the district was identified as having significant disproportionality, it was required to set aside 15 percent of its Part B funds to provide coordinated early intervening services, particularly to students in those groups that had been significantly overidentified (IDEA, 2004, 34 CFR 300.646(b)(2)). According to an administrator at the elementary school, the resource coordinators have a variety of responsibilities:

helping students with tutoring as well as touching base with them at various parts of the day to see if they were on track, if they needed help with anything. They’ve provided some real basic counseling. They are certainly a listener, kind of a mentoring type of a role. In addition, the [coordinator] makes contact with the parents, both by phone and in written form, and works closely with the classroom teacher to keep abreast of how the student was performing in the classroom, how they’re doing with their peer relations, how they’re doing with their academic performance, and how they were doing personally.

Since becoming involved in the CREATE initiative, school and district efforts have broadened to include a focus on culturally responsive practices. Both district and school-level CREATE teams have been established. The district team has 12 members and includes both district staff and staff from the school-level teams. Team members consist of principals, guidance counselors, special education teachers, home-school coordinators, resource coordinators, a reading specialist, and the district’s pupil services director.

During the past year, two primary groups have been involved in the CREATE initiative: the elementary school team that has participated in the Classroom Practices component and the district team that has participated in the CREATE Needs Assessment and the development of the district plan for addressing disproportionality. Participation in the American Indian Student Achievement Network has been light; the home-school coordinators at the high school and middle school have participated to some extent, with occasional participation by one or two other staff members. Four staff members from the district participated in the CREATE Professional Development Academies. District involvement in each CREATE component is described in more detail in the following sections.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices

Five staff members from the district’s elementary school participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component in spring 2009 and fall 2010 (cohort 1). According

to a district administrator, DPI invited the district to participate in December 2008. The elementary school already had a disproportionality team in place and several members of the team volunteered to participate. Two classroom teachers, a guidance counselor, a special education teacher, and one of the two elementary school principals attended the four two-day workshops. According to one of participants, there was strong interest in participating in the workshops because team members saw it as an opportunity to extend their efforts to build relationships with the Native American community as well as to address issues of disproportionality.

Four of the five staff members who participated in the Classroom Practices workshops were interviewed. All spoke very favorably about the quality of the workshops, noting that they were well-organized, offered numerous opportunities for discussion, and were effective in increasing participants' awareness of cultural biases, helping them to identify culturally responsive practices that they might use in their classrooms and to communicate with students and parents. One participant described the experience as “transformational—individually for all group members—but it also gave us a vehicle for framing our process of dealing with disproportionality and something we feel we would be able to move forward with as a school and a district to sustain the movement and direction toward being culturally responsive for all students and all cultures.”

Several of the participants mentioned that the workshop trainers had provided a rubric that described levels of culturally response practice (merely celebrating special ethnic holidays; adding content and concepts to the curriculum without changing the basic structure of the curriculum; changing the structure of the curriculum to allow students to view concepts, themes, and issues from several cultural perspectives; and requiring students to make decisions and take actions related to a particular issue or concept that they were studying). The rubric allowed participants to determine what approach their school and district was currently using and to determine what steps they might take to fully embed culturally responsive practices into their day-to-day instruction as well as their communications with students and parents.

Participants had few suggestions for improving the workshops. One participant noted “I don't think the culturally responsive practices [component] could have been any better.” Another participant suggested providing more training in navigating the Moodle website. A third said that it would be helpful if CREATE trainers could visit the school and talk with other staff members. That participant noted that although staff members planned to share what they had learned from the workshops, the information would be more effective “not just coming from us to the staff, but coming from them.”

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality

Five of the eight staff members who were interviewed had participated in the Needs Assessment process, although not all of them had participated in both 2009 and 2010. According to one of the participants, the district's pupil services director had recruited a small group of staff members to participate in the 2009 CREATE conference to learn what the state was requiring of districts. Those who attended completed the initial Needs Assessment.

Participants in the 2009 conference reported that the Needs Assessment was useful but thought it needed to be streamlined. One district team member described the Needs Assessment rubric as “scientific and not very user-friendly—like somebody created something without thinking that human beings are actually going to be able to need to use this and work with it.” That participant found that the directions were complicated and could have been much more clearly written.

Participants in the 2009 conference also reported problems in using the Web-based Needs Assessment. The participants had thought their notes from the conference would be entered into the Web-based Needs Assessment and that they would merely need to go in and refine and edit what they had already done at the conference. They discovered that they had to enter the information themselves. Team members also found the online template difficult to use. Users were required to enter information on different screens; there were no editing features; and the information could not be easily viewed or shared with others.

In addition to problems in using the Web-based assessment, team members reported that they were not yet functioning well as a team. Those who had attended the 2009 conference met once prior to the submission of the online Needs Assessment to discuss the plan they needed to draft. Only two people, however, were actively involved in drafting the district plan for addressing disproportionality. One of the team members solicited information from administrators in each building, wrote a draft of the plan, and worked with another staff member to complete it. As one of the respondents noted, “There were only a couple people who hammered out that plan. It’s hard work. Goal setting is hard work...and it really did not come together as a group of people saying ‘so where do we go from here?’”

After the Needs Assessment was submitted, the team regrouped. Additional team members were recruited from each building and the group began to meet monthly to discuss and work on the district’s plan for addressing disproportionality. As one team member explained,

When we really tried to regroup with this, we tried very hard to think about all our stakeholder groups. We were not successful in getting them all represented, but I would say that you would find representative members from each building level,...elementary, middle, and high school, and probably a mix of regular and special ed teachers,...[and] the school psychologist. We really worked very hard to try to get some outside people to be connected. We had one school board member.... We have a little CESA involvement...and got commitment from a number of parent members...who just could never get to a meeting.

In addition to a group of 12 core team members, the monthly meetings were attended by as many as eight other staff members. Members of the elementary school CREATE team were not participants in these monthly meetings and there was little communication between the two groups. As one team member reported, “The first time I actually met with the elementary team was at the [2010] CREATE conference. That’s the first time they had seen the district goals.”

Those who participated in the 2010 CREATE conference and Needs Assessment reported that it was a positive experience, in large part because the members of the elementary team and the larger district team began to work together to review and agree on the goals for the

district. On the whole, team members provided favorable feedback on the 2010 Needs Assessment, although one team member noted that instructions for the Needs Assessment still needed to be clearer. Team members had not yet used the revised Web-based Needs Assessment and thus were not able to provide feedback on revisions to the online assessment.

Professional Development Academies

Four district staff members attended the CREATE Professional Development Academies (one attended the September 2009 academy and three attended in February 2010). Two of these participants provided feedback on the academies. Both indicated that there was some confusion over the requirements for attending. The first academy was held at the same time and location as one of the Culturally Responsive Practices workshops and one of the district administrators thought they were the same event:

This whole CREATE disproportionality thing has been very confusing as far as how many strands there are, what it is, and we had a mix-up last year where they talked about having a CREATE team going down to the Dells. Being busy, and I'll own part of this, but being very busy I was under the impression that that was...[the Culturally Responsive Practices] group that they wanted down there and that we were ok."

Little effort was made subsequently to clarify the requirements for attending the academies, and only three staff members attended from the district in February.

The two staff members who provided feedback on the academies reported that the trainers were engaging and the sessions were thought-provoking but that the workshops were not directly relevant to the needs of a rural district that serves a large percentage of Native American students; the workshops focused primarily on urban districts that serve African American students. Both participants, however, appreciated the state's efforts to organize activities to help districts address disproportionality and introduce culturally responsive practices. As one of them observed,

It was the first time I could see the state having some organization around the whole issue, rather than just come once a year to this disproportionality [conference] and then good luck with that.... It wasn't top-notch professional development, but it was a good start. Sometimes I see that with the state. It's a good start. We don't seem to be that well versed in good professional development practices.

The September academy did motivate district staff to begin working on the district's plan for addressing disproportionality and organizing monthly team meetings to move forward with implementation of the plan. One of the district administrators noted that "I guess when I came back from that academy...that was sort of the impetus that I had, which was, ok, wait a minute, the state actually has some organization here.... Our charge was to create a district plan."

American Indian Student Achievement Network

Staff participation in the American Indian Student Achievement Network (AISAN) has been slight. One or two district staff members participated in the initial conference call in December 2008 to discuss the goals for the network. One participated in the January 2009 network meeting and two or three participated in October 2010 meeting that was held in conjunction with the National Indian Education Association meeting. One staff member also attended the March 2010 AISAN conference. The middle school and high school home-school coordinators have had the greatest involvement in AISAN activities.

Only one staff member who was interviewed had had any continuing involvement with AISAN. According to this participant, the meeting in January 2009 was well attended. Participants included administrators, teachers, home-school coordinators, guidance counselors, and a mix of Native American and non-Native American school staff. Participants from approximately 20 districts attended. The respondent spoke very favorably about the initial meeting:

It was well organized. The activities were worthwhile. I think that everybody learned something new and it was good to get out and make some contacts and do some networking with people that were involved.... The January [2009] meeting actually helped us when we were going through the Needs Assessment. We were able to keep those goals in mind [that we had discussed at January meeting].... So we took that and we pretty much built that into our CREATE goals.

The meeting in October was considerably smaller. Several districts that had been invited were unable to attend and participants from only seven school districts came to the meeting. The respondent thought the meeting was useful but was disappointed that more people had not attended. According to the respondent, a reason for the low attendance might have been the lack of communication between January and October.

Although a Moodle site had been established or provide opportunities for participants to network online, very few people used it. The respondent noted that the site is not very user-friendly. "It's probably easier to send me an e-mail and read it through a list serve rather than logging onto a different site. For me the day is busy and so to log onto another site or do this and do that, it just [took too much effort]...and then nothing was on there anyway." Overall, this respondent thought more follow-through was needed to keep network participants aware of upcoming activities and to keep them informed of what other districts were doing: "I'm on board with this, because I believe in what [AISAN] is trying to accomplish. The only problem is the communication and to let you know it's still alive." The respondent had not been able to attend the March 2010 AISAN conference.

District Goals and Activities

The district team has been working to address the goals identified in the district's plan to address disproportionality. The plan includes two primary goals: (1) to improve the collection, analysis, and interpretation of student data for purposes of monitoring and improving student achievement and engagement, particularly among Native American students; and (2) to improve communication with students and families (e.g., increasing awareness of different styles and

patterns of communication; increasing positive and respectful communication; and keeping parents informed of student outcomes, student support services, and services that are available to parents of students with disabilities).

Since November 2009, the district team has been meeting monthly to begin to address these goals. According to one of the leaders of the group, a lot of time was initially spent just organizing a team that would be committed to continuous improvement. A facilitator was brought in to help with team building. “A lot of our energy was thinking about how do you bring a group together and plan meaningful activities for their discussion and then help them organize to plan meaningful activities outside of this group discussion. So I think we spent a ton of energy from October until January just on that.”

A facilitator was also brought in to lead a discussion about *Courageous Conversations About Race*. After this event, eight of the team members formed a book study group to continue the discussion and had begun to meet regularly. As of early May, three meetings had been held. The team plans to establish similar study groups for other staff members in the future.

Lisa Bardon from the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point was also brought in at least twice during the year to meet with special education teachers to discuss the difference between cultural mismatch and disordered behavior. One of the teachers who attended the discussion thought that the sessions would have been better targeted to general education teachers. She explained that part of the discussion focused on students who were having difficulties in regular classrooms and how to remedy the situation:

Well, that’s not us. That’s not what we [special education teachers] are doing. We’re not referring kids. I feel very strongly that regular education teachers need to have more strategies for understanding children. Those strategies are not being provided. It’s easier to set us up to have somebody speak to the choir than to have somebody speak to people who might be argumentative or might not accept it well or might fight it. I would say that’s a box-checking activity and not really a valuable activity.

One of the district administrators indicated that the district was planning to invite Ms. Bardon to work with general education teachers next year.

Some effort was made by the district team to review student data. One district team member said that they had “spent most of this year trying to pull together pieces [of data] and begin to get a look at real data, not just perceptions.”

Although members of the elementary education CREATE team had not been involved in the district team meetings, the elementary school team had established similar goals for the school. The elementary school goals included reducing disproportionality, providing culturally responsive practices for all students, and identifying strengths within the community to foster student growth.

In addition to the involvement of five of the team members in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component, the school has been engaged in several activities designed to

build relationships with the Native American community. CREATE team members and other staff members have made several visits to the tribal community—the library, the community center, the casino, the Boys and Girls Club—to engage in community outreach. The school has participated in the youth open house and the annual Pow Wow hosted by the high school and has hosted its own family involvement nights. The CREATE team at the school also invited Courtney Bauder, a local equity coach from CESA 1, to meet with team members to obtain feedback on how the school could move forward with its work on implementing culturally responsive classroom practices. Some of the teachers also attended a workshop led by Lisa Bardon on cultural mismatch.

Teachers who participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops said they had begun to make changes within their own classrooms as a result of what they learned in the workshops. They were planning to share some of what they had learned at future staff meetings but said they were still deciding what to present. Participation of additional staff members in the Culturally Responsive Practices workshop is planned for next year. Some team members also expressed interest in participating in a *Courageous Conversations* book study group.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents were asked what at the district and school levels had facilitated district efforts to reduce disproportionality and improve cultural responsiveness. Interview respondents mentioned several factors that had facilitated district efforts.

Fit With Other Initiatives. Respondents indicated that the CREATE initiative fits well with several other district initiatives such as response to intervention (RtI), positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and the district’s school–community task force. To some extent, the district and school CREATE teams have been able to build on existing district initiatives, particularly those focusing on community relationships and parent involvement.

Additional Funds. Several mentioned that the additional funds that schools have received to hire resource coordinators and to fund attendance at CREATE workshops and conferences was helpful.

Efforts to Build Relationships. The district has also provided funding for specific initiatives such as the task force to build relationships between schools and the Native American community. According to one respondent, district administrators have allowed the task force autonomy in building relationships with the Native American community.

We [task force members] want to create a dialogue between [school] staff and the community, in particular, [the tribal community], and we feel that in order to do that, to have the higher-ups there, kind of is a distraction because you end up talking to the administrators.... So we specifically asked that the administrators not be at the table unless we invite them. And they have vision enough to realize that was accurate and that the reason for our success is because we’ve had some pretty good conversations that I think wouldn’t have been possible [if the administrators had been involved].

Support From DPI. Two respondents noted that DPI had been helpful in providing both organization and professional development opportunities to assist the district in addressing disproportionality. Another respondent said that the monthly meetings of the district CREATE team have provided opportunities for ongoing discussion among team members. “I don’t think that’s been done in the past—bring in a lot of ideas and have discussions as opposed to meetings.”

Barriers to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents also were asked to describe challenges to district improvement efforts. Respondents acknowledged that the district faces several barriers to achieving the goals identified in the district’s plan to address disproportionality.

Lack of Experience With Strategic Planning and Goal-Setting. Although a district CREATE team has been formed, very few of its members have any experience with strategic planning and goal-setting. The team has agreed upon specific goals but does not appear to have a systematic plan for achieving them. There are pockets of activity but very little coordination across district initiatives. Even within the context of the CREATE initiative, there has been little communication or coordination between the district CREATE team and the elementary school CREATE team. The two teams were able to work together at the 2010 CREATE conference, but that was the first time they had met.

Lack of Broad Teacher and Staff Buy-In. The district team does not appear to have a plan for obtaining teacher and staff buy-in. There has been some discussion of having additional teachers participate in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices workshops and establishing additional *Courageous Conversations* book study groups, but plans appear to be limited to small groups of five to eight staff members who have an interest in participating.

Entrenched Attitudes and Practices. Several staff members commented on the need to increase staff awareness and respect for cultural differences and to improve both teacher–student and teacher–parent communications and interactions. One district team member described the district as “very traditional...where you see teachers getting in kids’ faces.... I would say the need is not just culturally responsive but behaviorally appropriate.” Another respondent reported that several years ago she had overheard two district administrators make a derogatory comment about a Native American family. She said that although staff members were much less likely to make such comments than they once were, negative attitudes and stereotypes persist.

Lack of Systematic Data Collection and Analysis. One of the district goals is to improve the collection, analysis, and use of data in monitoring student progress and improving student outcomes and engagement, particularly among Native American students. Although the district is aware that more systematic procedures for collecting data are needed, there currently is no clear plan for achieving this goal. As one district team member said,

We have many, many sources of data, but nobody knows where it is and nobody knows how to use it and there’s no easy way to get to it. So if we wanted to start a program and we wanted to see what the need for that program would be,

everybody ends up starting over.... Families are getting surveyed on many similar issues many times a year. So we're creating a problem in the larger community because of the all of the surveys that we do.

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents did think the CREATE initiative is having an impact, particularly for those who have been actively involved in the initiative. Staff members who had participated in the CREATE Classroom Practices component said that their participation has definitely increased their awareness of their own cultural biases and how they can change both their instructional practices and the ways they communicate and interact with parents and students. Some teachers have also begun to introduce some of these practices into their classrooms. According to one of the participants in the *Courageous Conversations* book study group, the group discussions have also helped to increase awareness of cultural bias and institutional racism among participants.

A staff member who has been actively involved in the school–community task force thought that both the CREATE initiative and some of the initiatives that were introduced three years ago when the district was cited for disproportionality have been quite successful:

I think we've had a great impact. I think there are people in the district who would not know what has been done...but if you went to the Native American community and said "Have you seen the Native American student newsletter, have you attended the open house, have you heard about the [anti-bullying initiative]," they would say "yes, yes, yes."

Another district team member thought the impact of the CREATE initiative has been "minimal." Like several other respondents, however, this district team member thought participation in the CREATE initiative can change district practice, particularly if district efforts can be better coordinated, stronger leadership is provided by the district team, and a clear model or framework for change is developed by either CREATE or DPI to help guide district efforts.

Suggestions for Additional Support and Technical Assistance

Respondents offered several suggestions on additional support and technical assistance that might be provided to the district by the CREATE initiative. These suggestions are summarized below.

Improve Communication About the CREATE Initiative. Several of the district team members indicated that communication about the CREATE initiative could be clearer, particularly with respect to the various components of the initiative and how they fit together. Although an overview of the different CREATE components was presented to participants in the 2010 preconference Needs Assessment sessions, that was the first time that many of the participants from the district had heard about several of the components, and they felt more information should continue to be provided about all the components. Some team members also indicated that more direction should be provided to districts about what they should be doing. As one district team member commented, "[I don't think] there was ever a time when somebody

said to the district administrator, ‘this is the larger CREATE schema and this is what you should communicate to all your CREATE teams.’”

Provide a Conceptual Framework to Guide District Work. In addition to improving communication about the CREATE initiative, one of the district team members indicated that a conceptual framework was needed to articulate the relationships among the CREATE components and the strategies that were being presented to districts for addressing disproportionality, increasing equity, and introducing culturally responsive practices:

There still needs, in my mind, to be an overall vision for the whole initiative that puts a visual representation, the culturally responsive practices, parent involvement, the standards, the disproportionality, every different aspect, into one single vision.... There are a lot of schools that are only going to implement parts of it, depending on their need. But at the same time, it would be nice to have a conceptual framework on how you might [implement specific practices] in order to transform your school.

Organize Additional Training Through the Local CESAs. Several of the participants commented on the need for ongoing training of both district and school staff in culturally responsive practices as well as assistance with strategic planning, data management, and teacher and staff buy-in. Some team members suggested that additional training might be provided through the local CESA. This would allow trainers to provide on-site support to school and district teams, would make training more accessible to staff members throughout the district, and would provide local networking opportunities. Clearly linking these local trainings with the CREATE initiative would also help to increase awareness of the initiative within the district and help to broaden support for the initiative beyond the school and district CREATE teams.

Provide More Differentiated Professional Development. Two participants in the CREATE Professional Development Academies suggested that the academies might better address district needs if events were tailored to the needs of districts with similar student populations. One suggestion was either to organize regional meetings of districts with similar populations (e.g., Native American students) or to organize working sessions at conferences or workshops to allow districts with common interests and concerns to work together. Another suggestion was to provide more time at workshops for districts to share strategies for addressing disproportionality, building school–community relationships, and increasing student achievement and engagement, particularly among students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Sustainability of District Efforts

Most of the team members who were interviewed were optimistic about sustaining the district’s efforts to reduce disproportionality and to incorporate culturally responsive practices at the classroom, school, and district levels. Most felt that they had made a good start and would be able continue their efforts to involve additional staff in school and district improvement efforts. Funding was a concern, however. Several team members mentioned that the district had recently met state targets for reducing disproportionality. Some were concerned that funds that had been made available to the schools to hire resource coordinators would no longer be available, and that the positions might be eliminated. The school board also had recently approved budget cuts,

raising further concerns about funding. Although the immediate goal of reducing disproportionality had been achieved, most thought the district still had a great deal of work to do in meeting the goals it had established in its district plan for addressing disproportionality.

Some team members also noted that the district faced considerable challenges in moving forward with current improvement efforts because of its lack of experience with strategic planning. They thought that a lot more work was needed to build district capacity to both lead and coordinate the current work and establish broader teacher and staff buy-in before substantial progress would be made toward achieving the district's goals. An additional concern was a change in district leadership. A new superintendent had recently been hired, and some team members were unsure whether the new superintendent would support the work that the school and district CREATE teams had been engaged in.

District 2 Case Study

Staff members from District 2 are participating in the CREATE Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component and the Consortium on Racial Equity and PK–12 Education. Seven interviews were conducted with school and district staff members who have been involved in one or both of these components. Learning Point Associates spoke with the director of student services, the supervisor of community education services, a school psychologist, an elementary school staff member, two middle school staff members, and one high school staff member.

District Participation in the CREATE Initiative

District 2 has participated in efforts to address disproportionality for approximately four years. The district is not currently on DPI's list of districts with significant disproportionality, but it has been cited in the past. The district participates in CREATE because the initiative provides resources and opportunities to improve instruction. Several respondents said that, thus far, the district's participation in CREATE and in the Responsive Education for All Children (REACH) initiative has transformed instruction in the district.

District participants in the CREATE initiative include the district superintendent, principals, the director of student services and special education, the supervisor of community education services, a school psychologist, and several teachers. District involvement in the CREATE Consortium and the Classroom Practices component is described in this section.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices

Five staff members from the high school, the middle school, and the district participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component. The participants completed four two-day workshops during the 2009–10 school year. Participation in the component was voluntary. Two of the participants said they volunteered because they were already interested and involved in topics related to addressing racism and wanted additional training.

Three participants in the Classroom Practices component were interviewed. All described the quality of the workshops as excellent. One respondent said the presenters were not overly

focused on an agenda, and instead, allowed the group to gel and the discussion to evolve. Another respondent said the presenters provided meaningful and concrete examples of practices that could be applied in the classroom. The third respondent said that “I think it is a foundation for what you really are going to experience in your classrooms” and recommended that the training be required of all educators.

Several comments suggest that the sessions can build school capacity. For example, a district administrator said the workshops enhanced one’s capacity “to promote cultural relevancy, social justice, and help teachers understand power dynamics.” In addition, the respondent said the component has given the district an additional lens through which to look at other initiatives, such as RtI and PBIS. Several book study groups on culturally responsive practices have been formed as a result of the Classroom Practices component. One respondent indicated that, so far, the impact on classroom practice is minimal, but that respondent is planning to focus on implementation in the coming school year.

Respondents did not offer many suggestions for improvement. One respondent suggested offering more local or regional trainings, or trainings during weekends or evenings. The respondent indicated that it is difficult for administrators and teachers to be out of the classroom or school for eight days.

Consortium on Racial Equity and PK–12 Education

Between 10 and 12 staff members participated in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, including the superintendent, principals, pupil services director, teachers, and a school psychologist. Four staff members who attended the consortium were interviewed.

Respondents’ opinions on the quality of the consortium varied. Respondents generally agreed that aspects of the consortium were excellent, the speakers were good, and the group activities were relevant. Participants described consortium topics as mostly theoretical, focusing on critical race theory and white privilege. Sessions did, however, include time for team planning and guided discussions. One respondent said discussions with other districts were helpful for the district’s own improvement planning.

The respondents indicated that the consortium was relevant to their district needs and concerns. Because of the district’s growing minority population, one respondent said that it is time for the district to begin having conversations about race. As a result of the consortium, this respondent reported having more conversations with staff members in the school about race and said that slowly people are thinking more about race.

Criticisms of the consortium focused on organization. One respondent said that the consortium did not seem well organized. Another said that initially the purpose of the consortium was difficult to understand and added that “over time there was more of an understanding of where they [the consortium] were trying to take us.” Repetition of information and materials was also mentioned. One participant said, “We would go to our meeting and people would say ‘we already talked about this, why are we going over it again, let’s get to the meat of it.’” Another

participant agreed that there was too much repetition and the sessions should have had less discussion and should have provided more information on implementation.

Respondents suggested that the sessions focus more on *how* districts might reduce disproportionality and become more culturally responsive. At several points in the interviews, respondents noted they would like to have more strategies to take back to the district. One participant said, “I think some of the initial frustration may have been diminished if they had spent a little more time in the beginning kind of laying out the journey that districts and people need to take.” Another respondent suggested that participants have more opportunities to collaborate with other districts in order to share processes and resources and to build a network.

I’d like even more interaction with the different districts and maybe they can share with us where they’re at in the process, like from the tiny things, like “these are the documents we use,” to the larger things, like “this is how we got certain things done.”... Maybe have two or three hours where two districts are together and there are structured activities that we have to follow.

District Goals and Activities

Respondents indicated that the overall goal of participation in CREATE is to increase awareness of the need for racial equity and to achieve equity within classrooms and close achievement gaps. Respondents said evidence of success would be that disproportionality would be eliminated and there would be no racial differences in graduation, suspension, and expulsion rates. In addition, students from racially and culturally diverse backgrounds would be appropriately represented in advanced placement classes and extracurricular activities.

By the end of the summer 2010, all administrators were to have completed the Beyond Diversity training. One respondent described a recent district equity audit completed by the district equity leadership team. As a result of the audit, the district equity leadership team plans to systematically increase teacher tools for culturally responsive practices in the upcoming school year. The respondent said, “We’ll be able to put those together as resources for teachers and then next school year, when teachers start to use some of the information and engage in the conversation, the [district equity leadership team] and our administrators will be there to support those teachers.”

The district has formed building-level problem-solving teams that address the needs of individual students who are having difficulty and find ways to work with them in regular classroom settings. One respondent mentioned the importance of the problem-solving teams:

We have what’s called the problem-solving teams where instead of going straight to “let’s test this kid for special ed,” we’re making a stronger effort to work within [a] tiered pyramid of interventions. I see that happening. I see the discussion in general out there with administrators. I think there’s an effort to put this front and center.

The high school has formed the Committee for Equity and Excellence, which focuses on delivery of special education services and is currently working with Elise Frattura from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee to review district data in order to improve services for minority youth.

The committee has plans to visit two other districts to learn more about their coordinated, integrated service models.

Respondents described activities taking place in schools to increase the participation of students of color. For example, one middle school has formed student groups who talk with school staff members. The high school is planning family party nights with the English language learner program to increase communication with families about resources and to tell families about a program designed to provide early academic and other types of support to freshmen who are failing early in the school year.

Three respondents said several schools have developed book study groups. One of the books that they are reading and discussing is *Courageous Conversations About Race*. One assistant principal reported planning to give a presentation to school staff on CREATE to encourage more staff participation in the initiative in the coming school year.

Although several respondents mentioned staff collaboration on culturally responsive practices, for some schools this is still in the planning and discussion stage. A respondent at one school said that the school is trying to work the topic of culturally responsive practices into staff and department meetings. The respondent said:

I don't think it's been said, "let's all get together now and talk about cultural relevancy."... We've got to peel the onion, so to speak, and I think that's what we're doing. I think there's a conscious effort not to overwhelm the staff.... We have conscious discussions of what's the best way to introduce things.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents were asked what factors have facilitated efforts to reduce disproportionality and improve cultural responsiveness. In District 2, the most frequently mentioned facilitator was the commitment of leaders and staff members to equitable teaching practices. As one respondent said

We have a very driven group of individuals who are very passionate about equity and excellence in ensuring that all students obtain a high-quality education—very passionate individuals and very strong minded individuals, leaders.... That is going to help tremendously as we roll out our goals and our programs.

Two respondents mentioned the importance of having the new superintendent on board with the initiative. One respondent also mentioned that they have brought community members into the district equity leadership team to help address equity issues.

Barriers to District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified several barriers to district efforts, including lack of time, not having a shared understanding of the importance of culturally responsive practices, funding, low momentum, and ineffective communication.

Lack of Time. Four respondents indicated that time was a barrier to implementing practices and policies to reduce disproportionality, noting there is typically not enough time to devote to meeting the goals of the initiative. As one respondent said, “Time is always a challenge—time to plan, time to educate the teachers, time to talk about these initiatives, time to understand them.”

Lack of a Shared Understanding. Four respondents indicated that key players need to understand why culturally responsive practices are important. For example, one respondent indicated that district staff members do not agree why an achievement gap exists, nor do they agree that racial inequities might contribute to the achievement gap. A respondent said

I think some people have heard about white privilege for a long, long time. I think to some people in the group, it’s a very new idea and they kind of have to work themselves through it to really understand it. The whole idea of systemic racism, I think people really understand individual racism, but I don’t think they get the big picture of how the system works or doesn’t work for people of color.

According to one respondent, some of the staff members who did not participate in CREATE activities do not want to discuss what participants learned. The respondent said, “When we come back to our buildings we often hear ‘Well, what did you learn and just give me the summary or give me the binder.’”

Funding. Two respondents noted that funding is also a challenge. The district is currently experiencing budget deficits and is finding it difficult to provide funds to cover substitutes during the trainings, or fees for conferences and workshops.

Maintaining Momentum. A respondent observed that it is challenging to keep people invested and moving forward. The respondent said that some district equity leadership team members have not participated in recent meetings—community members in particular are not attending. This may be because the district equity leadership team has not yet developed a series of action steps that promote momentum. Several respondents are learning new skills but could use more assistance with action steps for moving forward.

Ineffective Communication. One of the respondents said that communication about CREATE is not effective: “Sometimes you’re not exactly sure where you’re supposed to be...or what opportunities are there. I think over the past three years communication has definitely improved, but that’s another area that could help the district improve.”

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Respondents indicated that the CREATE initiative is having an impact on the district. The specific changes mentioned by respondents, however, suggest that the district is still in an early phase of implementation. Generally, awareness and communication have increased, and the district team is engaged in planning.

One respondent said that, in contrast with the past, the school community is becoming “cognizant of some of the racial biases and issues that are evident in the school.” Another respondent said participation in CREATE has resulted in more communication about race:

Communication in conversations around race—that to me is one of the biggest impacts. For so long, people have been socialized not to talk about it and in our district we have very little representation of faculty and staff of color so it’s been difficult.

An assistant principal reported that participation in CREATE has made her more aware of practices that encourage families from different cultural backgrounds to participate in school events. For example, she recognized that it is not enough just to invite families to the school for meetings and lecture to them, but the school also has to provide child care and food in order to make families feel welcome.

One respondent said participation in CREATE has helped the district with resources and planning. Without CREATE, the respondent said, it would have “taken our district a long time to develop some type of model like this and find the right resources.

Suggestions for Additional Support and Technical Assistance

Respondents did not provide many suggestions for additional technical assistance. Two respondents indicated that the district needs to develop a plan before knowing what additional help they would need and reiterated concerns about not maintaining momentum: “We’ve got to have a plan, our group needs to get the plan whether it’s right or wrong, start using the plan and then we can tweak it along the way. But I think once we start moving with that, then we’ll be able to say we need this, we need that.” The respondents also said it would be helpful to have more updates on work in other districts in forming an action plan: “If there’s a workshop that could be provided for districts that would help them formulate a viable action plan, based on perhaps other districts’ success in addressing some of the goals that are generated, that would be helpful, certainly a little more concrete.”

One respondent said it would be helpful to “get a team together for a day or two and really start to develop action plans.... Part of [the planning involves] tailoring it to the needs of the individual districts, but part of it is knowing where you need to go and also knowing what’s worked in other places.” The respondent said that having a trainer to provide guidance for the process also would be helpful.

Sustainability of District Efforts

All respondents agreed that the district will be able to sustain its efforts. Respondents indicated that changes are or will be incorporated into the culture of the district. A respondent said, “I feel the shift already. I think there’s been a paradigm shift in the way that we think about a lot of issues.” Another respondent said sustainability is likely because the new superintendent is behind the CREATE initiative and district efforts to be more culturally responsive: “I know he is one that likes to say this is what we’re going to do, we’re going to do it, and then it’s just part of what we do all the time.”

A few respondents provided suggestions on how the efforts related to CREATE might be sustained financially. The respondents noted that the district has strong grant writers and can

probably secure funding through new grants. Currently, the district has a REACH grant for four schools, and this grant will cover some of the costs associated with CREATE. Additional suggestions for continuation were to form community partnerships and collaborate with other districts to share resources.

District 3 Case Study

District 3 was cited for significant disproportionality because of the number of African American students and Native American students who were identified as having specific disabilities. The district is required to participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment and the Professional Development Academies. In addition to these components, the district has participated in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education. Learning Point Associates conducted interviews with five school and district staff members who have been involved in one or more of these components: three district staff members, a staff member from the elementary school, and a staff member from the high school.

District Participation in the CREATE Initiative

As a district with a growing minority population, particularly Hispanic and Hmong, the district envisioned participation in CREATE as a way to “get ahead of the game,” according to a school administrator. Prior to the district’s participation in CREATE, district staff had noticed that despite numerous new initiatives 25 to 30 percent of students were not progressing academically. A district administrator noted that in reviewing school and district data, “We realized that race is...a significant factor in academic achievement.”

The district equity leadership team, which is charged with assessing equity and disproportionality, includes six district administrators and four principals. District administrators are required to participate in the district equity leadership team, although participation by others is voluntary. School administrators were informed of the CREATE initiative by the director of special education, who sought volunteers to represent elementary and secondary schools. A school principal who is a member of the team said, “I was an ELL teacher, so diversity is my thing.... I jumped at the chance to serve on that [team].”

District 3 also has worked with a professor from the local university, who helps the district with racial equity policies and practices and participates in some of the CREATE activities with the district.

Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education

The ten district equity leadership team members attended sessions of the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education throughout 2009 and 2010. Participants read and discussed books and articles, including *Courageous Conversations About Race* and *Critical Race Theory*. From these readings and discussions, District 3 developed a district equity plan. A district administrator said

The activities really began with going through the *Beyond Diversity* training and becoming much more involved in the *Courageous Conversations* work. From

there, we moved on to weaving in *Critical Race Theory* as a part of the planning process. We also had opportunities to dialogue with other school districts, to really talk about the extent to which their needs match with our school district needs, and how we can help each other out.

All five of the staff members who were interviewed welcomed the open discussions that took place through the consortium, and said they gained insight on issues of race. A school principal said, “On a scale of one to ten, I would give it a ten when it comes to open discussions and our district being honest with our thoughts and our opinions.” A district administrator said that although the consortium does not directly address district needs, it offers valuable content that is relevant to the district:

I think one of the key things here is...you start with yourself... It’s more of a personal journey. You then apply that to your school district, your work, your professional life, personal life, etc. If you don’t believe and don’t incorporate this thinking into who you are, nothing is going to change.

Another administrator said the consortium sessions encouraged participants to examine their own perspectives: “It has provided more people in our district an opportunity to reflect on themselves and how they see the world.... We’ve really been able to challenge assumptions and to look at how learning takes place.”

Staff members acknowledged that the consortium introduced topics on race that were sometimes challenging and uncomfortable to discuss. One principal said, “It felt stressful because you’re talking about things that you are not used to talking about...so there would be discomfort, not in a bad way, but just in a hard work way.”

Criticisms of the consortium focused mostly on organization and a sense that presentations were repetitive and not advancing in a straightforward way. One principal said, “The thing that’s been frustrating about the consortium is there are times...that our presenters are repeating some of the information over and over and over. So sometimes our meeting in December looks a lot like what our meeting in October looked like.” Two of the school staff members who were interviewed said the repetition may be due to the challenge of working with numerous districts whose levels of awareness on race and cultural responsiveness vary.

Both staff members thought there were communication problems between CESA 6 and the trainers who were responsible for the consortium. One principal thought this showed up in the tone of the workshops, where some discord was detected. Another principal said, “I don’t think they all get together ahead of time and really put a game plan together. It’s not all connected.... More work should be done on the agendas and preparatory work.”

One of the principals said more emphasis was placed on equity for African American students and less on equity issues for Native American and Hispanic students. A principal also said one of the consortium speakers was too emotional and judgmental: “We studied a book called *White Like Me*, which really talks about whiteness as a property, and he [the speaker] was upset with our group because we chose that book. [The speaker’s] energies have been negative at times.”

Despite these criticisms, all staff members gave a high rating overall to the consortium. A district administrator said, “I find this not only professionally essential, but personally interesting and rewarding.... I find it to be outstanding.” One of the school staff members said, “Although it seems like I’m being negative, it really has helped us, as leaders and the leadership team, focusing energy and continuing to see the importance of the work we’re trying to take on. So I do think it’s been beneficial.”

Needs Assessment and the District Plan to Address Disproportionality

The district equity leadership team participated in the CREATE Needs Assessments in 2009 and in 2010. In 2009, the focus of the Needs Assessment was to determine district status based on established criteria. A participant in the Needs Assessment noted that “There were 23 components that we were to look at and we were to use to assess our common placement—whether we’re just beginning, in progress, or at standard.” The process was described by another respondent as “good and in-depth and thorough.” A district respondent said, “As an administrative group, we have our principals use those formats that are used in the CREATE Needs Assessment.... Using that lens and that rubric, they assess what is taking place in their schools, not only behaviorally, but academically.”

In 2010, the district team met again at the CREATE conference to conduct a second Needs Assessment. At this time, according to a district administrator,

We started to reflect on where we were a year ago, what gains we made [and] where we didn’t make [gains]. We interpreted information more thoroughly based on this rubric, identifying what things were going on in the district that we were currently doing [and] things that we needed to do.

Overall, respondents said the Needs Assessment was a valuable and useful activity. A school principal said, “The Needs Assessment was really important, so I would say that was excellent. Taking a second look at [the Needs Assessment in 2010]...was excellent, very beneficial.”

Respondents who participated in the Needs Assessment said they appreciated the time they had to work together. A school principal said, “Getting us together so we have work time and we connect with other districts [that] are the doing the same work is all useful.” A number of respondents, however, said they could have used more time on the Needs Assessment. When asked about how CREATE could improve its activities, a district administrator said

I think the one thing we need more of—and it got better this year—is time to work together. [CREATE] has gotten better with that, but...as a district, it’s just good for us to be able to learn, get some direction from them...spend time analyzing what we’re doing in this district...and what are some the next steps to do.... But they have responded to that and it has gotten better this year.

Although respondents noted that the overall Needs Assessment process was useful, a district administrator said the introduction and directions for the Needs Assessment process were confusing and disorganized: “They [went] through the framework on how they’d like us to use this rubric.... That part was a bit disorganized and a bit frustrating because there were people who were presenting this framework and this process [that] have not actually done the process.”

Professional Development Academies

Five district equity leadership team members attended the September 2009 Professional Development Academy and six attended the February 2010 academy. This information was obtained from the attendance rosters for the academies. The team members themselves, however, were unsure what the Professional Development Academies were or whether they had attended them. One respondent assumed the academy must have taken place during the CREATE conference and said, “To be honest with you, it’s hard for me to segregate these things.” This district staff member’s comments were reiterated by other district equity leadership team members. One of the principals said

The structure of this has been confusing and sometimes one hand doesn’t know what the other one is doing. I know they’re trying to communicate better the different CREATE A, B, C, D kind of thing, but you’ll detect moderate, mild to moderate, severe confusion on my part in terms of which specifically belongs in which part. That has been real fuzzy.

District Goals and Activities

According to district staff members, district goals include reducing student achievement gaps and preparing all students for postsecondary education. Through participation in the CREATE initiative, the district wants to positively affect the 10 to 20 percent of students who are not succeeding academically. School administrators said they want classroom instruction to be culturally relevant, to increase the access of students of color to advanced placement classes, and increase achievement levels among students of color. District staff created a slide presentation summarizing the district’s goals and postsecondary readiness standards, which is available on the district’s website. The district has also restructured its budget to support the realization of these goals and standards.

When asked how the CREATE program aligns with other district initiatives, a district administrator said, “It’s been great because we’ve scrapped a lot of other district initiatives.... If things don’t fit with [the district’s readiness standards], with preparing every child for postsecondary education, with social and emotional asset development, culturally responsive practices, we don’t do it any longer.”

The district has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at increasing cultural awareness within school classrooms. Approximately 350 of its school-level and district-level staff have participated in *Beyond Diversity*, a two-day training led by the Pacific Education Group, which is intended to increase awareness about the impact of racism and exclusion on student learning. District staff members said all new district and school staff in leadership positions are required to participate in the *Beyond Diversity* training. In the 2009–10 school year, approximately 150 classroom teachers participated in three sessions on culturally responsive classroom practices. A district administrator said that both the *Beyond Diversity* and culturally responsive classroom trainings are open to everyone in the district.

A district administrator said that in his regular meetings with other administrators, “Part or all of those meetings are planning sessions, reflection sessions, and informational sessions on the work we are doing with CREATE.” District equity leadership team members who work in the district office meet once a week with the entire district staff and address issues of cultural responsiveness. Commenting on these weekly district team meetings, one team member said

We’re not necessarily talking CREATE, but we’re again embedding everything that we learn and looking at things through critical race theory, looking at using the four agreements that are plastered in our district. We have a ways to go, but...it’s becoming the fabric of what we do in [this district].

School principals who are district equity leadership team members do not have as many opportunities to discuss activities or initiatives stemming from CREATE, but they do meet with district staff once a month and then share what they have learned and how they are applying new information in their schools.

The district currently collaborates with a local university on a teacher professional development program that seeks to increase teachers’ awareness of racial equity in the classroom and offers training on culturally responsive classroom practices. The district has sent its first cohort of 20 teachers for a weeklong training session at the university. The district intends to send a second cohort of teachers during the summer. A district administrator noted that “The university has to train educators differently.... They haven’t done any job of teaching future teachers on how to teach to all children. So we’re trying to bridge that gap here.”

Other activities within the district support district efforts to increase racial equity and introduce culturally responsive practices. Several book groups have formed at the district level and in some school buildings that focus on topics related to racial equity. The district has also held data workshops to review student data and determine which students need additional help and where improvements can be made.

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

Respondents identified several factors that have facilitated district efforts to implement equitable and culturally responsive policies and practices:

Focused Goals. Respondents said that focusing the district’s efforts allows it to concentrate on meeting specific, overarching goals. One district administrator said, “Having a defined goal of preparing [everyone] for postsecondary education is hard to argue. That has forced our school district to have more...educational teaching and learning discussions in one year than we probably have over the last ten.” A second district team member said that the district has remained focused on doing what is best for its district’s students: “I think [our district] has finally focused on kids. Our responsibility in the public educational system...is not to make excuses for kids, for parents.... We have a purpose. We have a responsibility. We have a focus and that’s on every single child, no excuses.”

Staff Commitment. Two respondents identified staff commitment as a strength. One school principal said, “We have a super-committed district administration. It’s not like anyone is

feeling we just have to do this until our numbers are right. We are so far past that. It is something we all really believe in.”

Momentum. Respondents acknowledged that the learning opportunities, trainings, and subsequent conversations available through participation in CREATE have kept culturally responsive education in the foreground in the district. A school principal said there have been more “courageous conversations” that have opened up dialogue on race and culturally responsive practices.

Barriers to District Improvement Efforts

Despite the commitment of many of the staff members who have been involved in district improvement efforts, respondents acknowledged that the district faces several challenges in achieving district goals for increasing racial equity and culturally responsiveness. The following challenges or barriers were mentioned:

Discomfort. Four out of five respondents said that a critical barrier to implementing equitable policies and practices is district, school, and community members’ discomfort with discussing race, educational inequities, and strategies for addressing them. One principal said, “Some of us are more comfortable than others talking about things like race. So part of it is just getting our administrators, teachers, our aides, everybody in a place where they can comfortably talk about it instead of pretending it doesn’t exist.”

Lack of Buy-In. Many school and district staff members see CREATE and culturally responsive education as a passing fad. Some district personnel question whether academic achievement gaps stem from teachers and administrators or from students. Respondents said that teachers do not feel the need to change their instruction, lesson plans, or rules to accommodate students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Two respondents added that, within the community, there are community members who resist the direction that the district is moving in, particularly if that involves redirecting resources. A district administrator explained, “In our community we have some people who tend to have more political clout and economic clout in the community and who feel that entitles them to continued involvement and entitlement. Changing that, based on need, is challenging.”

Lack of Training. Although many schools and district staff members have participated in training on cultural responsiveness, there are still many who have not. One of the district administrators said, “It is very hard to replicate that training or really get as deep an understanding without having participated. So for those that haven’t participated, we spend a lot of time bringing them up to speed.”

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Four of the five respondents said that as the CREATE initiative continues, it will have a growing impact on district and school practices. Respondents indicated that the district is still in an early phase of implementation. A school principal said, “I really think it will have a huge impact. Some schools are really on board and really trying different things.... I’m extremely optimistic

that not just our district, but the whole community is going to grow from this and have an appreciation for this kind of thinking.”

One district staff member said that as a result of the district’s participation in CREATE district staff have developed a common language and framework from which to build. A district administrator said that CREATE has helped the district more clearly formulate its goal to prepare all students for postsecondary education and to develop its postsecondary readiness standards: “It really gave us the framework and gave us a common language and common tools to use to get where we need to go versus so many random things that we could be doing differently. It has provided a very, very nice framework for us.”

District and school staff said that CREATE has had an impact on how they think about race and culture, and this change has permeated many areas: “Our practices are changing and our practices are becoming more culturally relevant and responsive,” said a district administrator.

Suggestions for Additional Support and Technical Assistance

For the most part, respondents were confident in their ability to implement their district improvement plan and achieve district goals related to reducing disproportionality. They did not offer many suggestions on how the CREATE initiative could further assist them. When asked about additional technical assistance that would be helpful to them, one respondent said

That’s a hard one. We’re so off and running and things are so systematic. So many of us on this team are always pushing and thinking and reading and learning new things.... So in terms of when we need something, we figure it out. We’re all readers and [can access information]. So I can’t think of any specific thing they could offer.

Two respondents offered the following suggestions on how CREATE could further support district efforts.

Increase the Expertise of CREATE Coaches. Coaches were provided to districts participating in the CREATE consortium to help them develop and implement their district equity plans. Coaches often worked with districts between consortium sessions to help them apply what they learned. One principal did not think the local equity coaches had enough training and expertise to effectively help them. The principal said, “If I were to offer [a] suggestion, I think getting...the coaches more training so that they can work with the different school districts in a more productive way...would be really helpful.”

Provide More Training on Collaborative Planning. Additional support from the consortium trainers was requested by a district team member. The respondent said the district would benefit from and welcome technical assistance from the Pacific Education Group and West Wind: “Helping us do some collaborative planning would be very helpful to us.”

Sustainability of District Efforts

Most of the team members who were interviewed were optimistic about sustaining the district's efforts to reduce disproportionality and to incorporate culturally responsive practices at the classroom, school, and district levels. Most said they had made a good start in this direction and would continue their efforts to involve additional staff in school and district improvement efforts.

One respondent voiced a concern that once the CREATE initiative ended, school and district staff could slip back to business as usual: "I do worry that everybody will just kind of slip back.... We've perpetuated things that have been going on forever in this country. That's how we were taught. That's how we went through educational programs, so I do fear that."

Although the district continues to participate in CREATE activities, the district wants to begin implementing culturally responsive practices in schools. After CREATE, the district will be able to use its regular discretionary operating budget to continue implementing culturally responsive practices. Federal funding provides another source of support for district efforts to reduce disproportionality. A respondent noted that "We use our Coordinated Early Intervening Services funds, our 15 percent of our federal flow-through special education funding" to support district programs designed to reduce disproportionality. Once the district meets state criteria for reducing disproportionality, district staff members said they will use Title I funding and apply for additional grants to sustain their efforts.

District 4 Case Study

Staff members from District 4 are participating in the following CREATE components: Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices, the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education, the CREATE Needs Assessment, and the Professional Development Academies. Eight interviews were conducted with school and district staff who have been involved in one or more of these components. Learning Point Associates spoke with one district administrator, two elementary school staff members, one middle school staff member, two high school staff members, the school psychologist, and the special education coordinator.

District Participation in the CREATE Initiative

District 4 was cited for significant disproportionality because of the number of African American students who were identified as having specific disabilities. Several respondents mentioned that African American students are less likely than other students to participate in advanced placement courses and extracurricular activities.

CREATE participants from the district were the assistant superintendent, principals, teachers, school psychologists, special education teachers, the special education coordinator, and a diagnostician. All staff participated voluntarily. Some were asked to participate because of their influence within schools or the district as a whole; others volunteered after learning about the initiative at the district's summer academy or through other participants.

In interviews, many respondents talked about the importance of the CREATE initiative in relation to other initiatives and priorities in the district. One respondent said, “We can’t have all these other initiatives and we can’t be talking about all these other things if this work isn’t at the forefront.” A number of respondents referred to the CREATE initiative as a “plate” for all other initiatives in the district:

When we met with the administrative team this spring, we said that it isn’t like an item that you’re putting on somebody’s plate, it is the plate. It is what we have to be all about. This is what we have to be totally aware of and cognizant of and mindful [of] as we do anything, as we comprise any group.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices

Fifteen staff members from district elementary, middle, and high schools participated in Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices in fall 2009 and spring 2010. Two of the eight interview respondents attended the workshops. According to the two respondents, all teachers were informed of the district’s plan for addressing disproportionality during the district’s 2009 summer academy. At that time, the district provided information about the CREATE Needs Assessment process and described opportunities for staff members to become involved in the CREATE initiative. Teachers interested in professional development and training were asked to contact district staff. One teacher said the participants were aware of disproportionality issues in the district and recognized that they needed to have conversations about the issue. Participants in the component attended a series of four two-day workshops in 2009–10.

The two respondents who participated in the Classroom Practices workshops spoke very favorably about the quality and relevance of the workshops. They said the facilitators were knowledgeable and passionate. They presented high-quality research and data and allowed ample time and flexibility for group discussions to evolve. Both respondents said the workshops were relevant and increased staff awareness of disproportionality.

The respondents provided only two suggestions for improving the workshops. One teacher suggested that some of the workshops be shortened so that the training could be offered in fewer than eight days. The teacher said it was difficult to be out of the classroom or building for eight full days during the year. Another teacher suggested that the workshops include more effective, concrete strategies that teachers could apply in the classroom. The teacher suggested having a panel of experienced teachers discuss how they apply such strategies.

Consortium on Racial Equity and PK–12 Education

Nine staff members, including district leaders and elementary, middle, and high school principals, participated in the CREATE Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education. Respondents said the leaders of this group, particularly the school psychologists, were selected because of their key role in the special education program, but participation was voluntary.

Participants in the consortium met four times during the school year and were provided with training by the Pacific Education Group (PEG) and West Wind. Respondents said during the first year, the sessions focused on how to have conversations about race. Initially respondents were

not encouraged to take action steps, but rather to go through a “personal journey.” During the second year, the focus was on developing action plans to address district equity issues.

Five participants in the consortium were interviewed; two of the five were asked specific questions about their participation in the consortium. Both were favorable about the component and praised the quality of the training and the presenters. They were particularly favorable about the initial emphasis on personal reflection. A respondent observed that the consortium is the

most meaningful and transformative training [I have] been a part of because of that personal aspect. It changed the way I view my life. With colleagues I’ve gotten emotional about how my life would have been different.

One respondent said the emphasis on personal reflection was difficult because leaders often prefer to take action. The respondent said early discussions left participants “feeling unsettled.” Both respondents said the personal journey was important to undergo before developing action plans because teams needed to build awareness. One respondent said the consortium sometimes alternated between personal reflection and action planning in the second year, which was confusing for some participants:

In a way it felt like in the first year, we were able to go through that personal transformation and then we were expected to have a lot of action going on at a district level. [We went from] reflection/transformation then action and then back. It felt a little mixed.

Needs Assessment and District Plan to Address Disproportionality

Nineteen staff members, representing the district administration and elementary, middle, and high schools, participated in the Needs Assessment process. Participants included school principals, school psychologists, and the coordinator of special education services. The team also included an equity coach and a representative from DPI. Respondents said they were asked to participate because of their role within the district and their influence with other staff members. A subgroup of seven participants participated in a district disproportionality workgroup, which looked at what other districts have done to address disproportionality. Five of the eight staff members who were interviewed participated in the Needs Assessment process.

Participants met at the 2009 CREATE conference to complete the Needs Assessment and gather data in accordance with the Needs Assessment rubric provided by NCCRESt. Respondents reported that the Needs Assessment sessions focused on reviewing district data to identify specific areas in which the district needed to establish or improve policies and practices for addressing disproportionality. Two respondents said participants were very honest about the issues in disproportionality, especially referrals and participation in extracurricular activities. One respondent said the rubrics were “powerful because there [were] some things on there that I don’t think we necessarily stopped to think about.”

After participating in the 2009 CREATE Needs Assessment, participants scheduled and prepared a presentation for the district superintendent, assistant superintendents, principals, and other key staff members. At this meeting they presented information, district goals, and a proposed framework of activities. A respondent said, “One of our goals is ensuring more equitable access

in extracurriculars, so we looked at the statistics of who is involved in these extracurriculars and then communicated that information.”

Another respondent said that district team members used a rubric, developed and used in another school district, to plan improvements to district special education referral and assessment procedures. The respondent said a goal was to have the special education evaluation team “really look through a cultural lens” when considering and making referrals. The rubric explicitly encourages the evaluation team to consider the student’s cultural background, cultural reasons for certain behaviors, and family expectations. The rubric is still being refined and will be reviewed by teachers who have participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component.

Only one respondent offered a suggestion for improving the Needs Assessment sessions, which was to set a schedule for the sessions and adhere to that schedule.

Professional Development Academies

Four district staff members participated in the CREATE Professional Development Academies. Two of these participants were interviewed. Both respondents were favorable about the quality of the workshops and their relevance to district needs. They said the presentations had a strong focus on data, including their own data, and that the presenters were experienced and had appropriate suggestions. The participants were given adequate time to work through common issues with other districts. One respondent said, “Getting together with other districts and finding out the effective programming or effective strategies that they’re using is always authentic and practical and helpful.”

One said the academies could be improved by having trainers visit some of the districts:

I really feel we would benefit from having some more intensive work, where they [trainers] were present in the district, and were able to sit down with parents and then sit down with other staff and talk to them. Their information is fantastic. It’s just...being able to transfer that information into the district [that is difficult for us to accomplish].

The respondent said more structure in the follow-up activities is needed “either in collaboration with other districts, in collaboration with the trainers, or in collaboration with people that are in the trenches.”

District Goals and Activities

The district team has been working to address the goals identified in the district’s plan for addressing disproportionality. A primary goal is to make progress in the following areas: (1) identifying and utilizing multiple approaches to support student achievement and academic success; (2) ensuring that students who are culturally and linguistically diverse are represented equitably in all programs, including those of the gifted and rapidly progressing students; and (3) ensuring that all students are educated in the least restrictive environment. The district’s second goal is to continue to develop leadership capacity through the participation of principals

and other leaders in CREATE principal training and CREATE classroom practices training. Every administrator will participate in a *Beyond Diversity* workshop or similar course, or will participate in equity leadership training by 2012–13. Teaching staff at all schools will participate in training on culturally responsive classroom practices.

Respondents mentioned the extensive training provided to district leaders, school administrators, and teachers aimed at building awareness of and competencies in addressing disproportionality. More than 100 staff members, including all staff at one high school, have participated in either the online or in-person *Beyond Diversity* training, and 15 staff members have participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component. A respondent said that “The activities at this point are continued training—exposure, getting more people involved in the course, getting more people involved as we offer sessions.” Another layer, as described by one respondent, is “to use the language of minority involvement” when discussing school goals and policies.

The district’s disproportionality workgroup, which includes several staff members who participate in the CREATE Needs Assessment process, is currently reviewing data on student referrals to special education. One respondent explained that “We are looking for information about where [students] were identified—our district or other districts—and what some of those referral concerns were when they were identified. We are looking for evidence of appropriate interventions prior to identification.” The workgroup created a culturally responsive individualized education program (IEP) checklist that will be implemented in the district.

Several approaches to sharing and disseminating information are underway, though most are on a small scale. One principal said that CREATE participants from her school have provided handouts and presented key findings to other teachers who are participating in a professional learning community. One teacher reported having facilitated book studies with other teachers. A respondent who attended the consortium said that administrators are working toward creating a buddy system to match teachers who have gone through CREATE Classroom Practices training sessions with those who have not.

When asked about additional opportunities for collaboration in addressing disproportionality, two respondents indicated that more could be done in this area. Two respondents said that professional learning communities are an option. They are implemented in all the district schools and provide an opportunity for participants to share information.

Coordination of district efforts related to the CREATE initiative is the responsibility of the district equity leadership team, which is led by four assistant superintendents. A respondent said that the team is “working to improve our own learning and make sure the learning and growth continues in others.”

Facilitators of District Improvement Efforts

When asked about factors that have facilitated district efforts to address disproportionality and introduce culturally responsive practices, two general themes emerged: staff commitment and building connections.

Staff Commitment. Three respondents said that participants who have attended CREATE workshops are committed to addressing equity issues within the district. This commitment is evident to members of the school community who do not participate in CREATE. As one respondent said, “Many people are committed to the cause, giving up their own time to participate in this. There are additional book studies out and these different mentoring projects and things. The people who are [involved in the CREATE] initiative are definitely making positive strides in working toward district goals.”

Building Connections. Building connections within and across districts was mentioned as a facilitator of district efforts by two respondents. One respondent said she has met and learned from teachers in other districts, and that she and others have shared information and insights on addressing school issues. Another respondent said frequent meetings with other districts have helped participants learn from one another and share successful practices.

Barriers to District Improvement Efforts

Two barriers to achieving district goals were mentioned by respondents: lack of time and lack of a diverse staff.

Lack of Time. Six respondents said it is difficult to launch an initiative when there is not enough time. Much time is required to attend workshops and events, to balance and meet other responsibilities and priorities, and to collaborate with others. As one respondent said, “Time. The time that the training takes, the time people want to commit to it, and maybe they can’t. It’s been a bit of a barrier.” The respondents said, however, that their participation in CREATE workshops and seminars has been time well spent. They also noted that the work on disproportionality is directly tied to other district initiatives and priorities.

Not Having a Diverse Staff. One respondent said the lack of diversity among staff members is a concern: “I do think it’s difficult without having a [diverse staff] working with students [from diverse backgrounds]. Hopefully we can get some staff of color, and even administrators, to work in our district.” Another respondent said, “Our staff is woefully homogeneous, and I think as our district engages in this work more, I’m really optimistic that our staff can become more representative of our community.”

Perceived Impact of the CREATE Initiative

Awareness of disproportionality is stronger now than before the district participated in CREATE, according to several respondents. Three respondents indicated that their participation in CREATE workshops has heightened their awareness of factors that contribute to disproportionality. The respondents said reviewing district and school data has enhanced awareness. As one respondent explained,

For the first time, we looked at some data about participation. We were always [proud of] how many kids we have taking AP tests, but then when we really looked at it, it’s like this doesn’t match at all the demographics of our school. This is a sub-school in and of itself.

Five respondents said the foundational work they have engaged in will likely have an impact in the future. As one respondent noted, “I think it will have a pretty huge impact because we’re creating these goals, and we’re communicating the goals to other people in the district, and then we’re working together to meet the goals.” Respondents said the work is already shaping their practices and how they approach their jobs. As one respondent observed, “We are going to be more ready and willing to challenge an evaluation of a [minority student]. I think we are going to be less likely to identify a student [for referral to special education services]. I think we will try more interventions.” One teacher said that her participation in CREATE “has had a huge impact in my teaching. It just allowed me to think about everything that I do, even student engagement, and be a reflective practitioner.”

Two respondents said that at this time the impact of CREATE is slight because the district is laying the foundation for future work and systems. One respondent noted that “In our school goals, we have language around minority participation. The outsider has no idea why we did that, but I can say with certainty that this work helped us to realize that.” Another respondent said that “At this point, I don’t see a systemwide impact. I do see a more internal impact.... I think it’s really internal at this point.”

Suggestions for Additional Support and Technical Assistance

Respondents provided a few suggestions for how the CREATE initiative could better support the district. These suggestions are summarized below.

Greater Support in Obtaining and Understanding Data. Three respondents reported that they would like more help in obtaining and understanding data. One said that “I think just helping us sort through all of the data [would be helpful]. We have our own people that do that, but I think any ideas that [CREATE consultants might be able to give] in terms of the technical aspects of going through data and figuring that out would be helpful.” One respondent also mentioned that the district had discussed conducting a school equity audit, and that CREATE could perhaps facilitate that work.

Differentiated Support. One respondent would like to see more differentiated technical assistance in the future: “I think we almost need some technical assistance by level. By that I mean a superintendent group gets together.... I think there probably needs to be some technical assistance for principals.... [S]ome outside [assistance] would be helpful.”

Professional Development for Teachers. Both the respondents who participated in the Culturally Responsive Classroom Practices component said professional development on these practices should reach more teachers. As one said,

If we still have a lot of teachers who aren’t aware of how to be mindful of culturally responsive practices in the classroom, then we are not going to be able to move forward. It is important that we get more classroom teachers involved through professional development on culturally responsive practices.

Connecting the CREATE Components. One respondent, who had taken part in several CREATE components, said more should be done to tie the components together: “We have

people involved in this and this and this, but just trying to bring it all together.... I think that is something that we are trying to do as a district and we haven't received a whole lot of guidance on that."

Sustainability of District Efforts

All respondents were very optimistic about whether the district would be able to sustain district efforts after the CREATE initiative ends. Several respondents said that the district would be able to sustain the work because CREATE focuses on changing district and classroom practices as well as staff beliefs and awareness about race. "Even if the district practices fizzle," a respondent said, "I think [the work] will still continue because it's changing people's beliefs and their [individual] practices and I think that's something that you can't take away from people."

Two respondents said the district should now get more people on board, particularly the school board, to continue efforts and to build a network of support for culturally responsive practices. As one respondent stated,

[We need] to engage more leaders, to engage more levels of leadership, from the highest levels of our executive team to our school board members.... We honestly believe if those levels of leadership are buying into it, whatever it may be, custodial groups or whatever, you name it, if they're buying into the process, it's going to help.

With regard to community involvement, a respondent said that in the past, personnel from the county department of health and human services attended the *Beyond Diversity* training and are committed to addressing diversity issues.

District leaders said they expect funds to be available at the end of the CREATE initiative to continue the work in culturally responsive practices. District leaders mentioned the possibility of using Coordinated Early Intervening Services funds. One respondent said the district already uses these funds to cover substitutes while teachers are in training. Another respondent said RtI funds might be used, since the district is attempting to coordinate the two initiatives. Respondents also mentioned the possibility of using Title I funds and applying for grants to support this work.

Trend Analysis of Baseline Data

The evaluation of the CREATE initiative includes an analysis of baseline trends in performance indicators that are targeted by the CREATE initiative. Baseline trends describe the stability, magnitude, and direction of changes on specific indicators over time. This section describes these baseline trends for districts participating and not participating in the CREATE initiative. The analysis examines several demographic variables (e.g., the percentage of identified students with disabilities); nonassessment outcomes (student graduation rates, dropout rates, expulsion rates, and suspension rates); and assessment outcomes—student performance on both the Wisconsin Alternate Assessments for students with disabilities (WAA-SwD) and the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE). The number of years included in the baseline trend analysis was determined by the availability of public DPI data.

Analyses will be conducted in the second through fourth years of the evaluation to assess the impact of the CREATE initiative on the performance indicators targeted by the initiative. Year 4 will be an extended evaluation year to allow for an assessment of impact of the fifth year the CREATE initiative (2012–13). We are considering Year 1 of the CREATE initiative as a start-up year.

An interrupted time series analysis will compare trends in the indicators for the years preceding program implementation to trends after program implementation. We will determine whether and to what extent there is a sharp discontinuity at the point when the CREATE program was implemented and the extent to which there is a change in the slope of the time series after the program was introduced (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). For example, the interrupted time series analysis will determine whether outcomes for students with disabilities improve after the introduction of the CREATE initiative.

The data presented in this section are publicly available DPI data. Data are summarized as averages across all schools within each of three district types. The first district type is referred to as the “26 identified CREATE districts,” 26 districts that the state identified as having significant disproportionality. These districts have the greatest involvement with CREATE. The second district type is referred to as “districts participating in some CREATE.” These districts were not required to participate in CREATE as a result of disproportionality but participated in at least one of the CREATE components. The last group of districts are all other districts in the state and are referred to as “non-CREATE districts.”

Demographics

The demographic analysis was conducted to compare the demographic characteristics of districts that are and are not participating in CREATE. Comparisons are drawn by presenting the average across all schools for each district type. The data include the average number of students enrolled in the schools, the percentage of minority (nonwhite) students, the percentage of students considered limited English proficient (LEP), and the percentage of identified students with disabilities.

Figure 1 shows the average school enrollment by district type. The general trend indicates a small decrease in average enrollment for all three district types. The 26 identified CREATE districts have the highest average number of students per school. Districts participating in at least one component of CREATE have slightly higher enrollment than districts not participating in CREATE.

Figure 1. Average School Enrollment

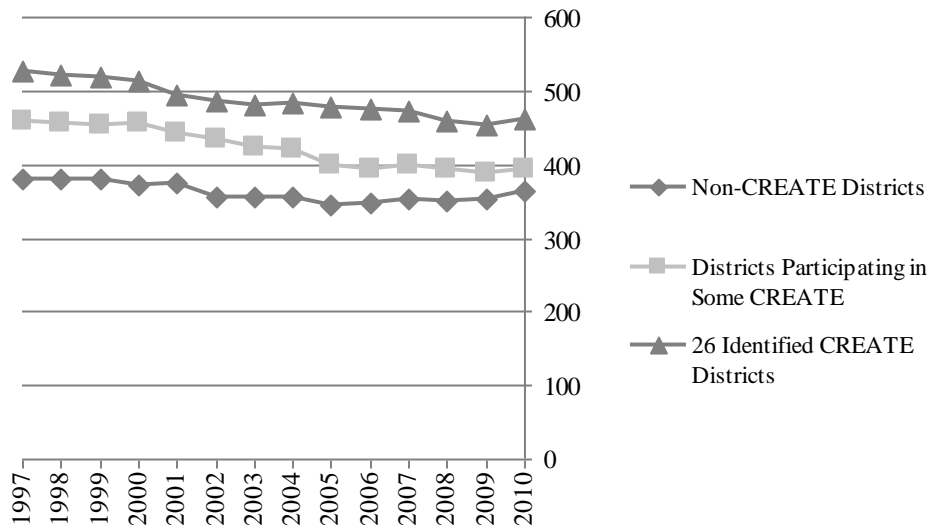


Figure 2 shows the average percentage of minority (nonwhite) students per school for the three district types. Evident in Figure 2 is that non-CREATE districts have a lower percentage of minority students than the 26 CREATE districts and the districts participating in some of the CREATE components. For all three district types, the trend is that of increasing diversity.

Figure 2. Average Percentage of Minority Students

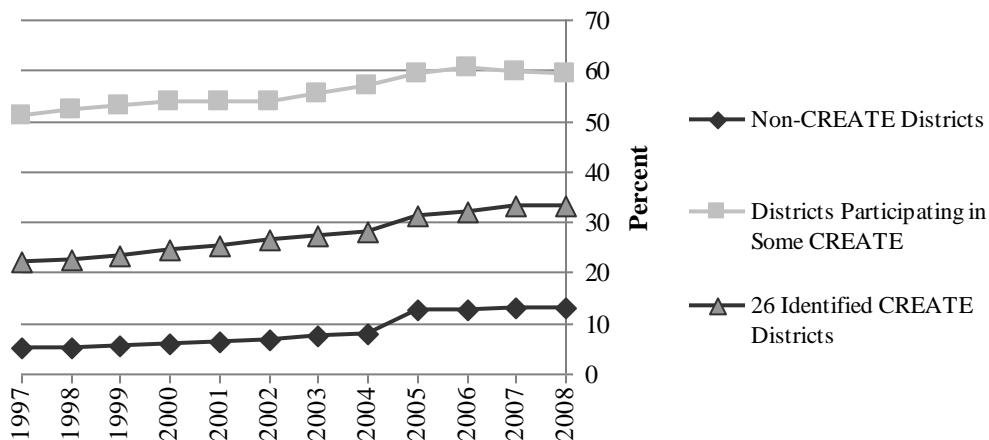
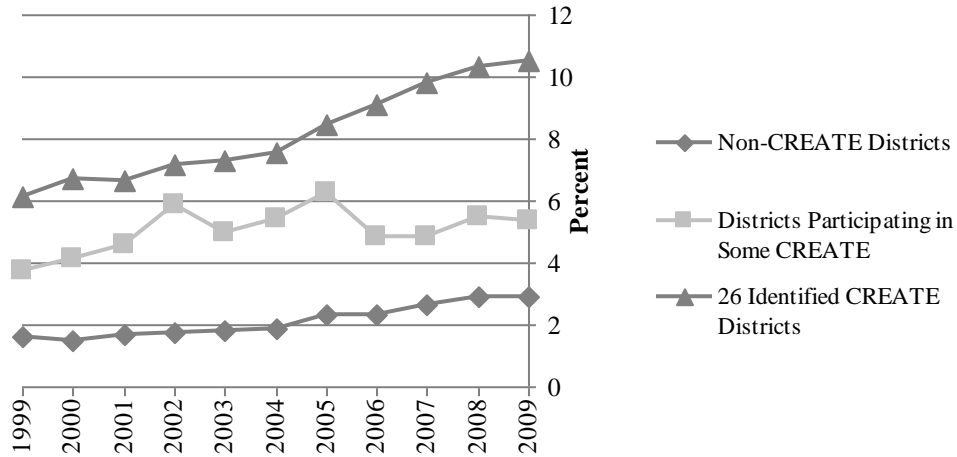


Figure 3 shows the average percentage of limited English proficient (LEP) students per school for the three district types. As with percentage of minority students, districts participating in CREATE have higher percentages of LEP students than nonparticipating districts. Since 1999,

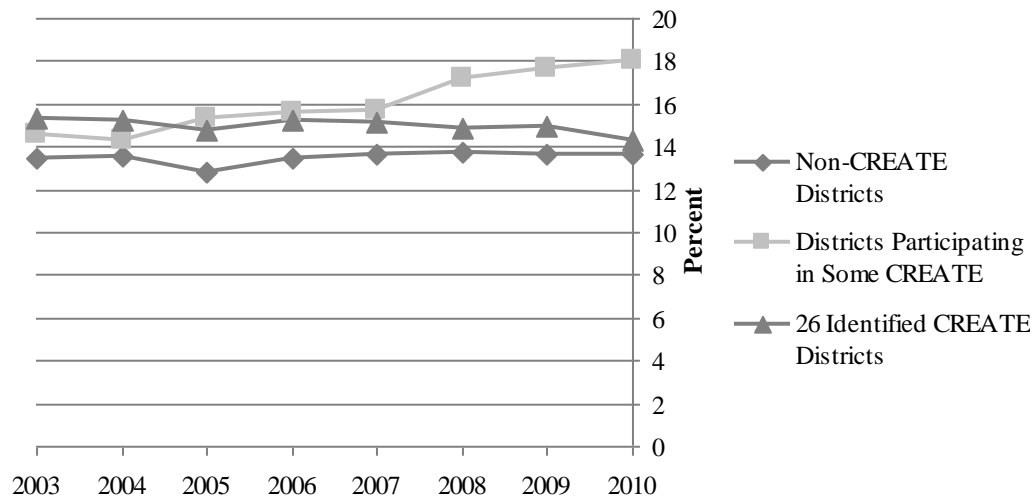
the percentage of LEP students has increased in all three district types and has increased rapidly in the 26 CREATE districts.

Figure 3. Average Percentage of LEP Students



As Figure 4 shows, districts participating in CREATE have higher percentages of students with disabilities than non-CREATE districts, particularly districts participating in some CREATE components, whose percentage of students with disabilities has increased markedly since 2007. The percentage for the 26 identified districts is stable and has declined somewhat since 2003.

Figure 4. Average Percentage of Students With Disabilities



Student Outcomes

The baseline trend analysis looked at multiple student outcomes relevant to the CREATE initiative. Both assessment and nonassessment indicators were analyzed. Nonassessment indicators are dropout rates, graduation rates, expulsion rates, and suspension rates for students with and without disabilities. Assessment indicators are reading and mathematics proficiency rates on both the Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students with Disabilities (WAA-SwD) and the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE). For the assessments, the proficiency ratings are aggregated across grade level. A limitation of these data is that proficiency rates are not reported for grades/student group combinations that have fewer than five students (for confidentiality purposes). This limitation may skew the data such that it is more representative of larger schools.

Dropout Rates

The average dropout rate was generally low for students in all three district types. Figure 5 indicates that dropout rates for students with disabilities in the 26 identified districts were similar to dropout rates of districts that were not participating in the CREATE initiative. Districts participating in some CREATE components tended to have higher and more variable dropout rates, though that result likely arises from the small number of students in these averages and the low dropout rate.

Figure 5. Average Dropout Rates for Students With Disabilities

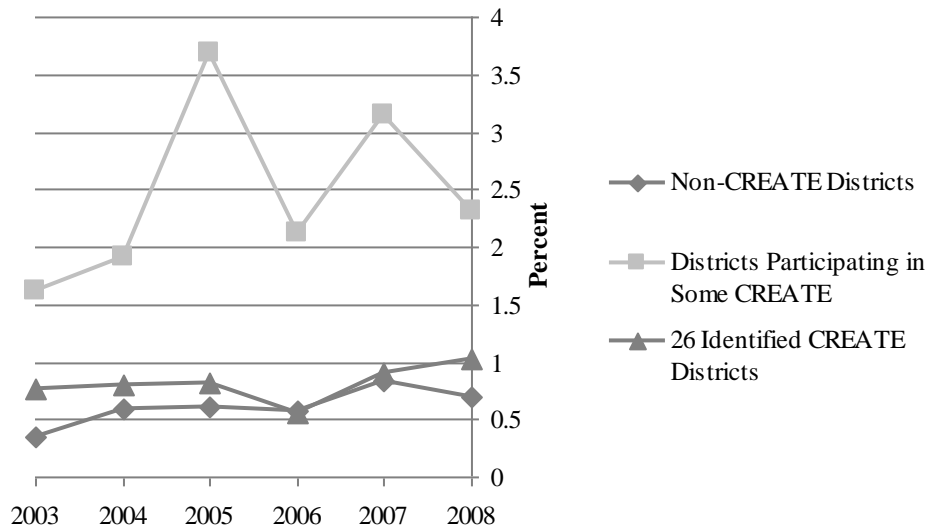


Table 4 compares the dropout rates for students with disabilities to the dropout rates of other students for the three district types. For districts with some participation in CREATE, and the 26 identified districts, the dropout rate is actually higher for students without disabilities than for students with disabilities. This is not true of the non-CREATE districts.

Table 4. Average Dropout Rates for Students With (SWD) and Without Disabilities (non-SWD), by District Type

| District Type | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Non-CREATE Districts (SWD) | 0.3% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.8% | 0.7% |
| Non-CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 0.3% | 0.4% | 0.8% | 0.4% | 0.5% | 0.4% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (SWD) | 1.6% | 1.9% | 3.7% | 2.1% | 3.2% | 2.3% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (non-SWD) | 3.6% | 2.1% | 4.9% | 3.7% | 3.5% | 3.1% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (SWD) | 0.8% | 0.8% | 0.8% | 0.6% | 0.9% | 1.0% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 1.5% | 0.7% | 1.8% | 1.2% | 1.1% | 1.3% |

Graduation Rates

The average graduation rate for students with disabilities in districts with at least some CREATE involvement was somewhat lower than graduation rates in other districts, as shown in Figure 6. The 2005 graduation rate for districts participating in some CREATE components shows a sharp decline, and it is not clear whether this is a problem with the publicly available data on graduation rates in 2005 or whether the graduation rate actually dipped 30 percentage points for these schools.

Figure 6. Average Graduation Rates for Students With Disabilities

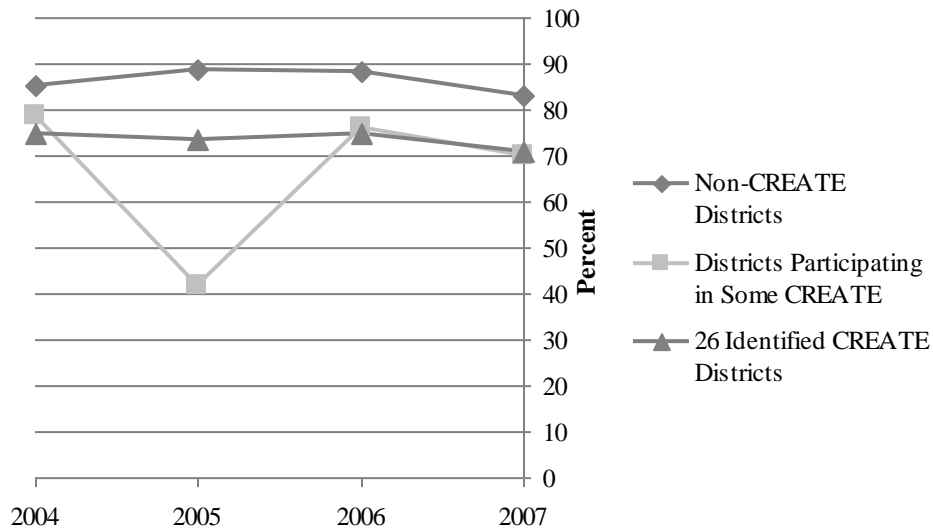


Table 5 compares the graduation rates for students with and without disabilities in the three district types. For non-CREATE districts and the 26 identified CREATE districts, the graduation rate for students with disabilities is lower than that for students without disabilities. For the districts with some CREATE participation, however, students with disabilities actually had higher graduation rates than students without disabilities in 2004 and 2006, and a similar graduation rate in 2007.

Table 5. Average Graduation Rates for Students With (SWD) and Without Disabilities (non-SWD) by District Type

| District Type | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Non-CREATE Districts (SWD) | 85.1% | 88.7% | 88.2% | 83.0% |
| Non-CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 93.9% | 95.0% | 95.2% | 94.9% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (SWD) | 78.7% | 41.8% | 76.1% | 70.2% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (non-SWD) | 56.7% | 62.9% | 67.0% | 71.7% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (SWD) | 75.0% | 73.4% | 75.0% | 70.8% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 86.4% | 82.6% | 80.9% | 81.9% |

Expulsion Rates

Figure 7 shows the average expulsion rate for students with disabilities in the three district types. In general, the expulsion rate is quite low (less than 0.3 percent of students). The low number of expulsions, coupled with the low number of students used in the averages, results in a baseline trend that looks more volatile than it is; the actual difference from one year to the next may be due to one or two students at the school level.

Figure 7. Average Expulsion Rate for Students With Disabilities

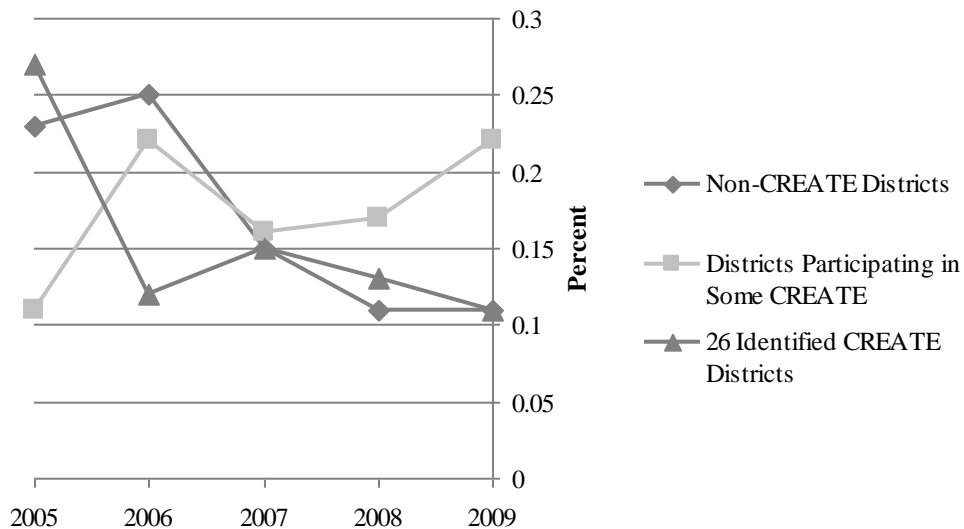


Table 6 compares the expulsion rates for students with and without disabilities in the three district types. The data indicate that the expulsion rate for students with disabilities in non-CREATE districts is higher than for students without disabilities. For districts with some participation in CREATE, the opposite is true. In the 26 identified districts, the expulsion rate appears to be similar between the two groups, with the exception of 2005, when the expulsion rate was a bit higher for students with disabilities.

Table 6. Average Expulsion Rates for Students With (SWD) and Without Disabilities (non-SWD) by District Type

| District Type | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Non-CREATE Districts (SWD) | 0.23% | 0.25% | 0.15% | 0.11% | 0.11% |
| Non- CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 0.13% | 0.12% | 0.09% | 0.09% | 0.08% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (SWD) | 0.11% | 0.22% | 0.16% | 0.17% | 0.22% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (non-SWD) | 0.34% | 0.40% | 0.35% | 0.32% | 0.23% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (SWD) | 0.27% | 0.12% | 0.15% | 0.13% | 0.11% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 0.19% | 0.15% | 0.16% | 0.14% | 0.12% |

Suspension Rates

Students with disabilities were suspended more often, on average, in districts that participated in CREATE (see Figure 8). In the districts that were not required to participate in CREATE but did participate in at least one component, baseline suspension rates ranged from 22 to 31 percent. Non-CREATE districts had the lowest suspension rates for students with disabilities.

Figure 8. Average Suspension Rate for Students With Disabilities

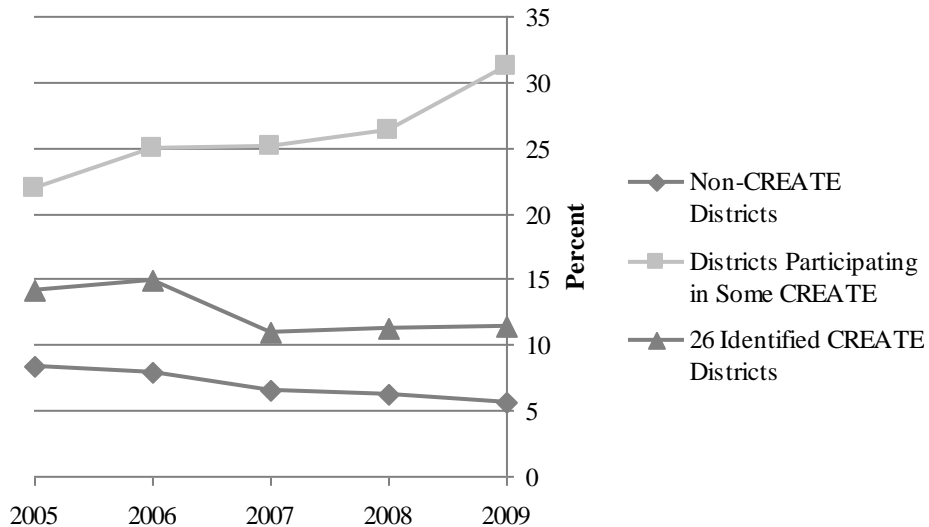


Table 7 shows the average suspension rates for students with and without disabilities for each of the three district types. Across all three district types, students with disabilities were suspended at a higher rate than students without disabilities.

Table 7. Average Suspension Rate for Students With (SWD) and Without Disabilities (non-SWD) by District Type

| District Type | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Non-CREATE Districts (SWD) | 8.3% | 7.9% | 6.5% | 6.2% | 5.7% |
| Non-CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 2.7% | 2.5% | 2.0% | 1.9% | 1.8% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (SWD) | 21.9% | 25.0% | 25.1% | 26.4% | 31.2% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (non-SWD) | 14.6% | 15.8% | 14.8% | 16.5% | 15.3% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (SWD) | 14.2% | 15.0% | 11.0% | 11.2% | 11.5% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 4.8% | 4.9% | 4.3% | 4.0% | 4.3% |

Wisconsin Alternate Assessment for Students With Disabilities (WAA-SwD)

The WAA-SwD is the assessment that is made available to the small number of students who are unable to participate in the WKCE assessment, even with accommodations. Figure 9 shows the average percentage of students with disabilities in each of the three district types who took the WAA-SwD from 2006 to 2009. The plot indicates that a higher percentage of students took the WAA-SwD in both the 26 identified CREATE districts and the districts with some CREATE participation.

Figure 9. Average Percentage of Students With Disabilities Taking the WAA-SwD

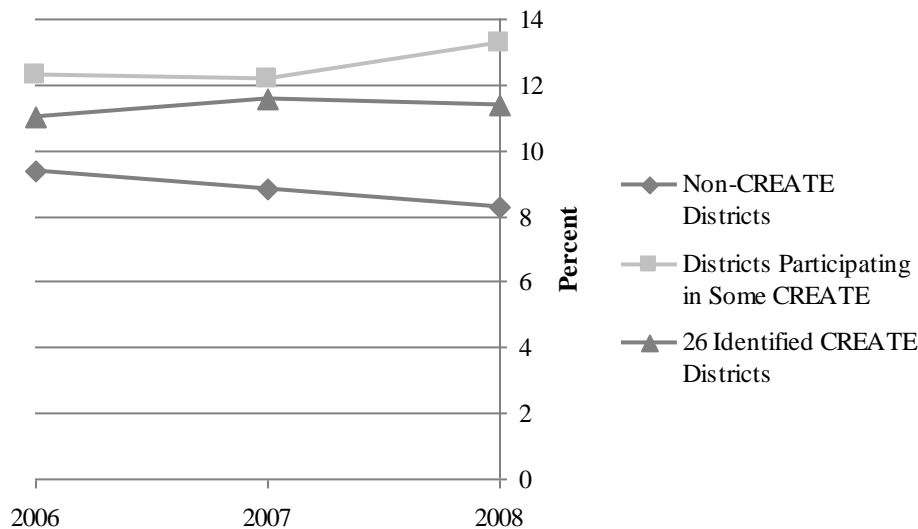


Figure 10 shows the average percentage of students who achieved a level of proficient or higher on the WAA-SwD in reading. The proficiency rate was relatively inconsistent from year to year, which is likely due to the small number of students in each grade and school who took the WAA-SwD. For schools in districts with some CREATE participation, the proficiency rate grew dramatically across the three years prior to CREATE implementation. Proficiency was somewhat steadier for the other two district groups.

Figure 10. WAA-SwD Reading: Average Percentage Proficient

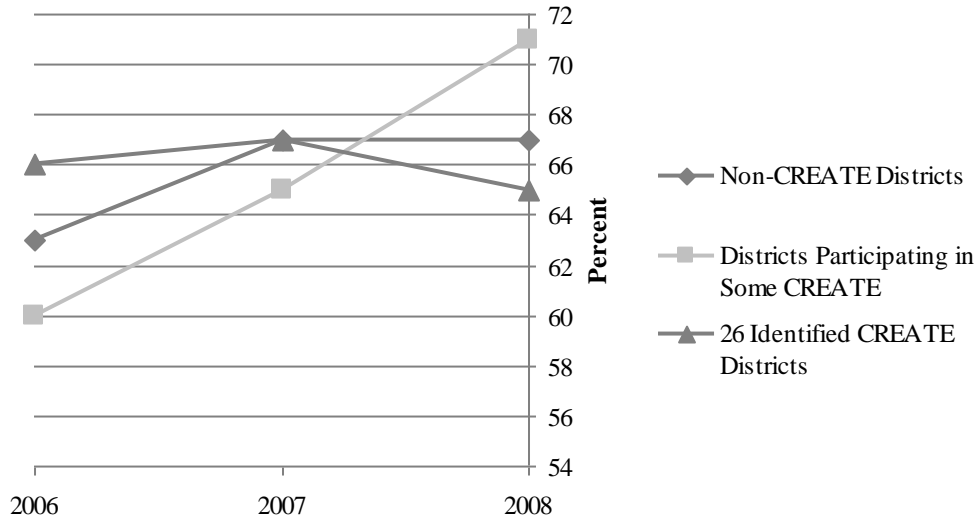
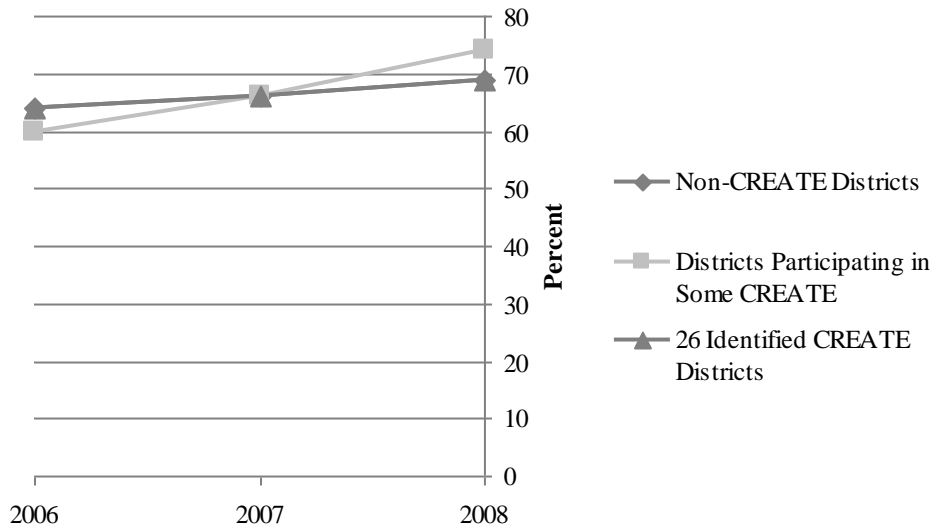


Figure 11 shows the average percentage of students who achieved a level of proficient or higher on the WAA-SwD in mathematics. Proficiency rates and gains were similar among the three district types.

Figure 11. WAA-SwD Mathematics: Average Percentage Proficient



Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE)

This baseline trend analysis also looked at the performance of students with disabilities on the WKCE reading and mathematics assessments. Figure 12 shows the average percentage of students with disabilities who achieved a level of proficient or higher on the WKCE reading

assessment for the three district types. The 26 identified CREATE districts had slightly lower proficiency rates than the non-CREATE districts. Students with disabilities in districts with at least some CREATE participation, however, had considerably lower achievement than students in the other districts.

Figure 12. WKCE Reading: Average Percentage Proficient for Students With Disabilities

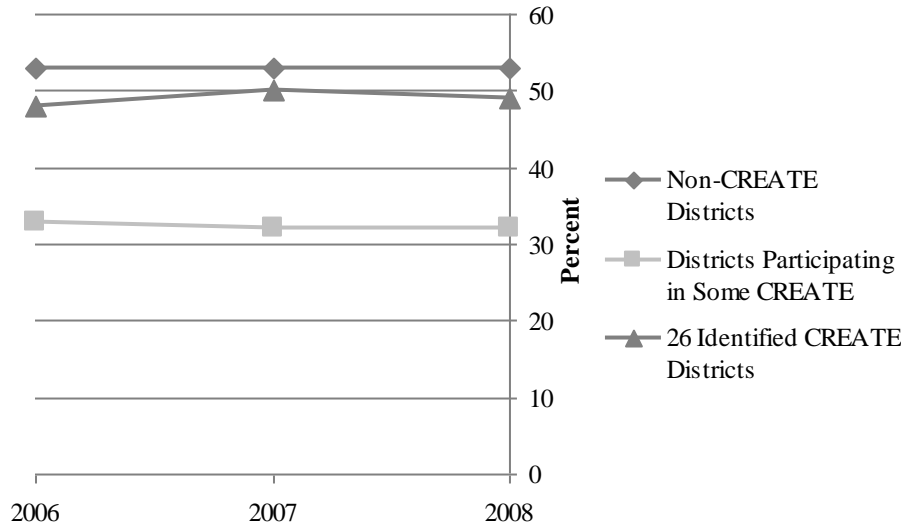


Table 8 compares the reading proficiency rates for students with and without disabilities in the three district types. In all three district types, there was a striking difference in the proficiency rates, with much lower proficiency rates among students with disabilities.

Table 8. WKCE Reading: Average Percentage Proficient for Students With (SWD) and Without Disabilities (non-SWD) by District Type

| District Type | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| Non-CREATE Districts (SWD) | 53.0% | 53.0% | 53.0% |
| Non-CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 92.0% | 92.0% | 92.0% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (SWD) | 33.0% | 32.0% | 32.0% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (non-SWD) | 76.0% | 76.0% | 76.0% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (SWD) | 48.0% | 50.0% | 49.0% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 87.0% | 87.0% | 87.0% |

Figure 13 shows the average percentage of students with disabilities who achieved a level of proficient or higher on the WKCE mathematics assessment. As with the reading assessment, the 26 identified CREATE districts exhibited achievement levels that were similar to non-CREATE districts (although slightly lower). Again, the districts with some CREATE participation showed significantly lower mathematics achievement among students with disabilities.

Figure 13. WKCE Mathematics: Average Percentage Proficient for Students With Disabilities

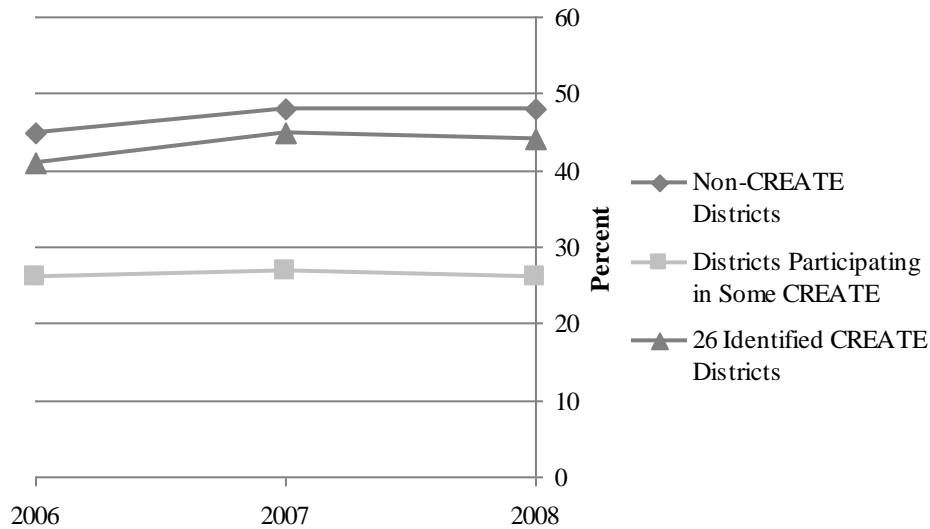


Table 9 compares the mathematics proficiency rates for students with and without disabilities in the three district types. As in the results for reading, students with disabilities achieved considerably lower proficiency rates on the WKCE mathematics assessment than students without disabilities.

Table 9. WKCE Mathematics: Average Percent Proficient for Students With (SWD) and Without Disabilities (non-SWD) by District Type

| District Type | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| Non-CREATE Districts (SWD) | 45.0% | 48.0% | 48.0% |
| Non-CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 85.0% | 86.0% | 86.0% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (SWD) | 26.0% | 27.0% | 26.0% |
| Districts Participating in Some CREATE (non-SWD) | 56.0% | 60.0% | 61.0% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (SWD) | 41.0% | 45.0% | 44.0% |
| 26 Identified CREATE Districts (non-SWD) | 78.0% | 81.0% | 80.0% |

Conclusions

Baseline trends for both demographic and student outcome data were examined for the districts and schools participating in CREATE. These trends were compared for districts required to participate in CREATE, districts participating in at least one CREATE component (but not required to do so), and nonparticipating districts. These trends do not reveal the potential impact of the CREATE initiative, but rather the stability, magnitude, and direction of the data prior to program implementation. The analyses indicated the following high-level trends:

- Districts participating in CREATE had higher average student enrollment per school, were more diverse, and had a greater percentage of students with limited English proficiency. The percentage of students with disabilities was similar for CREATE and non-CREATE districts.
- CREATE districts had a somewhat higher dropout rate than non-CREATE districts. Students with disabilities in the CREATE districts, however, dropped out at a lower rate than students without disabilities.
- CREATE districts had lower graduation rates and higher suspension rates among students with disabilities than non-CREATE districts. Expulsion rates were similar across the three district types.
- Academic achievement, measured on both the WAA-SwD and WKCE in reading and mathematics, was generally higher for students in non-CREATE districts than for students in CREATE districts. For schools in districts with some CREATE participation, the proficiency rate for students with disabilities was significantly lower on the WKCE in both reading and mathematics than for other districts. In these same districts, however, the proficiency rate in reading for student who took the WAA-SwD grew dramatically across the three years prior to CREATE implementation. In CREATE districts, a higher percentage of students with disabilities took the WAA-SwD in place of the WKCE.

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 state 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. Although participant feedback has been generally positive, participants offered several suggestions for improving the professional development, training, and services provided to districts by CREATE.

The recommendations presented here are based on a review of the findings from interviews conducted with schools and district staff in the four districts in which site visits were conducted, 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. Develop and disseminate a framework that illustrates how the CREATE components fit together. In most of the case study districts, interview respondents said they did not understand the overall framework of CREATE. Key district participants have expressed confusion over the big picture of CREATE. One principal said that the confusion expressed by stakeholders has been “mild to moderate to severe.” More than one CREATE team member said that no overarching schema has been presented to the district, and, for that reason, much activity on CREATE components takes place without a sense of where it is all going. Team members, particularly district administrators, said not having a CREATE framework makes it difficult to communicate to their CREATE teams, and difficult to coordinate district efforts. The framework should include the purpose of CREATE, a description of each component, and a defined purpose for each of the components. It would also be helpful to create a logic model that shows the relationships among the components and the ways they help build capacity at different levels—state, community, district, school, and classroom—to improve student learning opportunities and outcomes.

Recommendation 2. Provide support aimed at building district capacity, and differentiate that support to meet district needs. Respondents in several of the case study districts said that the CREATE components are not addressing their districts’ current capacity (or lack of capacity) to implement recommended changes in policies and practices. This unmet need has caused frustration in the districts in the early phases of implementation. A number of interview respondents indicated that different types of support might be offered to district and building administrators, whose role in CREATE differs, and that direct technical assistance to districts—differentiated to meet the needs of individual districts—should be offered.

District respondents mentioned two areas in which they need support: data management and strategic planning. Although districts have data, two districts said they do not have an adequate data management system; data is collected, but unorganized and difficult to access. As a district team member said, the district has “many sources of data, but nobody knows where it is and nobody knows how to use it. There is no easy way to get to it.” Strategic planning is another area

where districts may need support. In one of the case study districts, a CREATE team member said the district has set its goals but does not yet have a systematic plan for achieving those goals. CREATE activities within the district are disorganized and unconnected with one another.

Recommendation 3. Ensure the quality and relevance of the CREATE components.

Concerns about the quality and relevance of CREATE activities varied across components. Overall, the components were favorably assessed, but there were distinct exceptions. Several participants in the Consortium on Racial Equity in PK–12 Education said that early workshops were not well organized and that the objectives of the sessions were not made clear to participants. Content was repeated from one session to another, and the reflection and implementation discussions alternated in a way that was confusing for some of the participants. Results of the evaluation surveys indicate that the organization of consortium workshops improved in Year 2 and that goals were more clearly communicated.

The Professional Development Academies received very mixed reviews. In one district, team members said the objectives of the academy were so unclear that they were not certain they had even attended the academies. Several participants who completed evaluation surveys said that the workshops lacked relevance to their district needs and were not well organized. The decision to offer several professional development options to districts should help to make the academies more relevant to districts needs. Districts will be able to choose the workshops that are best aligned with district needs.

Recommendation 4. Improve the coordination and planning of AISAN events and communicate more frequently with participants.

A major complaint about AISAN was lack of continuity. The time between meetings and events was sometimes long, and communication with participants was minimal. Participants were unaware of upcoming events and were not informed about what other districts were doing. More advanced planning of events also is needed. Some participants also requested that AISAN participants be more involved in planning conference and workshops.

Recommendation 5. Develop a new schedule for the Classroom Practices component.

Although the component was assessed favorably, teachers and principals in two districts said the scheduling required them to be out of the building for eight days—too many days for most workshop participants. Suggestions were to either shorten the component, offer it when school is not in session, or both.

Recommendation 6. Consider offering regional workshops and opportunities for districts from the same region to meet together at larger conferences.

Several respondents asked that regional workshops be offered to allow districts from the same region to work together and to reduce the time involved in traveling to state workshops and conferences. A participant in AISAN, for example, suggested that two or three regional workshops and one state conference be offered during the year. Several respondents also suggested that districts from the same region or with similar student populations be given opportunities to work together at larger events.

Recommendation 7. Consider creating a Native American track at the CREATE conference.

Several participants in the 2010 CREATE conference requested that more sessions

be offered that focus on Native American issues and that more Native Americans serve as conference presenters. Creating a block of sessions at the CREATE conference that focus on Native American issues would also encourage greater participation in the conference by Native Americans.

Recommendation 8. Explore ways to coordinate the CREATE initiative with other state initiatives, particularly the Wisconsin RtI initiative. The Wisconsin RtI Center was established last year and plans to offer professional development and technical assistance to districts throughout the state on academic and behavioral RtI and culturally responsive practices. Technical assistance services will be provided primarily through the CESAs. Several CREATE participants said that they would like to have trainers or coaches come to their districts to help them implement district improvement plans. The RtI Center and its CESA affiliates might be able to provide such training and technical assistance and help districts develop the structures and processes needed to advance district improvement efforts. The RtI Center—and the Wisconsin PBIS Network, which is part of the RtI Center—is cosponsoring two of the 2010–11 Professional Development Academies. The goals of CREATE and the RtI Center are similar, and coordinating the two initiatives would strengthen support to districts.

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