Annual Evaluation of the Region II Equity Assistance Center: 2005-2006
Annual Evaluation of the Region II Equity Assistance Center: 2005-2006

Robert Tobias, Director
Tarika Barrett, Research Assistant
Janna Robin, Research Assistant

CRTL External Evaluation Report Series
EE-1206-01

December 2006

Center for Research on Teaching and Learning
Department of Teaching and Learning
The Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development
New York University

© Copyright 2006 by the Center for Research on Teaching and Learning
Executive Summary

The Center for Research on Teaching and Learning of New York University’s Steinhardt School of Education is conducting a third-party evaluation of the Region II EAC project. The evaluation spans the three-year duration of the project and documents progress toward attaining the project’s goals and objectives. The first year of the evaluation focused on providing formative feedback designed to inform mid-course adjustments in project activities.

Description of the Region II EAC

The New York University Equity Assistance Center (EAC) for Region II (New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, and USVI) is designed to address school and school district issues that are occasioned by race, gender, national origin and poverty by working with the U.S. Department of Education and other Technical Assistance providers through quality technical assistance to school districts school boards, states and other governmental agencies in Region II. The Equity Assistance Center at New York University has been committed to placing a greater emphasis on (1) alignment of its technical assistance with the USDOE’s strategic goals and objectives, (2) supporting New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the USVI in fulfilling their state and federally approved plans for equity, and (3) developing long-term technical assistance plans with school districts.

Project Objectives

In the first year, the evaluation assessed the Region II EAC’s progress toward attaining the following four project objectives:

1. The Region II EAC will help state education departments, school districts, and schools to link federal education funding to accountability for results.

2. The Region II EAC will encourage districts and schools to use scientifically-based methods for federal education programs.

3. The Region II EAC will provide professional development opportunities to the entire region in an effort to improve teacher and principal quality.

4. The Region II EAC will work with school districts to eliminate ability grouping or tracking that isolates students based upon race, sex, or national origin.

Evaluation Methods

In order to review and assess the implementation and quality of the proposed activities during the first year, evaluators reviewed staff logs, workshop
agendas, attendance sheets, and workshop evaluation forms; and inspected products and materials used in Technical Assistance sessions.

Findings and Conclusions

The evaluation found that, during the 2005-06 project year, the Region II EAC fully met two of its project objectives and made substantial progress in two others. Given the project’s broad scope of proposed activities and performance measures, this is an impressive record of accomplishment for the project’s first year. A detailed analysis of the project’s performance measures showed that the Region II EAC worked with a diverse set of customers on a variety of initiatives designed to help them develop, implement or improve their equity policies and practices. The activities included assisting customers with the development of products and the implementation of processes designed to address their individual needs and contexts. The following is a summary of findings with respect to the extent to which EAC attained its proposed objectives for the 2005-06 project year:

- The Region II EAC was successful in its goal to help state education departments, school districts, and schools to link federal education funding to accountability for results. Specifically, the Region 2 EAC helped 14 customers (higher than the proposed target of 11) at the state, district, and school level to implement, or improve their policies and practices ensuring that students of different race, sex, and national origin have equitable opportunity for high-quality instruction. While EAC has not yet created and disseminated an ELL best practices publication, it has identified and done research at the school, Port Chester’s Edison Elementary School, whose exemplary practice will inform the publication.

- The Region II EAC made substantial progress toward its goal of encouraging districts and schools to use scientifically-based methods for federal education programs. The website presented useful information on proven methods for assisting districts and schools to increase equity and the popularity of the website was demonstrated by a three-fold increase in website hits. EAC documented eight follow-up requests for information, approaching but not reaching the proposed target of 10.

- The project met its goal of providing professional development opportunities to Region II in an effort to improve teacher and principal quality. One hundred ten participants (10 more than proposed) attended the annual professional development symposium on English language learners. In addition, 225 educators attended the first day of a two-day conference on disproportionality held on July 17 - 18, 2006, and 79 TAC-D regional team members attended a working and planning session on the second day. Participant’s feedback and the observations of the evaluators indicated that these events were perceived as effective in helping districts and schools address issues of equity.

- The project made progress toward its goal of working with school districts to eliminate ability grouping or tracking that isolates students based upon race, sex, or national origin. The project’s efforts in this area were focused on the New York City Department of Education’s Region III, and consisted of a June, 2006
training session on issues of disproportionality in the region, which was attended by 31 participants, and the development of a technical assistance plan for summer 2006 that is directed at building district-specific knowledge and capacity to address issues of disproportionality. Region III staff also attended the July conference on disproportionality.

The evaluation report offers a number of specific recommendations aimed at extending the project’s first-year successes, many of which focus on the enhanced collection and use of outcome data for project planning and reflection.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Objective 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Objective 2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Objective 3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Objective 4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures and Tables

**TABLE 1.** Targeted Customers and Technical Assistance Provided

**TABLE 2.** Evaluation Results from the EAC-sponsored Teaneck Community Charter School “Stop the Gap” training workshop for parents

**TABLE 3.** Targeted Customers and Scientifically-based Research Assistance Provided

**TABLE 4.** Targeted Customers and Professional Development Assistance Provided

**TABLE 5.** Targeted Customers and Trainings to Facilitate the Development of Equity Strategies
INTRODUCTION

The New York University Equity Assistance Center (EAC) for Region II (New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, and USVI) is designed to address school and school district issues that are occasioned by race, gender, national origin and poverty by working with the U.S. Department of Education and other Technical Assistance providers through quality technical assistance to school districts school boards, states and other governmental agencies. The Equity Assistance Center at New York University has been committed to placing a greater emphasis on (1) alignment of its technical assistance with the USDOE’s strategic goals and objectives, (2) supporting New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the USVI in fulfilling their state and federally approved plans for equity, and (3) developing long-term technical assistance plans with school districts.

The Center for Research on Teaching and Learning (CRTL) of New York University’s Steinhardt School of Education is conducting a third-party evaluation of the EAC project. The evaluation spans the three-year duration of the project and documents progress toward attaining the project’s goals and objectives. The first year of the evaluation focused on providing formative feedback designed to inform mid-course adjustments in project activities.

This evaluation report presents the findings from CRTL’s assessment of the Region II EAC’s first year of work on the three-year project, and describes EAC’s progress toward attaining its goals and objectives. The report contains a detailed explanation of Region II EAC’s progress as it relates to specific performance measures within larger project objectives. It also offers information about the evaluation methods used by the evaluation team, as well as recommendations for Region II EAC’s continued work. The findings from this evaluation were included incorporated in the Annual Performance Report for the project’s first year. For consistency, this report largely follows the organization of the annual report.

Following the statement of the project objectives, the report is organized into sections based on the objectives articulated by the Region II EAC. For each objective, there is an accompanying list of performance measures that we outline and evaluate. Within each section, we describe the specific evaluation methods used to gather data on the performance measures, assess the findings concerning progress toward the attainment of the specific performance measures, and offer recommendations aimed at enhancing program effectiveness. The last section presents a summary and conclusions for the first year evaluation.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES
In the first year, the evaluation assessed the Region II EAC’s progress toward attaining the following four project objectives:

1. The Region II EAC will help state education departments, school districts, and schools to link federal education funding to accountability for results.

2. The Region II EAC will encourage districts and schools to use scientifically-based methods for federal education programs.

3. The Region II EAC will provide professional development opportunities to the entire region in an effort to improve teacher and principal quality.

4. The Region II EAC will work with school districts to eliminate ability grouping or tracking that isolates students based upon race, sex, or national origin.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE 1. LINKING FEDERAL EDUCATION FUNDING TO ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS

Description of Objective

During the 2005-06 project year, the Region II EAC worked with a diverse set of customers on a variety of initiatives designed to help them develop, implement or improve their equity policies and practices. The activities included assisting customers with the development of products and the implementation of processes designed to address their individual needs and contexts. The targeted customers and specific types of technical assistance EAC proposed to provide these customers are documented in Table 1.

Evaluation Methods

In order to review and assess the implementation and quality of the proposed activities during the first year, evaluators reviewed staff logs, workshop agendas and attendance sheets, and inspected products and materials used in Technical Assistance sessions. In quantitatively analyzing the extent to which the project met performance measure 1a (GPRA), data for the customers in the above table were aggregated. (See Region II TAC Annual Performance Report for 2005 – 2006, filed with USDOE in July 2006.)
### Table 1
Targeted Customers and Types of Activities for Project Objective 1 Performance Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Targeted Customer</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a.1</td>
<td>NYSED &amp; 7 State Regional Technical Assistance Providers (RTAPs)</td>
<td>Develop Equity School Improvement Tool and assist NYSED in training RTAPs to implement</td>
<td>To help school districts to effectively address equity issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a.2</td>
<td>At least two school districts</td>
<td>Assist in the development and implementation of an NCLB policy statement</td>
<td>To help parents understand issues of equity and their impact on their children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a.3</td>
<td>At least two school districts</td>
<td>Assist districts in conducting an equity gap analysis</td>
<td>To help districts assess and address issues of equity in their schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b.1</td>
<td>Region II</td>
<td>To conduct research for a written and online publication on best practices for educating English Language Learners (ELLs)</td>
<td>To help districts improve educational programs for ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b.2</td>
<td>A regional network of educational agencies</td>
<td>To develop and supply information on the issues concerning students with interrupted formal education.</td>
<td>To help broaden and unify the practices and resources of equity in education agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b.3</td>
<td>Region II</td>
<td>To write and research a publication documenting and furthering the network’s reach.</td>
<td>To make available and disseminate information about equity work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings**
1a. 1 Development and Implementation of the Equity Assistance Tool

The Region II EAC director was a member of Equity Alliance, a subcommittee of the New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) Professional Development Initiative (PDI). Originally called the Diversity Work Group, the group aimed to define the parameters of how the Regional Technical Assistance Providers (RTAPs) for the Office of School Improvement (OSI) and Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) need to think about the issues of equity.

According to EAC Region II director,\(^1\) in January of 2004 all of the RTAPs came together and, as a community, asked that forthcoming TA professional development workshops incorporate attention to race, culture, and diversity. As an active member of this subcommittee, the Region II EAC Director participated in conference calls and meetings,\(^2\) and both facilitated and attended conferences and workshops sponsored by the Equity Alliance.\(^3\) Two workshops he helped plan included “Stereotype Threat” and “Culturally Responsive Parent Engagement.” In 2006, when the committee paired with People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, the director also participated in a three-day “Undoing Racism Workshop” for Equity subcommittee members. In June of this year, he acted as host in New York City when a two-day workshop: “Undoing Racism: Anti-Racism Leadership Training for Educators” was offered at different locations throughout the region.

The Equity tool,\(^4\) in rubric form, continually emerged as the committee engaged in all of these professional development initiatives. According to meeting minutes, the Equity Alliance felt that providing workshops was insufficient for achieving its goal of integrating equity into all levels of the regional network’s policy and practice. The rubric was developed as a protocol for region-wide use, and became part of presentations the committee made or workshops it sponsored or delivered.\(^5\) The still-developing rubric is called “Equity and Diversity Rubric—Organizational Level,” and cites the SED Equity and Diversity Sub-committee and Learner-Centered Initiatives and the Center for the Study of Expertise in Teaching and Learning as development partners\(^6\).

There is clear evidence that the proposed equity tool was indeed developed and that it is aligned with significant dimensions of an effective equity policy. While the evaluators are not able to discern specific beginning and end points of the creation of the equity tool or its implementation, it does appear that through the involvement of the Region II director, EAC was a significant participant. Due to the evolving nature of the

---

\(^1\) Meeting held between evaluators and EAC staff on July 7, 2006

\(^2\) See Appendices for sample sign in form

\(^3\) See Appendices for “Chronology of Technical Assistance” which documents activities of the NYSED PD Initiative

\(^4\) See Appendices for rubric and information on the process of Integrating Equity into Ongoing Regional Network Practice

\(^5\) See Appendices for listing of workshops

\(^6\) See footnote 3.
equity tool and its multiple creators, EAC’s files did not yet include evidence of its implementation.

1a.2 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Policy Statement

EAC sees its role and responsibility concerning parent involvement as highly contextual and guided by the notion of support. Rather than establish blanket policy statements, the team chose to learn as much as possible about the needs of parents in specific districts, and respond accordingly. In the July 7, 2006 interview, the EAC director and a project associate shared their consideration of 2004-2005 as the year of “data collection” (including an EAC-led parent focus group and a parent survey distributed by Teaneck Community Charter School). Building on this information, 2005-2006 was the year of “implementation.” The evaluators considered information solicited in 2005 from parents via a focus group and a questionnaire relevant to the NCLB objective. While the following information specifically relates to the Achievement Gap objective, it also speaks to how EAC addressed the NCLB objective: to help parents understand the issues embedded in their child’s school, and to be empowered with choice.

On November 1, 2005, EAC sponsored a training workshop for parents of students at Teaneck Community Charter School (TCCS) called “Stop the Gap.” Eighteen parent participants and a school trustee were in attendance. The EAC Region II Director facilitated this meeting and gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled “Closing the Achievement Gap I: Building Home-School Partnership.” The slides included national testing scores, information on scores according to race and ethnicity, and information about disproportionality.

The presentation also asked the question “What is the cause of the gap?” and examined the importance of both in-school and out-of-school factors that may contribute to the achievement gap. The evaluators focused on the out-of-school factors because they directly address parent involvement: socio-economic class, lack of community capital, lack of early childhood education, lack of parental involvement, health disparities, institutionalized race and class-based policies, and child-rearing practices. The next slide presented “gap closing strategies,” including out-of-school-time instruction, teacher expectations, home-school partnership, continuous improvement teams, culturally responsive pedagogy, and access-granting practices. The last part of the PowerPoint presentation was geared toward Parent Involvement. Specifically, the focus was on parenting changes that occur as children get older, benefits and challenges of parent involvement, and different types of involvement.

At the conclusion of the meeting, parents completed an evaluation, and received handouts about parenting changes across the developmental continuum, reading with one’s child, and increasing excitement about math. Fifteen of the eighteen participants returned surveys. The results, as summarized in Table 2, indicate that in three out of the

---

7 See Appendices for sign-in sheet and sample evaluation.
four areas surveyed, between 96% and 100% of the participants rated the activities either “Very” or “Somewhat” helpful.

Table 2
Summary of Parent Ratings of Teaneck Community Charter School Parent Workshop, Stop the Gap
November 1, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Percent of participants who responded</th>
<th>Number (of 15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Gap research</td>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat helpful</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not helpful at all</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations of Achievement Gap</td>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat helpful</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not helpful at all</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Home-School Partnership&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat helpful</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all helpful</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of Home-School Partnership&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat helpful</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all helpful</td>
<td>06%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Project-developed workshop rating form.

EAC’s commitment to parent awareness and information dissemination has laid important groundwork for productive and meaningful work. In the first year of the project, significant progress was made towards meeting the ultimate objective of developing NCLB policy statements.

1a.3 Assist districts in conducting equity gap analysis

Review of the evidence indicates that EAC’s approach to equity gap reduction was situated in the context of each district’s specific needs. This determination is based on review of the following EAC documents: multiple data sources from work with Teaneck Community Charter School District; start-up files for work with Scarsdale Public Schools, Ithaca City School district, presentation materials from Louis D. Brandeis High School and Rockland County BOCES, and agendas and materials for a professional development day for Hudson City School District.

EAC has done its most extensive equity gap analysis to date with Teaneck Community Charter School (TCCS). Identification of the gap began during the 2004-

---

<sup>8</sup> One participant indicated he or she had not attended activities to evaluate this
<sup>9</sup> One participant indicated he or she had not attended activities to evaluate this, three left it blank
2005 school year and included professional development initiatives such as “Equity by Design” about lesson planning with equity in mind and collecting and sharing school-specific information. EAC also presented a PowerPoint called “Closing the Achievement Gap I: Beginning the Conversation.”

All of this data collection culminated in a TCCS Baseline Data Report, issued January of 2006. It contains information about TCCS students’ ELA and Math scores according to gender, race, and both gender and race. It also tracks whether there are differences in test scores over time in the New Jersey State Assessment NJASK 4. The third topic the report addresses is the factors that are predictive of performance on these standardized tests. Finally, the report responds to the question whether there are demographic factors that are associated with students who leave the school before graduation. The Baseline Data Report also provides preliminary analysis of test information to identify areas that may contribute to the achievement gap, and suggest the need for further investigation. EAC also completed a Baseline Analysis of Teacher-Reported Activities and Groupings for 1 Lesson.

According to a copy of the service request evaluators reviewed, Scarsdale Public Schools contacted EAC in April 2006 after the district formed the Scarsdale Equity and Access Committee (SEAC). EAC facilitated monthly meetings during the remainder of the school year, and the Technical Assistance (TA) Plan it developed indicates that the work will start up again in September 2006. According to the TA plan, the committee work is based on the expressed need of community parents to address issues surrounding black students. These issues include parent expectations, discipline, and achievement research and practice. According to a Training Design Document developed by EAC, the TA was to take place during seven two-hour sessions and would include: identifying and analyzing the problem; identifying and prioritizing root causes, selecting solutions, developing a work plan to address root causes, implementing strategies, and then assessing the impact of those strategies. The evaluator was able to review four agendas, one of which appeared to be written by EAC. Agenda items addressed TA plans, and also reviewed literature.

SEAC also developed its own evaluation form as a way to help inform EAC’s work, but the evaluator did not find any completed forms to read. However, the evaluators did also review a data collection chart developed by EAC that included observations and insights about black students on the district, school, classroom, and individual level. It is clear that EAC is helping Scarsdale build awareness of equity gap issues as they pertain to black students, and that their efforts are deeply rooted in the specific context of the school district. It is in a good position to guide SEAC to uncover and address important issues in its schools.

Ithaca is a new client, and in June, EAC staff met with three different groups from the district: two groups of 15 different community members and then a group of administrators. Each group was asked the same three questions, and EAC compiled all the answers: First, to “describe the strengths and weaknesses of the Ithaca City School District”; second, “what factors in the schools contribute to equity? Inequity”; and third,
“What role would you like to play in helping the district to implement the Equity Strategic Plan?” Such direct questions at the first meeting are a strong indication of EAC’s focus on identifying, analyzing, and addressing the equity gap.

Further examination of the files show that a week after this meeting, EAC had prepared a TA plan. Though this TA plan is not yet adopted by Ithaca, it demonstrates that there is a model by which EAC plans to act.

The Brandeis files to which the evaluators had access contain two illustrations of attention to the equity gap. First, a power point presentation called “Closing the Achievement Gap: Beginning the Conversation,” which presents national and state data on the achievement gap, as well as Brandeis-specific information EAC gathered from the NYCBOE 2003-2004 Annual School Reports. Second, documents from an ACCESS training workshop at which nine staff members were taught how to build a student database to track student success in out of school activities. This workshop demonstrates EAC helping an institution build its own capacity to identify and track issues relating to the achievement gap. It should be noted that since Brandeis is a school, it does not count toward the proposed target for districts.

Printouts of an email correspondence between EAC Project Region II director and a Rockland BOCES staff identified the purpose of the initial meeting to “really focus on the achievement gap and how administrators can become more culturally competent to the needs of minority kids.” In response, the EAC PowerPoint presentation delivered on April 25, 2006, was called “Understanding Achievement of Racial/ethnic minority students.” While this presentation did not have district-specific information, it presented on the achievement gap, the access gap, disproportionality, National and New York State trends, the implications of these gaps and trends, characteristics of Immigrants and English Language Learners, school organizational and instructional factors, insights into the policy realm, and statements of beliefs about equity. This comprehensive overview/introduction created an informed lens through which to proceed.

In May 2006, EAC sponsored Hudson City School District’s Superintendents’ Conference Day. The evaluators had access to EAC files of this day. Included was a workshop entitled “Multicultural Perspectives: Creating Spaces for Diversity in Our Classrooms.” This workshop explored ways to enhance teaching and learning by capitalizing on the multiple perspectives teachers and students bring the classroom. The implication of this is that incorporating the experience of students and families into classroom learning can positively impact academic, social, and emotional achievement. Another workshop addressing issues related to the equity gap was targeted at disseminating information about English Language Learners. PowerPoint slides included specific strategies teachers can incorporate immediately, and on a day-to-day basis. The keynote speaker for the day was the Region II Director, who gave a talk listed as “Addressing Disproportionality.”

---

10 Citation from EAC files “Ithaca Meetings 6/13”
The evaluator is able to conclude that EAC met and surpassed its stated goal of assisting at least two school districts with their equity gap analyses. The attention to context will no doubt be an important factor in the success of these partnerships. Recommendations will surround the area of assessment and follow-up measures.

1b. 1 Best Practices ELL publication

While EAC has not yet created and disseminated an ELL best practices publication, it has identified and done research at Port Chester’s Edison Elementary School, whose exemplary practice will inform the publication. The agenda for a Professional Development Half Day with NYU research staff and the Manhattanville liaison at the school indicates that staff at has been aware of EAC’s research goals and timeline since March, 2006.

Evaluators were able to examine notes from a May 2006 training activity. The title was “Theory of Change: Defining Outcomes and Domains,” and according to an EAC log, had the objectives of becoming familiar with the Theory of Change (TOC) process, developing TOC outcomes and domains through consensus, and creating small group team leaders for a later phase of work. Additionally, there are several pages of notes around the themes of “What Edison children graduate with in 5th grade, what they leave with?”, and “Goals” and “Resources/Services.” At the end of this packet is a sign up sheet for “Community Domains.”

What is evident from this early work is the depth at which EAC plans to investigate Port Chester, and the multiple perspectives it honors. In addition, its adherence to a TOC model indicates that it will be have a strong research base, and be accessible to a wider audience. EAC proposes a 3-pronged research plan, which includes, in the first stage: additional focus groups with a variety of audiences, interviews, attitudes and beliefs surveys. Stage two will be devoted to documenting the system in progress, with an emphasis on extensive data collection, observation, analysis, and assessment. The third stage will focus on analyzing the outcomes of research in relation to Theory of Change and Process. It seems to the evaluators that EAC is in good position to do the research and writing that will enable a wide community of practitioners to learn from this model school.

---

11 Data evaluators examined included 11 signed Adult consent forms.


Recommendations for Project Objective 1

The evaluation of EAC’s work yielded several recommendations that address its efforts to help state education departments, school districts, and schools in linking federal education funding to accountability for results. The evaluators ask that EAC carefully consider the following recommendations:

- Help NYSED to assess the inter-rater reliability of the equity tool.
- Administer a survey to elicit reactions to the equity tool.
- Consider expanding best practices research beyond a single school.
- Involve students in change processes.
- Develop protocol for follow-up after individual workshops.
- Incorporate context specific information as NCLB policies are written.
- Assist schools in relating their own practices to that of the exemplar to best benefit from the research.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE 2: USE OF SCIENTIFICALLY-BASED METHODS FOR FEDERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Description of Objective

During the 2005-06 project year, the Region II EAC worked with a diverse set of customers on a variety of initiatives designed to help them increase their awareness and use of scientifically-based research in key initiative areas to improve their equity policies and practices. The scientifically-based research being shared with districts and schools included information on English Language Learners (ELLs), bridging the achievement gap, disproportionality, gender equity, and instructional practices for low-performing students. The targeted customers and specific types of research assistance are described Table 3.
Table 3
Targeted Customers and Activities for the Performance Measures of Project Objective 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Targeted Customer</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2a.</td>
<td>Region II</td>
<td>Provide information on scientifically-based practices for districts and schools via the EAC website</td>
<td>To help school districts and schools use research to effectively address equity issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b.</td>
<td>10 School Districts</td>
<td>Assist districts in identifying their need for information on scientifically-based practices, and provide opportunities for these districts to request and obtain follow-up assistance</td>
<td>To help school districts use research to effectively address equity issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation Methods:**

To evaluate performance measures 2a and 2b, the evaluators reviewed project staff logs and inspected products and materials used in the creation of the website in order to document and assess the implementation and quality of the proposed activity.

**Findings**

2a. **Development of the EAC Website**

Through an interview with the Region II EAC Director and a review of project staff logs, the evaluators learned that the official EAC website underwent renovation during November 2005, with the website appearing in its current format in February of 2006.

An evaluation of the website content and its sources supports the assertion that EAC has provided schools and districts in Region II with information on scientifically-based practices. A significant portion of the website is devoted to the provision of resources aimed to equip schools and districts in their efforts to promote equity.

---

12 Evaluators reviewed the list of resources used to develop the website materials and also visited the website during the month of June, 2006.
Under the Resources heading of its website\textsuperscript{13}, EAC distinguishes between Equity Areas and Special Topics. Under the Equity Area heading there are active links to resources on Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and National Origin. Special Topics is divided into Achievement Gap, Disproportionality in Special Education, and Parent Involvement, with the Disproportionality in Special Education topic being an active link for users.

Thoughtful overviews\textsuperscript{14} are provided regarding the larger topics of Gender, Race and Ethnicity, National Origin, and Disproportionality. These overviews offer the reader insight into the contexts that define these important topics and present many resources that reflect much of the relevant research in the field. Some of these resources include explanations of federal mandates that impact the various issues. There is also an extensive list of websites, books, articles and reports that feature the current thinking that defines the work around equity.

For program performance measure 2a, the evaluators were able to establish baseline data pertaining to the number of users who accessed the EAC website\textsuperscript{15} over approximately a five-month period. A counter function on the website documented the number of users to be 424 in total on January 13, 2006, with the number of users increasing to 1,273 as noted by the evaluators upon visiting the site on June 30\textsuperscript{th} of the same year. This increase far surpassed the performance measure target of 10%, with the increase in website hits reaching 300%. This large increase in website hits far beyond the 10% target does suggest the need for further analysis.

The objective attached to performance measure 2a focuses on the desire to have districts and schools access scientifically-based information via EAC’s website. The evaluators confirmed that evidence supported the notion that EAC’s website received a substantial increase in visitors, but there was no way to determine who visited the site, for what purpose, and whether the visitors accessed information that they deemed useful. EAC will need to devise a way to gain additional information about its population of users.

2b. Increased Request for Follow-Up Assistance

For program performance measure 2b, evaluators visited the site and confirmed that requests for service could be made via the website. Further, through an interview with project staff on July 7, 2006, the evaluators ascertained that there were additional means by which districts could make requests for information.

Through this interview with the EAC Program Staff, the evaluators determined that several requests for follow-up assistance were made during the 2005-06 project year. EAC’s work with school districts— Rockland County BOCES (March 31, 2006), Ithaca

\textsuperscript{13} http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/EAC/resource.html
\textsuperscript{14} These overviews are scheduled to be added to the site in the near future
\textsuperscript{15} The website may be accessed by visiting the following address: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/EAC.html
School District (June 6, 2006), Scarsdale School District (February 4, 2006), Orange School District (March 15, 2006), East Ramapo School District (June 21, 2006), Hudson City School District, Phillipsburg School District, and Brandeis High School — all resulted from initial requests for assistance with its work around equity. Requests for follow-up assistance were a natural outgrowth of EAC’s early contact with the school districts and have been documented through our conversations with the Program Director and Staff. The evaluators therefore concluded that EAC received follow-up information requests from 8 customers (7 districts and one school), falling short of the performance measure 2b target of 10.

**Recommendations for Project Objective 2**

The evaluation of EAC’s work leads to several recommendations that address its efforts to encourage districts and schools to use scientifically-based methods within their federal education programs. The evaluators ask that EAC carefully consider the following recommendations:

- EAC staff would profit from a regular review of the counter on their website. Periodic review will allow the staff to gain a better sense of true customer usage and will ensure, through the documentation of increased website hits, that the site is being accessed successfully. This kind of review may also help EAC to understand the large increase in website hits it has received this past project year.
- EAC might consider creating a brief questionnaire/feedback form that would offer a better sense of who visited the website and for what purpose. Currently, EAC has no way of knowing this information unless they web user formally submits a request for additional information.
- Consistent maintenance of the website with care given to active and accessible links is important. In the evaluation of the website and its resources, evaluators noted that some links were not active.
- Information on the topics of the Achievement Gap, Parent Involvement, and NCLB would be valuable additions to the website. There is currently no information on these topics.
PROJECT OBJECTIVE 3: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL QUALITY

Description of Project Objective

During the 2005-06 project year, the Region II EAC worked with a diverse set of customers on several professional development initiatives designed to help them improve teacher and principal quality. The professional conferences the project proposed to offer to districts and schools focused on how to prepare teachers with the knowledge and skills to provide equitable and culturally relevant instruction to English Language Learners (ELLs) and the larger student population. The professional development sessions also focused on larger issues of equity. The targeted customers and specific types of professional development activities proposed for this objective are described in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Targeted Customer</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3a.</td>
<td>At least 100 staff members of school districts in the NYC metropolitan area</td>
<td>Provide an annual professional development symposium on ELL population</td>
<td>To help prepare teachers and principals with the knowledge and skills to provide equitable and culturally relevant instruction for ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b.</td>
<td>At least 100 staff members of school districts in the NYC metropolitan area</td>
<td>Provide an annual professional development conference on equity issues</td>
<td>To help prepare teachers and principals with the knowledge and skills to provide equitable and culturally relevant instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation Methods

The evaluators reviewed project staff logs, workshop agendas, attendance sheets and reflection forms, and inspected products and materials used in professional development sessions in order to document and assess the implementation and quality of the proposed activities.
Findings

3a. **Annual Professional Development Symposium on English Language Learners**

On October 21, 2005, EAC presented “A Symposium on the Needs of Mexican Students in New York City Schools.” The symposium was held at New York University and was co-sponsored by the New York Department of Education, New York University’s Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies and the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center, Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Entérate, Lectorum Publishers, Santillana USA, and Tortilleria Chinantla.

Through an interview with the Region II EAC Director and program staff on July 12, 2006, evaluators determined that approximately 110 people attended the symposium; therefore, the target for measure 3a was exceeded. Evaluation of the symposium agenda, workshop materials and participant feedback support the assertion that EAC has provided schools and districts in Region II with valuable information that will better equip teachers and principals in their efforts to promote equity. The focus of the conference, the needs of Mexican students in New York City, provided a lens through which many of the issues and concerns of ELL students in general could be viewed and better understood. Among the participants at the conference were several parent coordinators, teachers, school psychologists and counselors, graduate students in education, education professors, and ELL specialists. The diversity of participants speaks to the conference’s wide appeal and potential application.

The various workshops gave participants access to knowledge and skills to address their culturally diverse population of learners. The presentations covered several topics including *Cultural Assets and Education; Early Literacy; Mexican Families and the Psychological, Social, and Cultural Adjustment of Mexican Students in NYC Public Schools;* and *Mexican Students in NY: Successes and Challenges.*

An analysis of the responses from the reflection forms that were disseminated among participants provided further evidence that the symposium was of benefit to those who attended. The symposium received an average rating of 4.6 on a 5-point scale from the 38 respondents (35% of the 110 participants) who completed a reflection form.

A content analysis of the open-ended responses from the reflection forms revealed that respondents felt they had gained important insights from their participation in the conference. Specifically, respondents cited an increased understanding of the needs of Mexican students, a stronger grasp of the quantitative and statistical realities of Mexican students, as well as a heightened awareness of the importance of developing cross-cultural understandings generally.

Toward the objective of improving teachers, principals and their practice, several themes emerged. Among the most salient were the insights educators believed they

---

16 See Appendices for reflection form
obtained regarding their potential work with parents. One respondent stated, “When speaking with parents I can understand their needs better.” Another respondent echoed this sentiment and added that he/she had gained a new understanding of how to work with parents as partners. One respondent also pointed out that the symposium helped illuminate the need for continued professional development in schools for teachers who had not attended the symposium.

Further indication that EAC’s symposium filled an important need in terms of professional development was seen in the nature of the “next steps” that respondents offered in their reflection forms. In responding to a question of what strategies EAC could embrace as it continues its work on equity, responses emphasized the need to expand the audience of the symposium—that others in the educational community have the chance to benefit from the information that was shared. Respondents indicated the need to have ongoing follow-up activities.

The evaluators concluded that the objective for performance measure 3a was successfully met based on their review of the evidence presented.

3b. Annual Professional Development Conference on Equity Issues

On July 17 and 18, The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education (Metro Center) presented “The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education Second Annual Institute on Disproportionality.” The two-day conference, Gaining Tools for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education and Discipline, was held at the Kimmel Center for University Life at New York University, and was co-sponsored by The Equity Assistance Center (EAC) and the Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality (formerly Chapter 405).

Two evaluators attended the conference on both days and determined, based on their review of sign-in sheets, that approximately 225 people attended over the period of the 17th and 18th. Therefore, the target for measure 3b was exceeded. Evaluation of the conference agenda, workshop materials and participant feedback support the assertion that EAC has provided schools and districts in Region II with valuable information that will better facilitate their efforts to promote equity. The goal of the conference was to provide participants with strategies and techniques to be used at the district, school and classroom level to improve educational opportunities for students with learning disabilities as well as students of color, low-income students and other underserved populations.

Among the participants at the conference were educators from New York and New Jersey, including district and regional team members from participating TAC-D districts. The diversity of participants speaks to the conference’s wide appeal and potential application. Workshops on the first day of the two-day event were divided into three strands: Policy, Practice, and Research.
For the policy strand, presenters addressed several issues including New York State’s Performance Plan and how schools address issues of disproportionality at their schools; State Policy and Disproportionality; Response to Intervention and its impact on identifying Students for Special Education Services; Organizational and Instructional Practices that Address the Needs of English Language Learners; and Special Education from the Students’ Perspective.

Several workshops were offered for the Practice Strand. Workshop facilitators presented on topics such as Differentiated Instruction, Creating Culturally Inclusive Classrooms, Developing an Appropriate and Equitable Referral Process, and Strategies for Effective Collaboration between Parents and Professionals.

The final strand, which addressed the issue of research, explored several important issues. The topics included: Improving the Educational Futures of Latino Students, Understanding the Learning Needs of Children of Immigrants, Educating African American Males, and a Historical Look at IDEA.

Seventy-nine district and regional team members from the participating TAC-D districts attended the second day of the conference. Team members had an opportunity to participate in developing service plans based on root cause results. The day was divided into three parts. Part I of the day focused on researching the root cause of disproportionality. Part II involved discussing ways in which race/ethnicity, language, and culture are connected to how participants consider the equity issue of disproportionality. Finally, Part III was the component of the training that allowed teams to develop a map of solutions to issues of disproportionality.

Feedback was solicited from the participants, and each received evaluation forms that asked them to share their feelings about each strand of the workshops they attended. Based on 151 respondents to the Summer Institute evaluation, an overall average of 88% of attendees found the content useful, with an overwhelming percentage of respondents ranking several workshops as highly useful.

**Recommendations for Project Objective 3**

The evaluation of EAC’s work yielded several recommendations that address its efforts to improve teacher and principal quality. The evaluators ask that EAC carefully consider the following recommendations:

- EAC might make an effort to keep accurate records of conference attendance and gather information about the backgrounds of those choosing to participate. EAC had no official record of the number of attendees even though there were numerous evaluation forms submitted.

---

17 Data obtained from Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality (TAC-D) 2005-2006 Evaluation Report
• EAC might carefully consider ways that it may follow up with conference participants. Evaluators found no evidence that EAC maintained relationships with those who attended the conference. Relationship-building should be viewed as an important component of EAC’s work.

• EAC might create reflection/evaluation forms that feature more focused questions with consideration given to the objectives it wishes to accomplish.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE 4: Work with school districts to eliminate ability grouping or tracking that isolates students based upon race, sex, or national origin.

Description of the Objective

During the 2005-06 project year, the Region II EAC worked with New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Region III to develop strategies to prevent the overrepresentation or misclassification of minority and ELL students in special education. The targeted customers and the trainings to facilitate the development of these equity strategies are described in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure</th>
<th>Targeted Customer</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4a.</td>
<td>Region III</td>
<td>Provide school districts with training on disproportionality in special education</td>
<td>To help school districts develop strategies to prevent the overrepresentation or misclassification of minority and ELL students in special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b.</td>
<td>Region III</td>
<td>Help change policies and practices related to disproportionality in special education</td>
<td>To reduce disproportionality in special education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation Methods

The evaluators reviewed project staff logs, workshop agendas, attendance sheets and inspected products and materials used in training sessions in order to document and assess the implementation and quality of the proposed activities.
Findings

4a.  Trainings on Disproportionality

On June 19, 2006 EAC sponsored a NYCDOE training entitled “NYCDOE Region: Disproportionality Issues in Region III.” According to sign-in sheets the evaluators examined, there were 31 participants in this workshop. The participants were from NYCDOE’s Region III Learning Support Center which provides instructional support and professional development to 152 schools in the region.

Evaluators also had access to EAC’s carefully constructed report detailing what it describes as the disproportionality “problem areas” in NYC’s Region III. The presentation of data within the report led the participants through complex calculations to identify and analyze overrepresentation based on race/ethnicity. Additionally, summary statistics given in the report served to aide participants in the crucial next steps of addressing problems of inequity in their home districts.

The objective for performance measure 4a has not fully been met as EAC has not provided “at least four trainings in one school district” identified as a target in meeting its objective. Given that the work EAC has undertaken will span multiple years, the June training that took place represents a useful first step in the process of analyzing disproportionality in special education placement. The evaluators recommend that there be specific emphasis placed on follow-up to this training focusing on strategies for actually ameliorating disproportionality in these districts.

4b.  Changes in Policies and Practices Related to Disproportionality

New York City Region III educators attended the July 2006 “Gaining Tools for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education and Discipline” conference. The evaluation findings for the conference, described in findings section 3b above, indicate that the objectives for this workshop were attained.

Recommendations for Project Objective 4

The evaluation of EAC’s work yielded several recommendations that address its efforts to eliminate ability grouping or tracking. The evaluators ask that EAC carefully consider the following recommendations:

- EAC should plan ways to meet its target of providing at least 4 trainings in one school district or consider amending its objective to reflect a renewed understanding of the needs of those districts in Region III.
- EAC may provide participants with the opportunity to give feedback about the quality of the workshops they experienced. This will serve EAC in its future planning of workshops.
EAC might think about its role in impacting practice and policy around disproportionality and how its work will translate into actually reducing the overrepresentation based on race/ethnicity in special education. EAC’s current accomplishments provide districts with important skills and tools toward that end. Direct assistance with the formulation of polices and practices are logical next steps.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation found that, during the 2005-06 project year, the Region II EAC fully met two of its project objectives and made substantial progress in two others. Given the project’s broad scope of proposed activities and performance measures, this is an impressive record of accomplishment for the project’s first year. A detailed analysis of the project’s performance measures showed that the Region II EAC worked with a diverse set of customers on a variety of initiatives designed to help them develop, implement or improve their equity policies and practices. The activities included assisting customers with the development of products and the implementation of processes designed to address their individual needs and contexts. The following is a summary of findings with respect to the extent to which EAC attained its proposed objectives for the 2005-06 project year:

- The Region II EAC was successful in its goal to help state education departments, school districts, and schools to link federal education funding to accountability for results. Specifically, the Region 2 EAC helped 14 customers (higher than the proposed target of 11) at the state, district, and school level to implement, or improve their policies and practices ensuring that students of different race, sex, and national origin have equitable opportunity for high-quality instruction. While EAC has not yet created and disseminated an ELL best practices publication, it has identified and done research at the school, Port Chester’s Edison Elementary School, whose exemplary practice will inform the publication.

- The Region II EAC made substantial progress toward its goal of encouraging districts and schools to use scientifically-based methods for federal education programs. The website presented useful information on proven methods for assisting districts and schools to increase equity and the popularity of the website was demonstrated by a three-fold increase in website hits. EAC documented eight follow-up requests for information, approaching but not reaching the proposed target of 10.

- The project met its goal of providing professional development opportunities to Region II in an effort to improve teacher and principal quality. One hundred ten participants (10 more than proposed) attended the annual professional development symposium on English language learners. In addition, 225 educators attended the first day of a two-day conference on disproportionality held on July 17 - 18, 2006, and 79 TAC-D regional team members attended a working and planning session on the second day. Participant’s feedback and the observations of the evaluators indicated that these events were perceived as effective in helping districts and schools address issues of equity.
The project made progress toward its goal of working with school districts to eliminate ability grouping or tracking that isolates students based upon race, sex, or national origin. The project’s efforts in this area were focused on the New York City Department of Education’s Region III, and consisted of a June, 2006 training session on issues of disproportionality in the region, which was attended by 31 participants, and the development of a technical assistance plan for summer 2006 that is directed at building district-specific knowledge and capacity to address issues of disproportionality. Region III staff also attended the July conference on disproportionality.

The evaluation report offers a number of specific recommendations aimed at extending the project’s first-year successes, many of which focus on the enhanced collection and use of outcome data for project planning and reflection.