



Newsletter

Comprehensive Centers Network

Supporting Schoolwide Improvement for All Students

The *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA) was passed by Congress in 1994 to support increased learning and achievement to high standards within elementary and secondary schools. The legislation promotes the development of integrated, schoolwide programs of reform directed toward all students, especially those who are at greater risk of academic failure.

Consistent with this focus, the IASA also restructured the forms of technical assistance provided to states, districts, tribes and schools. An integrated system of technical assistance was created in which 15 comprehensive regional assistance centers replaced the 48 centers that formerly offered technical assistance under separate federal programs. Each center provides knowledge and assistance to educators within a certain service region to affect the quality of instruction, particularly in schools implementing schoolwide improvement programs and those in high-poverty areas.

The 15 comprehensive centers comprise a network. Together, they constitute an important and far-reaching technical assistance resource, since the centers communicate regularly, share information on issues of common concern and coordinate efforts toward common assistance goals.

The funding of the comprehensive centers to provide integrated services is therefore a significant technical assistance effort with extremely challenging technical assistance goals. Now, as the centers enter their fifth year of operation and preparation for reauthorization is beginning, it is useful to summarize the work being done by the centers.

Technical Assistance within the Comprehensive Centers Network

Technical assistance has been provided within a context of educational change and reform. The IASA itself represents change by promoting comprehensive planning for services, in contrast to the prior focus on separate categorical programs. Similarly, the comprehensive centers have focused on change in two respects.

First, the comprehensive centers network is charged with the task of assisting states, districts, tribes and schools ("clients") in working comprehensively with the various federal programs that serve their students. This is a substantial change for those accustomed to defining efforts for separate programs independent of other programs.

Second, the network's goal in technical assistance is to promote schoolwide reform and improvement efforts to assist all students, regardless of their backgrounds and special needs, to meet challenging state standards. The comprehensive centers have responded by developing a model of technical assistance that takes these change efforts into account.

A starting point in defining the network model is the definition of technical assistance offered by Yin and White: "a means of using knowledge to improve the adoption and implementation of some type of educational practice or procedure" (1984). Within this definition are two critical aspects of technical assistance: *content* (knowledge, practices, procedures) and *process* (adoption and implementation). The context of change within which comprehensive centers network providers work

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Teachers + Teachers = Success

Effective teachers learn that for their students to be successful, children must be exposed to literacy in use and be able to understand the structure of spoken words. Teachers also know that strategies, instructional materials and intensity of instruction works differently for different children. The goal of the Reading Success Network (RSN) is to equip teachers with the tools and knowledge to make choices to ensure that every child is a successful reader.

The Reading Success Network is a national initiative of the 15 federally-funded regional comprehensive centers and the U.S. Department of Education. It builds upon the findings and recommendations from the National Academy of Sciences research to examine the prevention of reading difficulties.

The Region XIV Comprehensive Center at Educational Testing Service conducted a pilot RSN program. Elementary teachers from six Title I Hillsborough County (Florida) schools attended three days of intense training and seven monthly networking meetings designed to create a network to improve the reading achievement of every student.

One participating teacher commented:

Participating in RSN helped me be more aware of pinpointing specific difficulties that LEP [limited-English-proficient] students have. I now know where to focus my instruction for them.

“Schools have the responsibility to accommodate the linguistic needs of students with limited proficiency in English. Precisely how to do this is difficult to prescribe, because students’ abilities and needs vary greatly, as do the capacities of different communities to support their literacy development.”

– Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, 1998

Another said, “I’m more aware of the process LEP students go through in acquiring reading skills in a second language.”

The training promoted excellence in reading instruction as the primary intervention to avoid reading problems. Throughout the training, a special emphasis was

given to teaching reading to students who are limited in English proficiency. The teachers developed their skills in diagnosing and preventing reading problems. They implemented intervention strategies and learned how to adjust instruction to address diverse student needs. They practiced using data to inform and support their decisions about who needed more help and the focus of that additional help.

Monthly networking meetings provided a forum for discussing specific challenges and opportunities to counsel with peers. The teachers found the networking meetings to be so beneficial that 71 percent of them met with other RSN participants more than twice monthly. One participant said, “We felt less isolated and more accountable.”

When teachers applied the RSN strategies in their classrooms, they discovered an increase in student achievement: 57 percent of students in participating classrooms met grade level expectations. These schools had an average of 78 percent of students receiving free and reduced price lunches, 48 percent LEP population, and 55 percent mobility rate.

This teacher’s success story exemplifies the resulting improvement: “I had a LEP student I was considering recommending for retention, but when I implemented strategies I got from the RSN program with him, I found he made so much progress in summer school that it made better sense to promote him than hold him back.”

Teachers also discovered that conferencing with parents was more productive when they were able to discuss student work and use data. They showed parents how the child was approaching the reading process and offer concrete strategies to help the child at home.

This pilot program was conducted with the purpose of adapting and aligning the materials for use in Florida schools. RSN is being expanded throughout Florida. Educators from several school districts attended a week-long RSN institute at the end of September. The institute equipped district and school staffs to develop their

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The comprehensive regional assistance centers were created by the U.S. Department of Education to provide technical assistance services to state education agencies and local school districts who are implementing education reform efforts under the *Improving America’s Schools Act*. The comprehensive centers support and assist states, districts and schools in serving children served under the IASA in their efforts to:

- Implement school reform programs in a manner that improves teaching and learning for all students.
- Adopt, adapt and implement promising and proven practices for improving teaching and learning.
- Coordinate school reform programs with other federal, state and local education plans and activities so all students – particularly those considered at risk of educational failure – are provided opportunities to meet challenging state content standards and student performance standards.
- Administer and implement IASA programs.

The comprehensive centers work primarily with states, local education agencies (LEAs), tribes, schools and other recipients of funds under the IASA. Priority for services is given to high poverty schools and districts, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools, and IASA recipients implementing schoolwide programs.

For more information on the comprehensive centers network, visit

www.ccnetwork.org

or contact the center nearest you (see Page 12).

This issue of the comprehensive centers network newsletter was produced by the STAR Center, the comprehensive center that serves Texas. The STAR Center is a collaboration of the Intercultural Development Research Association, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

Best Practices Abound in Western Schools – Strategies include “Blended Classrooms” and “Learning Style Inventories”

The following are a few examples of promising practices in four of the states served by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory’s Comprehensive Center.

Idaho – Benefits of Using Technology in the Classroom

Over the past four years, the Jerome County School District in south central Idaho has aggressively pursued technology training as a major emphasis of its staff development. Technology is viewed as the catalyst for helping teachers develop their teaching methodology, which in turn helps students gain a greater mastery of content and higher-order thinking skills. The district believes that technology has a powerful impact on the academic and social growth of its students. Therefore, it devotes most of its staff development funds to technology development. The district promotes and maintains its technology through the following efforts.

- Each school has a building technology committee that surveys the needs of teachers and designs a plan to meet these building-level needs.
- A district technology committee, comprised of representatives from each building committee and from the community, oversees the implementation of the program.
- The district has developed partnerships with two public universities and two private colleges to train teachers who, in turn, train their peers.

Teachers report that students who are engaged in a variety of activities with intermittent use of computers and other forms of technology stay motivated for longer periods of time than students who study without the use of computers.

One evaluative study conducted in an elementary school social studies classroom reported that an experimental group of students who used computers for writing assignments wrote paragraphs with longer, more detailed sentences than did a control group of students who used pencil and paper. In addition, the experimental group scored 10 percent higher on teacher-prepared tests, used higher-level study and research skills, and demonstrated more collaborative skills.

For more information, contact Chris

Gibson, special services director, at 208-324-3361, ext. 1110.

Montana – Emphasizing Learning Styles

Newman Elementary School in Billings is one of 15 sites worldwide to be recognized as a 1998 “Inviting School” by the International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) and as one of the 100 “Distinguished Title I Schools” in the nation.

The mission of IAIE schools is to “enhance lifelong learning, promote positive change in organizations, cultivate the personal and professional growth and satisfaction of educators and allied professionals, and enrich the lives of human beings personally and professionally.” Therefore, all people, places, policies, programs and processes (the five Ps) in a school should invite all students “to develop intellectually, socially, physically, psychologically and spiritually.”

The staff at Newman Elementary School helps its students realize their personal potential through numerous promising practices. They consistently emphasize learning styles and employ techniques to address the individual needs of all learners. The entire teaching and support staff and all students receive learning style inventories and discuss the results with one another. This practice increases awareness and tolerance of individual differences and builds student self-esteem.

The staff also uses the following strategies and activities to better serve students: the Balanced Literacy Approach for early reading intervention, writing as a process, cross-age tutoring, hands-on instruction, “Talents Unlimited” (an instructional model based on multiple intelligence theory and higher-order thinking skills), and “Kinderplus” (an early intervention extended day program for selected kinder-

garten students). For more information, contact Cheryl Malia-McCall, principal, at 406-255-3862. For information on the International Alliance for Invitational Education, visit www.InvitationalEducation.net.

Oregon – Four-day School Week

Fifteen years ago the Cove School District in rural Northeast Oregon shifted to a four-day week in response to reduced funding and low student enrollment. The results have been excellent for students, teachers and the community.

Students in grades three through 12 attend school Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with the final 30 minutes reserved for meetings, clubs and other activities. Primary students are released at 3:00 p.m. By reducing the lunch period and passing time between classes, Cove students spend as much time in school as they did when they attended school five days a week.

Along with the financial savings resulting from reductions in utilities and bus transportation, the district realizes other important benefits as well. Because Fridays can be used for athletic events and other school activities, there are fewer classroom interruptions on school days. Teachers use Fridays as an extra workday to plan lessons, conduct meetings and work on classroom projects.

The community is able to continue student services and activities that would normally have been eliminated due to education cutbacks. For more information, contact Arnold Coe, administrative assistant, at 541-568-4424.

Washington – Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Educators at Grantham Elementary School in Clarkston have shifted a conventional curriculum (a fixed sequence of distinct skills) to developmentally appropriate practices. This has allowed students to become more active learners in the educational process. The change gives students

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“Team Success”

Graduate Tutors Help Students Achieve in Low-performing Schools

Three years ago, New York City Chancellor Rudy Crew “adopted” 12 of the city’s lowest performing schools (six elementary and six middle schools). All 12 schools were at a critical juncture: either student performance would improve, meeting New York State standards, or they would be closed.

Many education experts collaborated, offering the schools an array of tools and knowledge that might enhance student learning and improve achievement. The New York Technical Assistance Center (NYTAC) was asked early on to join the technical support team. It helped develop the successful plan that turned the schools around through a well thought-out mixture of support for teachers, parents and students themselves. The plan called for leadership training of principals, parent involvement initiatives, curriculum alignment, and a schoolwide restructuring program.

In a major contribution to the turnaround effort, the center brought its reading tutoring program, *Team Success*, to the targeted schools. The center prepared 25 New York University graduate students in education to use proven, research-based techniques in their work as reading tutors. Each tutor committed to a 20-hour schedule, meeting five days a week with each of eight to 10 students. Tutors used assessment and evaluation tools to target their efforts to students’ skill level. They also worked with reading teachers so that tu-



tors and teachers could enhance each other’s efforts and share what they learned about how best to help individual students.

Team Success proved rewarding for students, teachers and the tutors. Since most of the tutors plan to teach in the near future, they were enthusiastic about their opportunity for research-based training and hands-on field experience.

“In the neighborhood that ‘our’ school is in, it is questionable how many children have a lot of special, positive learning experiences,” commented tutor Colleen Coleman. “Providing such an experience for them has definitely been a highlight of the job over the past two years,” she said. Colleen is currently completing a research project for her master’s degree at New York University on teaching reading to English as a second language (ESL) students.

Individualized tutoring has provided a powerful and effective strategy for helping students become better readers, gain self-confidence as learners and also involve parents in the learning process.

“I had Rodney for 16 weeks; He was far from confident and had a lot of trouble with nearly all of the sound blends,” tutor Michael Fulton recalls.

Like many other students, Rodney had already been held back and his parents feared the same thing would happen yet

another year. However, Rodney’s hard work and the continuous support of his tutor, reading teacher and his parents fostered a change in the student’s life.

“At home, he would talk about the stories and the words he learned,” said Fulton. “We would create lists of new words that he could read and he would hang them up on the fridge at home. He began asking his parents to listen to him read and help him with his homework. His confidence now established, his mother couldn’t have been happier.”

In the past year, test results indicate that there was a significant increase in reading achievement in all 12 of these targeted schools, greater than that of any other district in the city. Student achievement improved on both city-wide and New York state tests. For example, the percentage of third graders reading at grade level jumped from 31 percent to 46 percent in one year. Subsequently, six of the 12 schools were removed from the list of schools in danger of being closed.

Dr. LaMar Miller, NYTAC’s executive director, is pleased with the success of the project: “We know that *Team Success* added a new dimension to school improvement. But it was the combination of activities that confirmed our belief that school reform efforts must be broad-based and utilize the strengths of all constituents.”

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an incentive for learning and applying diverse skills and relating one skill to another.

Instruction has become a blend of teacher-directed and student-directed tasks with the goal of having students take increasing responsibility for their own learning throughout their elementary school experience. Instead of isolating individual tasks, teachers instruct on the basis of a whole-student interaction model. As a result, students are encouraged to spend more time creating, applying, analyzing and evaluating. The Grantham Elementary School staff successfully addresses the social, emotional and physical development of its students through the

following practices.

- The school has changed the traditional grade-level configuration to a system of “seamless grade levels” with several “blended grades.”
- Students are allowed to keep the same teacher over a period of two to three years, thereby increasing a students’ growth and sense of stability.
- Staff development activities emphasize developmentally appropriate practices, performance-based assessment, and community and career awareness.
- Students are encouraged to openly interact to learn peer mediation skills.

For more information, contact principal Robert DeBuhr at 509-758-2503.

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local capacity to help educators become more effective teachers of early literacy skills and competencies.

The RSN is an initiative of the Region XIV Comprehensive Center at ETS and its partners: Center for Applied Linguistics, David Anchin Center at the University of South Florida, ESCORT, DREAM, and Litton/PRC. For more information about RSN, contact the center at 1-800-756-9003.

Resources

Snow, C.E., and M.S. Burns and P. Griffin (Ed.). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998).

Dynamic Network Supports Schoolwide Reform in New England

The New England Comprehensive Center is proud to announce that two of its "Schoolwide Programs Network" schools have received national recognition as Title I Distinguished Schools. As members of the regional schoolwide network, these schools have worked with the center dur-

Principals of these schools reported that they attribute the progress they have made in their comprehensive school improvement process to their participation in the Schoolwide Programs Network.

ing the past three years, participating in a variety of professional development activities and receiving on-site coaching.

The Schoolwide Programs Network has created a New England regional community of practice that strives to develop and implement exemplary schoolwide programs in which all children achieve to high standards of learning. Network membership consists of schools that are using *Improving America's Schools Act* funding to implement a schoolwide reform program.

The center's strategies for providing support to the Schoolwide Programs Network include the following:

- providing ongoing professional development opportunities for member schools' improvement teams and their district office team members according to expressed needs of the member schools;
- ensuring that each school has a coach who is provided with support and professional development;
- partnering with the state departments of education to leverage collective resources for network schools;
- identifying and developing tools and other resources to assist schools engaged in schoolwide reform planning and implementation; and
- developing electronic resources continually, such as the center's web site and the national schoolwide network electronic discussion group.

Evidence of Success

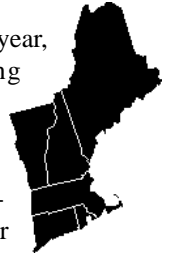
Participating schools are required to document their planning and progress toward meeting their improvement goals, particularly gains in student achievement. Other evidence of impact on participating schools has been collected by the center's external evaluator, the Urban Institute.

The data collected through this evaluation have shown that participating schools and districts highly value the professional development, coaching, networking with like-minded schools, and resources provided. Principals of these schools reported that they attribute the progress they have made in their comprehensive school improvement process to their participation in the Schoolwide Pro-

grams Network.

At the end of the school year, the center began assessing three-year gains in student achievement among member schools. Significant gains were found in schools that had participated in the network for three years.

The network has also shown effects at the state level. Individuals in state departments of education who have received training by center staff to serve as facilitators for Schoolwide Programs Network schools reported that they value the skills they have developed through the professional development the center has provided and the opportunity to apply their skills by facilitating the network.



Comprehensive School Reform Models Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners

Southwest Comprehensive Center has developed a guide to some of the nationally-available and locally-developed school reform models that are addressing the needs of English language learners. The center worked to identify up to five schools for each of the 26 comprehensive school reform models identified in the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory's *Catalog of School Reform Models* that are serving English language learners (ELLs). Model developers were contacted to nominate schools. The schools then completed a data collection form including demographics of the schools and demonstrated (i.e., data-based) improvements in ELL students' academic achievement. A total of 95 schools were nominated by 25 model developers; personnel at 26 schools were interviewed; and 18 models are reviewed in the new monograph, *Comprehensive School Reform Models Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners*.

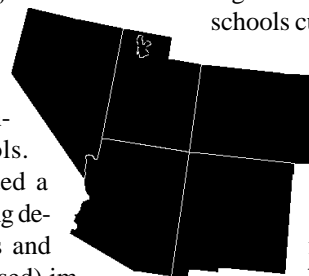
The project also designed to identify up to 10 schools implementing "home grown," comprehensive school reform

projects that are serving ELLs and to describe those programs. A total of 25 schools were nominated; personnel at 21 schools were interviewed; and 11 are included in the monograph.

This document briefly describes the project's methodology. It provides information about each of the identified schools and the programs they are implementing. This information will assist

schools currently trying to identify a model for comprehensive school reform that will meet the needs of all students in the school, including ELLs.

The project was funded by the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education. For more information about *Comprehensive School Reform Models Addressing the Needs of English Language Learners* by Judith Wilde with Bruce Thompson and Rosa Maria Herrera, contact the Southwest Comprehensive Center (Region IX) at 505-891-6111.



High Impact Technical Assistance: Violence Prevention Initiative in the Gary Community School Corporation

In the winter of 1996, a team from the Region VII comprehensive center assisted the school corporation in Gary, Indiana, in addressing concerns about the escalating levels of violence in the local schools. Several months prior to this request an active community leader was shot and wounded by a young teen. The community leader, who almost lost his life, approached the superintendent to investigate and develop strategies to reverse the rising tide of violence. The superintendent decided to take a pro-active approach to this major problem.

He wrote a passionate letter to Mr. William Modzeleski, director of safe and drug-free schools and communities at the U.S. Department of Education, asking for assistance. Mr. Modzeleski provided support and directed the letter to the comprehensive center. A team from the center visited Gary and met with all the key stakeholders to gather data and information about the problem. Meetings included participation from board members, teachers, principals, parents, students and union representatives including the union president and community representatives.

While on-site, the team from Region VII collected qualitative and quantitative data to document the extent of the problem. The data revealed higher than expected suspension rates in some of the elementary schools and high rates of suspension in numerous high schools. Visits were made to schools to discuss these issues with school staffs, parents, teachers' union safety committee members, students and community leaders. The team met on-site to review the findings and to develop and propose a comprehensive technical assistance plan to the corporation. Key decision-makers (such as the superintendent, assistant superintendent and director of staff development) met with the team to review the proposed technical assistance plan. The school corporation gave unanimous approval to proceed.

The plan included implementing a corporation-wide violence prevention initiative. A vital component was a peer mediation program in grades prekindergarten through 12. Providing professional devel-

opment to teams, including a principal or assistant principal from each school was the first step in ensuring broad-scale implementation. A team from the staff development division participated in the training to ensure that as more training was needed, the corporation would have the capacity to provide it, thus helping to maintain the corporation-wide initiative.

Teams were brought to Oklahoma for a week-long training institute on developing violence prevention programs, including peer mediation. The training included a component on data collection and evaluation.

Assessment and data collection tools were provided to assist the corporation with evaluation of this initiative. The fourth day of the institute was devoted to having each team develop a preliminary implementation plan. Accommodating all the teams required providing the training over a period of about five weeks. A trainer-of-trainers' model also was used to build capacity in the corporation. A team then made a presentation to the school board. With support from the superintendent and the coordinator of safe and drug-free schools, funds were made available to each school to assist with implementation.

Follow-Up

Approximately four months after implementation started, the comprehensive center team returned to Gary to provide follow-up training and to visit some of the school staffs and students involved in the program. All teams trained were invited to a day-long session. The goals of the follow-up training were to create a cross-grade-level network to maintain the violence prevention network, provide opportunities for teams to share their progress and plan next steps.

During the sharing, teams voiced their elation at the positive press they were receiving from the media. Numerous articles appeared in the local newspapers. The local television stations also produced sto-

ries and offered their support to the corporation for its pro-active approach in addressing the problems of violence. The director of staff development presented an impressive document that was a compilation of all the revised plans and budgets.

Preliminary Outcomes

Almost two years later, details of the outcomes are rolling in, demonstrating significant impact in the corporation. A few months ago, the corporation forwarded a copy of its initial evaluation to the comprehensive center. Tremendous gains have been made. Highlights of the most significant outcomes follow.

- All school counselors are now being trained to provide additional support for the original teams trained by the comprehensive center.
- The program is beginning to extend into the community. VISTA volunteers have been trained to implement the program in housing developments.
- Twenty schools have active violence prevention and peer mediation programs in place. An additional 16 schools implemented their programs in the fall of 1998. These programs are making great strides.
- Students and teachers with the most active programs are reporting fewer and fewer conflicts. Students indicate that there are fewer fights and "relative calm" in their schools. These same schools have large numbers of students expressing an interest in becoming peer mediators. (Quantitative data are available from the school.)
- A number of community organizations are actively involved in this initiative. These include: VISTA, the Youth and Family Community Renewal Project, and the Youth Services Bureau.
- An extensive evaluation of the corporation-wide training is also available. The overall evaluation of the training was very positive. Students and staff differed slightly in their perceptions about the training. For example, staff participants were less likely than students to agree that ample time had been given for them to practice their conflict mediation skills.

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Improving Data Collection and Instructional Programs for English Language Learners

In order to increase student achievement in high poverty, low-performing schools, it is essential to accurately diagnose student strengths and weaknesses and to provide targeted instruction to meet the needs of every student. To guide instructional decision making, teachers, administrators and parents must be able to skillfully use data to assess student learning and to measure the effectiveness of instructional programs.

Data that are collected in a systematic manner and organized in a user-friendly format can:

- Motivate inquiry and dialogue about the critical issues related to improving student achievement;
- Provide a basis for developing sound action plans; and
- Determine whether plans are working as intended or are in need of revision.

The ability to use data effectively is critical to programs that serve English language learners (ELLs). They have been the center of ongoing debate as to which methods are most effective in enhancing student achievement. In addition, administrators and teachers are required to measure how well ELLs are progressing in school. Schools and districts must collect data such as: (1) the nature of the educational pro-

gram in which students are enrolled; (2) the length of time students are in the program; (3) their English language proficiency level; and (4) the level of student achievement.

A Key Resource for ELL Programs

In collaboration with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center (Region XII) has developed a key resource: *Data Collection and Program Improvement for English Language Learners – Accountability, Acceleration and Excellence*. This document is helping districts collect, communicate and use data to improve instruction for ELLs.

This resource provides a framework for systematic collection, analysis and reporting of disaggregated data for ELLs. It shows educators how to:

- Develop critical questions about ELL achievement and progress;
- Decide what data to collect and include in a student information system;
- Address technical and technological issues that arise in collecting and using data; and
- Develop an action plan to improve student achievement.

The document also includes a case

study conducted in the Santa Ana Unified School District in Orange County, California. It describes how the district developed an extensive data collection and reporting system, merged many kinds of information, and used these data for effective program evaluation.

Meeting the Need for Professional Development

In addition, the center provides professional development services in the areas of data gathering and program improvement. Two trainer-of-trainer institutes were conducted in southern California during the 1998-99 school year. About 70 school and district personnel successfully completed the four-day training that provides an orientation to the document, addresses critical questions in the field, sheds light on technical and technological issues, demonstrates the power of a data-based action plan, helps districts write effective plans, shows schools how to create the conditions for effective use of data, and describes how to reflect on available data and use it to stimulate change.

For further information regarding the document or the training series, contact the Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center at 310-922-6364.

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A content analysis of various aspects of the training is also available.

- Attitudes changed significantly for students receiving the training. All of the students trained agreed after receiving the training that physical fighting is not an appropriate way to handle conflicts. Students indicated that they would use listening, communication and negotiating skills learned and practiced in the training. Almost all of the referrals from mediation came from the students themselves. Most of the conflicts once referred to mediation ranged from five minutes to one hour depending on the number of disputants and the nature of the conflict.
- There were no statistically significant differences in self-reported conflict by gender.

Eighty-four percent of the students who participated in the mediation process because of disputes indicated that this was their first experience with this process.

- Student satisfaction data are available on the evaluation of the mediation process in their schools. The vast majority of students surveyed indicated overwhelming satisfaction with the mediation process in their respective schools.

The corporation is preparing its next annual violence prevention and peer mediation awards banquet.

Factors Affecting Program Efficacy and Recommendations

The quality of the training experience was hailed by students and staff as one of the most important factors generating interest and success in the peer mediation

program. The general consensus was that the training clearly presents the concepts of mediation and conflict management and enables students and staff to understand and apply the concepts.

Even though the training was well received, there were specific suggestions for improving future training sessions. For example, most students felt that even more attention should be given to increasing the use of role-plays, especially in the first two days of training. The need for better publicity and recruitment efforts was emphasized by every peer mediation group. During the original training, teams were encouraged to have school assembly programs to recruit and orient the student body. Numerous other recommendations are provided in the Region VII comprehensive center quarterly report (October-December, 1998).

Advocating Culturally Congruent School Reform: Title IX Indian Education Programs and Parent Committees

As we move into the fifth year of the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA), many schools are struggling to help their students achieve high standards. State departments of education are designating some schools as being "in need of improvement" and are requiring them to re-examine their improvement plans. Many of these schools are eagerly searching for better methods of teaching their American Indian students. Title IX program staff and parents have an opportunity and responsibility to help schools identify and adopt reforms that have the best chance of success.

Since the passage of the *Indian Education Act* of 1972, Indian education programs have worked to improve success rates among American Indian students in public schools by addressing their "culturally relevant academic needs" as described in the law. The exact meaning of this phrase, referred to among Indian educators with the acronym of "CRAN," has never been clearly defined. For the most part, Title IX programs across the nation have worked to identify and meet the "academic deficiencies and social problems" prevalent among American Indian students and their families. Despite their fine efforts, American Indian students, on average, continue to register higher dropout rates and lower achievement than do other students.

The time has come to look less at the students and more at the public school system itself for the source of the problem. Indeed, the problem may be cultural at its very core, stemming from a dissonance between the cultures of American Indian communities and the public school system.

Culturally Congruent Teaching Strategies

The dissonance between Indian and mainstream teaching practices has existed since colonial times. Consider the following statement by an Iroquois leader named Canassatego. In June of 1744, the commissioners of Maryland and Virginia sought to entice the Six Nations of Iroquois into a treaty by offering to educate a number of Indian boys at William and Mary College. The next day, Canassatego, speaking for the Iroquois, gave the following reply:

We know that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in those colleges and that the Maintenance of our young Men while with you would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different Nations have different Conceptions of things and you will, therefore, not take it amiss if our Ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same as yours. We have had some Experience of it...

We are however not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentleman from Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great care of their Education, teach them all we know and make Men of them (Armstrong, 1971).

Some might scoff at the suggestion that such an "Indian Education" might be preferable to a college education. However, if we consider tribal educational methods during Canassatego's time, we might find several virtues.

Tribal societies integrated education into everyday life, allowing children to work both individually and in cooperative groups where they could share their accomplishments. And most importantly, *children learned by doing*, and their lessons were often *immediately applicable in their lives*.

Tribal teaching methods were holistic and socially interactive. The lessons they taught were often immediately applicable in the lives of the children. Ironically, these attributes of traditional Indian teaching are reflected in some of the leading innovative teaching strategies of the school reform movement. Today, educators identify these practices as effective methods of teaching but have given them new names.

- An **integrated curriculum** is an example of the holistic approach. By combining language arts and social studies, students learn and reinforce language skills by applying them to real-life stud-

ies rather than depending solely on writing abstract themes to practice form and structure.

- **Applied, authentic learning experiences** reflect the traditional practice of students learning by doing. Applying lessons in real life tasks can be very effective in engaging student attention.
- **Cooperative learning models** allow students to work and/or compete in groups, which not only develops teamwork skills but allows gifted students and "late bloomers" to work effectively together.

People who remember the days when Indian children were taken from their homes to give them a "proper" education in boarding schools will appreciate the irony of this return to tribal teaching practices.

The Source of Dissonance

Perhaps the primary source of cultural dissonance in teaching lies in the nation's middle and high schools that employ an "industrial model" of organization. For decades, American Indian students have languished in this system that has tried to educate students with industrial efficiency. This model reflects the cultural values of industrial and corporate America that, of course, have always been at odds with the culture of Indian America both in and out of school.

It was developed under the premise that skills and content were best taught if they were broken down into separate disciplines such as math, English and science. The notion is that, as a student moves through the system, his or her education is to be assembled and manufactured by a team of experts. On the surface, the concept is appealing. Unfortunately, it has not worked for a great number of students across the nation. For American Indian students, it has been devastating.

We have unintentionally taught generations of American Indian students – along with a sizeable percentage of the general population – that going to school means days of boring drill punctuated by weekly testing traumas. These culturally incongruent practices, that are prevalent in

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Alaska's Multicultural Conference: Unique Opportunity for Region XIII

Alaskans have been gathering together for 25 years to celebrate diversity and success for all students at the annual Bilingual Multicultural Education Equity conference in Anchorage. This year, the Alaska Comprehensive Center, Region XIII (AKRAC) assisted with planning and conducting the next conference, which focused on standards-based education through bilingual programs, multicultural education and equity for all students.

The center planned a variety of technical assistance activities with conference co-sponsors, the Alaska Association for Bilingual Education and the Alaska Department of Education. It also worked with Alaska's 59 school districts, Native organizations, university campuses and community-based organizations that supported the largest education conference in the state. In addition, AKRAC provided training in grant writing for Title VII applications and conducted workshops on Indian Education parent involvement, safe school environments, ESL performance standards, bullying and harassment in school and ways to help youth become media literate.

This three-day conference provided a unique opportunity for Alaskans to share their successes in implementing standards-based practices and their responses to the diverse needs of Alaska's students, whose population includes 85 different language and culture groups. Thanks in large part to AKRAC, this year's conference was a great success in honoring Alaska's cultural diversity.



Aligning Curriculum with Standards

The Pacific Center has been called on to provide technical assistance to schools and district staffs in the region to help educators understand the alignment of effective assessment to standards-based curriculum and instruction. In the past three months, the center has facilitated workshops for vice-principals in Kauai District and for teachers and principals in the Windward Oahu District. The workshop entitled "Making Sense of Standards-Based Education," involves participants in hands-on activities to identify different kinds of standards, their match to appropriate assessments and the design of suitable tasks. The center is developing a process for teachers to formulate standards-based units of instruction that are relevant, meaningful and based on powerful instruction.

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so many public schools, may be among the root causes of the high American Indian dropout rates. If that is true, then it will be necessary for schools to adopt a fundamentally different approach to teaching. But what sorts of innovations and changes should we explore?

The answer may lie in examining some aspects of traditional tribal teaching practices. The figure below illustrates a broad direction in which schools serving American Indian students might move in adopting more culturally congruent teaching strategies.

These changes should not be considered an absolute recipe for success. Rather, we are seeking to urge schools to adopt innovations that are intended to engage stu-

dents' attention, imagination and participation. If we are to meet the goal of high achievement for all students, we must be able to get many more students to be deeply involved with their school work. The more schools provide instruction that is relevant to students' lives, the more students will remain engaged in education. The suggestion here is not that schools should forsake classroom lecture forever or completely abandon all remedial programs. Rather, the idea is for the school staff to seek alternative and innovative teaching strategies to better engage students in learning activities. *Student engagement* is a critical element for success; these culturally congruent teaching practices are very effective ways to engage students.

With this in mind, perhaps it is time

for Title IX Indian Education programs and parents to look at CRAN from another perspective. Let us look at the public school system itself from a cultural perspective. Maybe Indian students do not need tutoring so much as more effective teaching methods throughout the school. It is time for districts serving American Indian populations to emulate, as much as possible, traditional teaching methods of tribal societies.

Well informed, articulate parents can be a most effective force for change in the public school system. Parents are able to advocate for children in ways that no one else can. They may question school policy and advocate for change at the highest level of administration. After 25 years of trying to fix Indian students and their families, the time has come for us to fix the system.

Industrial Model

Discrete Disciplines	—————	Integrated Curricula
Classroom Lecture	—————	Applied Learning
Contrived Lessons	—————	Authentic Experience
Individual Competition	—————	Group Competition

Culturally Congruent

Reference

Armstrong, V.I. (compiler). *I Have Spoken: American History through Voices of the Indians* (Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1971).

Robey J. Clark, associate, NWREL Comprehensive Center for Region X. This is an abridged version of a longer essay. The full text may be found www.nwrac.org/congruent.

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affects both the nature of the content brought to clients and the nature of the technical assistance process.

Content of Comprehensive Centers Network Technical Assistance

The comprehensive centers bring knowledge and experience to clients in a variety of formats tailored to clients' needs. This content is structured to provide the direct services needed at a specific time and to help build client capacity. Our clients receive technical assistance based on knowledge that:

- ◆ promotes a change process and/or helps clients understand how to implement change and improvement.
- ◆ assists clients to take a systems perspective.
- ◆ assists clients specifically in the implementation of the IASA.
- ◆ supports priorities identified by the U.S. Department of Education.
- ◆ informs clients and builds their capacity in the specific improvement effort.
- ◆ assists clients to address specialized needs of students.
- ◆ assists clients in using all tools available to them, including technology, in accessing resources.
- ◆ assists in the development of effective administration and management structures.
- ◆ assists clients in creating safe and drug-free learning environments.
- ◆ assists clients in developing an aligned accountability system.
- ◆ assists clients in evaluating their programs.

Knowledge resources are maximized within the comprehensive centers network by the communication and sharing of resources across the individual comprehensive centers. The comprehensive centers network is thus more than individual regional centers. Through the collaboration that has developed, the centers comprise an important collective technical assistance resource that benefits all of the centers and their clients. For example, professional development materials, strategies and trainer-of-trainer opportunities are shared among the comprehensive centers to help all increase their assistance in specialized areas. The centers also collaborate on se-

lected priority efforts (for example, the Reading Success Network). The efforts toward regular communication and collaboration have become an important element in the overall comprehensive centers network effort to support implementation of IASA.

Process of Comprehensive Centers Network Technical Assistance

The comprehensive centers not only must determine what type of information will best serve the client, but they also must understand how that information can most effectively be presented or shared with the states, districts, tribes and schools.

To do so, they must also understand the requirements for change and understand that change is a process. As such, client needs will undergo change, information needs will shift, and the role of the technical assistance provider will similarly need to adapt and change. The nature of the technical assistance process used by the centers includes:

- ◆ In-depth knowledge of the client and the client's need;
- ◆ Collaborative technical assistance;
- ◆ Client commitment to change and ownership of change;
- ◆ Timely delivery of assistance;
- ◆ Focused, sustained assistance;
- ◆ Varying roles for the technical assistance provider;
- ◆ Awareness that the nature of technical assistance will change over time; and
- ◆ Constant self-monitoring and evaluation of the assistance provided.

In summary, the network's technical assistance reflects careful attention to client needs both in terms of the specific content that is needed and the type of assistance activity or relationship that is selected.

Lessons Learned about Effective Technical Assistance

The comprehensive centers have learned how to deliver effective technical assistance to a broad range of clients who need to solve complex educational problems. Through their work with states, districts, tribes and schools, comprehensive centers network providers have identified the following key principles underlying effective technical assistance.

- ◆ Technical assistance must be built upon

a clear understanding of the client's condition, needs, capacity and degree of progress in implementing improvement efforts; that is, assistance must be "tailored" to fit the client in each technical assistance effort.

- ◆ Technical assistance must be carried out as a relationship of trust between the provider and the client, a relationship that is grounded by mutual commitment to the improvement effort.
- ◆ Effective technical assistance requires a sustained effort over time, with regular communication, often face-to-face, and good interpersonal relations with a broad group of individuals within an organization.
- ◆ Technical assistance must be able to change and evolve over time, both in content and process, as the client proceeds through a change effort and as the client conditions, needs and capacity evolve.
- ◆ Technical assistance efforts and resources are maximized through the collaborative efforts of the individual comprehensive centers, increasing the effectiveness of the comprehensive centers network as a whole.

Role of the Comprehensive Centers Network within the IASA

The technical assistance efforts of the comprehensive centers network are clearly "hands-on." Although the primary clients of this technical assistance are defined as the states, the network's efforts take into account the needs of all levels of the system, and its activities often address and involve interaction with all: states, districts, schools and teachers. The impact of comprehensive centers' activities is at those levels where implementation of IASA is put into practice on a day-to-day basis, affecting the lives of educators and students.

In carrying out this role, the comprehensive centers interact with, as appropriate, other resources supported through the IASA, such as the regional educational laboratories, state literacy resource centers, vocational resource centers, and Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia.

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Academic and Proficiency Gains Expected of Students in High Quality Programs Designed to Meet their Needs (a.k.a., the Expected Gains Study)

The Southwest Comprehensive Center (Region IX) is pleased to announce a project newly funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA): The Expected Gains Study. The purpose of this study is to develop a standard by which to measure bilingual program effectiveness. More specifically, the comprehensive center will determine what should be expected academically (i.e., in English language arts and reading, home language arts and reading, and math) from students in effective, high quality programs that have been specifically designed to meet their needs.

The study will provide information greatly needed by local programs serving English language learners (ELLs) and will ensure that a nationally recognized set of technical assistance providers (the 15 regional comprehensive centers) are answering the “how much” question in the same manner.

Phase I, the design phase, ended in September. The center conducted a focus group to discuss the design and implications of the study; developed survey instruments and interview protocols; and sought nominations of schools with three years of positive outcomes, supported by longitudinal data. The nominated schools were contacted via telephone and/or mail to complete a brief survey of items related to programs for ELLs, numbers of ELLs, languages of ELLs, funding sources for

programs, program design and implementation, and student outcomes for ELLs, former ELLs (also called FEP), and English only students. These data provide basic, demographic information about a large number of programs.

Phase II will continue for about six months. The number of schools is being reduced to those that do, indeed, appear to have “effective, high quality programs specifically designed to meet the needs of LEP students.” This information will determine which schools are selected as “finalists” and will allow the expected gains study to describe the features of an “effective, high quality” program.

The study will operationalize “effective and high quality” by combining two types of information: (1) a literature search defining features typically seen in effective schools (e.g., Even Start’s “Quality Indicators” and Title VII’s “Academic Excellence” schools) and (2) the features of schools identified as “finalists” for the expected gains study in which students show the highest test scores. However, most importantly, “effective and high quality” will be defined by the student outcomes observed for a minimum of three years. The data collected during this phase will focus on the gains that can be expected of ELLs receiving services in effective programs designed to meet their needs.

In Phase III, a maximum of 10 schools will be identified for more intensive on-site

visits, interviews and data collection. Each of these schools may receive a stipend to help offset the time and effort required and to encourage their participation in the study.

The center will develop a report on the methodology of the study, the overall findings, and gains that can be expected of students in English language proficiency and the academic areas of language arts, reading and math. This product will be widely disseminated.

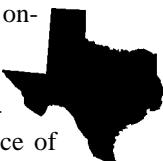
The overall question that the study seeks to answer is twofold: (1) What does a well-designed, successful program for ELLs “look like?” and (2) What gains do ELLs in such programs make in the content areas of language arts (English and home language), reading and math? The results are important to the federally-funded technical assistance centers, the 15 comprehensive centers, and the local programs serving ELLs. The expected gains study will provide needed information that will help local programs determine whether they are meeting the needs of ELLs and whether students are increasing their academic and linguistic skills to the extent anticipated.

To nominate a school for the expected gains study, contact your local comprehensive center. All comprehensive centers have the nomination forms. You also may call Judith Wilde or Sharon Yates at 505-891-6111.

Products

STAR Center’s Teacher’s Internet Use Guide

The STAR Center* has developed a step-by-step Internet user guide that enables teachers to use and develop standards-based lessons. Teachers save time and energy by using links to online lessons and curriculum units that can be customized for a class. The guide is a dynamic and growing resource of lessons created by Texas teachers.



It is a hands-on, hyperlinked tool. The self-paced manual provides a framework for teachers to work through the process of

planning Internet-based lessons that are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. The *Teacher’s Internet Use Guide* gives instructors the opportunity to create lessons on their own that address the new standards that states and districts are adopting. Rather than being “spoon fed” lessons, teachers will learn and practice the process necessary to integrate the Internet into instruction. To access the *Teacher’s Internet Use Guide* visit the STAR Center web site at <www.starcenter.org>.

*The STAR Center is the comprehensive center that serves Texas. It is a collaboration of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation. For information about STAR Center services call 1-888-FYI-STAR.

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Yin, R. and L.J. White. *Federal Technical Assistance Efforts: Lessons and Improvement in Education for 1984 and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: Cosmos Corporation, 1984).

Comprehensive Centers Network

Region I

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212-995-4199 fax
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504-831-5242 fax
URL: www.sedl.org/secac

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Region XIII

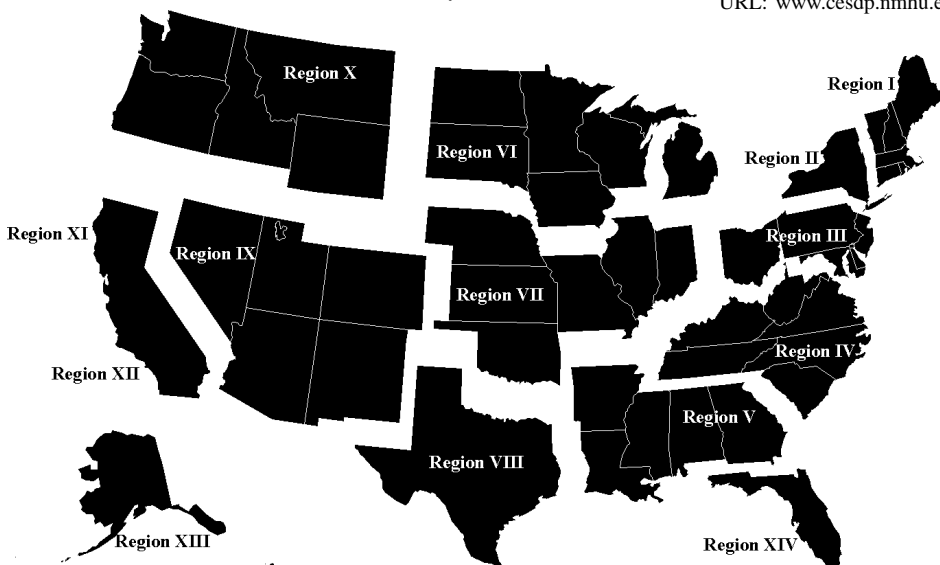
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Region XV

Also includes:
• American Samoa
• Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
• Federated States of Micronesia (Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap)
• Republic of the Marshall Islands
• Republic of Palau

*Comprehensive Centers
Network On-line
www.ccnetwork.org*

The comprehensive regional assistance centers were created by the U.S. Department of Education to provide technical assistance services to state education agencies and local school districts who are implementing education reform efforts under the Improving America's Schools Act.

