

Introductions, Updates and Today's Goals

Meeting Goals:

1. A prioritized list (at least a rough ordering) of projects for the research agenda that we can take to DPI leadership
2. Ideas to maintain the current research infrastructure institutionalized through the transition to new DPI leadership this July.

This was the first WERAC meeting in nearly two years after a hiatus that was lengthened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After a round of introductions, Carl updated the group on 3 research related activities that DPI had been working on in the interim.

First, cabinet participated in an agency-wide initiative inventory led by DPI's implementation science consultants with technical assistance from that National Implementation Research Network and the Wisconsin Minnesota Comprehensive Center. The goal of the initiative inventory was to strategically identify potential areas of alignment, gaps and overlaps across divisions relative to the agency's [five focus areas](#):

- Effective Instruction
- School and Instructional Leadership
- Family and Community Engagement
- Safe and Supported Students
- Meaningful Relationships with Students

At the initiative inventory process, we had information about 105 candidate initiatives. These candidate initiatives were evaluated based on two criteria, whether they met NIRN's definition of what an initiative is and the degree to which they met an evidence standard devised by the implementation science consultants and our TA partners. Of the 105 candidates: more than half (56) did not meet the initiative standard and 10 fully met the evidence standard and at least partially met the initiative standard. The WI-MN Comp Center advised DPI researchers on the Policy and Budget Team to focus on those 10 initiatives as a place to start in supporting the agency move toward more rigorous evidence-based initiatives that are informed by monitoring program implementation and fidelity.

Second, we discussed the new post-SLDS 2015 landscape of research related groups that provide connections among DPI and the broader education research community in

Wisconsin and among the various units within DPI. First there is WERAC itself which connects DPI leadership with the education research community, then there is the Research Evaluation Partnership (REP) Workgroup that grew out of the research portion of the 2015 grant. The REP workgroup connects researchers and evaluators that regularly work with DPI and directors of various program areas across the agency. The purpose of this group is to reduce redundancies and coordinate evaluations and the resulting translational research artifacts so that we are using consistent language in our outreach to districts and other stakeholders.

Finally, Carl provided a brief overview of the updated research tracker and the new research repository (zotero bibliographic database) of publications based on DPI data sharing agreements.

Also, this is a farewell meeting from Kurt.

2021-22 Research Agenda

With all of that catch-up complete, Carl provided a brief overview of the draft research agenda that was distributed to the group ahead of time--the five DPI focus areas plus sixth category called equal opportunities and equitable outcomes which was meant to include research questions that straddle the boundaries between 4K-12 public education: including factors in early childhood; success after 12th grade in postsecondary education, the labor market and as active citizens; and questions that cross into other programs that serve our students.

Discussion points:

- Karen - as kids are coming back to school as the pandemic abates I think all these topics are key to address to try and make up for the lost time/learning loss
 - Pandemic provides a nice way to crystalize the issues we had been facing ... bringing them into sharp relief and also provides opportunity to learn about innovative practices that may have arisen in the wake of covid (necessity is the mother of invention ...)
- Curtis cautions us how we are framing **equal** vs **equitable** opportunities. “Equal’ opportunities is often viewed as the end of the responsibility of education. I think we should be talking about ‘equitable’ opportunities that adjust opportunities provided to students according to the opportunities they have outside of school.”
 - Carl - I agree that care needs to be taken so that we have a consistent message, given that the meanings behind both terms are becoming more

fluid and politically charged. The language should stress that opportunities can only be equal if students are treated equitably ... i.e. provided with the supports/resources they need. I will work on this language to make it clear, especially in light of the comments below from Curtis and Hilary re: keeping priority area #6.

- Annalee - have you reflected at all about how the 6 topic areas interact with each other ... obviously #6 interacts with all of them - implicit and explicit connections between them.
 - Incorporate #6 explicitly into the other five times
 - Curtis also suggested that it would be better to fold #6 into the other five instead of having it as a stand-alone topic area ... perhaps in an effort to have mutually exclusive topic areas.
 - Hilary wants to keep at least some version of #6 to remind us that we need to be thinking about what's happening outside the classroom school/how that impacts kids/how that can inform practices in the other 5 areas, and how DPI might want to work with other agencies/actors to pursue better outcomes for kids and families.
 - It reminds Annalee of the MLSS conceptualizes the relationship between the topic areas: <https://dpi.wi.gov/rti>
- Brad - calls attention to all the federal money that is coming in and how that can be used to and is being used in these areas and how the various initiatives that are going to pop up and DPI should try to gather information about how well they work and can be sustained/scaled/etc.
- Karen - from her conversations with administrators in CESA 9 is that the two biggest issues they are identifying as areas of greatest importance in the wake of COVID are Effective Instruction and Safe and Supported students
 - Good and Bad - some students benefited from remote, others giant challenges (access)
- Kerry - wondering about the role of covid in this and what sort of shifts needs to happen to capture covid's impact ... Can you give us context about what sort of data/information DPI has related to Covid's impact? E.g. wide range of experiences for student teachers in Waukesha County
 - Started collecting student address data along with internet accessibility/quality and number of devices
 - Push is working with broadband service providers to connect deals et
 - Collect coursework instructional method - not mandatory
 - Surveyed schools a bit (Act 185 and reopening plans)
 - With DHS - closure data for P-EBT payments in lieu of school lunches

- Percival - I heard Kerry's question as broad, what aspects are we going to keep and what will change ... this is a watershed moment where we could drastically shift how we do education. Also there is a difference between being a good teacher in person and being able to exploit/leverage technology (LMS/zoom meetings) for teaching
- Eric - How long do we imagine that schools will be virtual
 - Aleksis - has been in person all year
 - Rick - has been all year ... needs are going to be so different moving forward -- e.g. going forward, Rib Lake who has been in person all year will have a different set of needs compared to MMSD or MPS who have been mostly virtual or just returning. We should probably divide the 5 focus areas up depending on this difference.
 - Karen - mostly in person up north -- never waste a good pandemic: last year has really pushed us in expanding what we are able to do. What should we carry forward (and NOT) from the pandemic. Opportunities for kids that we want to build on.
 - Kurt - perhaps follow up with CESAs to monitor emerging practices
 - Beth - agree with Karen - it is much messier than that, don't want to lose a chance to integrate different kinds of things that are working for students.
 - Eric - this is a promising avenue to go down, but virtual is still a small niche in the education system as it stands - just be mindful about where we allocate resources compared to potential to impact practice for the greatest number of kids.

RA22 Focus: Equity Indicator System

Justin talked to the group about one of the projects we are working on as part of the 2021-22 research agenda. Creating an Equity Indicator System. This was inspired by the Promoting Excellence for All (PEFA) report produced back in 2014. Unlike existing dashboards, this would likely be a report/webpage that would assess whether Wisconsin is making progress on our mission of equity for all. It is also informed by the Equity Indicator System publications from the National Academies of Science Education and Medicine.

Initially the system would include the familiar indicators that we already have established data and metrics for and over time we will add other indicators as they are developed. Our ask here is to help us prioritize those metrics/data that we don't currently have solid data and metrics for and also suggest any key metrics that may be missing.

Hilary - Pre-K we just received PDG and work with DCF on their plan for using this money. So much evidence that early childhood is key and volunteers to help with that work.

Eric - echo early childhood focus. Perhaps we could use some of the money coming down from the feds about this.

Carl - use this group to figure out ways around the constraints we are working within.

Curtis questioned about teacher quality - want to make sure we are specific about what we mean here - stable, easy to measure, equitably distributed across wisconsin and credentialed teachers

Grades - good measure, MPS has looked at the distribution of F's and found that 25% of teachers give 75% of Fs and disproportionately to black students. So not just GPA but distribution and looking at the people doing the grading not just those getting the grades.

Karen - resources for metrics around students and mental health - could tap into Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools Center for possible indicators on the social emotional side of things.

RA22 Focus: Convenings and Rapid Response Research

Annalee provided some examples of Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) activities that are taking place right now ... note this is not a comprehensive list. Gave us updates about the new KmB Flashtalk series, Youth Empowerment series with DPI, Educational Policy Studies course flash talks, Equity Connect discussions on family engagement.

She also discussed some of the rapid response research projects that are funded in part by the current SLDS (2019) grant.

- Scan of district learning plans
- Review of youth engagement and partnership approaches
- Family engagement technical assistance and policy brief
- Innovative practices brief

Wrap-up Research Agenda

This was a chance for WERAC members to cover any other thoughts they were having about the research agenda.

Hilary - looking at preamble of research agenda where we talk about the importance of adult behaviors that we are including the adult behaviors of creating policy, and deciding what gets funded, making the lives of teachers easier.

Aleksis - question about equity indicators project, any plans to make them available at the district/school level? The benefits are putting equity information into the hands of more people at the district level.

Justin - current vision is for a statewide report. A little worried about producing one per district given experience working on the report cards about the potential for people seeing this as yet another accountability report rather than a tool for exploration and self reflection. Carl - perhaps there is a way we can make the methodology or something available for districts to easily adapt/produce. Also there are issues about delivering potentially sensitive information to districts.

Eric - remember that 4K is part of the public education system, especially as more districts are exploring full-day 4K and increased state support for this.

Percival - was going to say something similar about thinking about education from beginning to end ... more of a P20 ... Pre-K should be the priority for equity indicators.

Main Messages Carl heard from the discussion:

- Prioritize projects that deal with the fallout from COVID and the brave new world we are entering into
- Articulating the structures and interactions among the priority areas so that people can see that they are purposely chosen to get us from where we are to where we want to be.
- Early childhood should be the first stretch equity indicator topic we tackle.

Positioning Research & Evaluation for Next State Superintendent

Advice/recommendations on positioning research at DPI through the transition.

Eric - could certainly point to the productivity of the 2015 SLDS and even the current, 2019 SLDS grant as added value and show how this has benefitted the state.

Annalee - emphasize resources and **capacity** that these relationships are bringing to DPI instead of focusing on the time/effort/resources DPI uses to maintain them. It is a net

positive. Are you asking how do we describe the research landscape at DPI or how do you justify it?

Carl, good question. The more we can get written down as established practices the better because it is harder to undo something vs approve something brand new. Looking for advice about how to hit the ground running and finding the next champion for research at the agency after Kurt's departure.

Hilary - IRP certainly happy to get together and get time to meet with new leadership to have a conversation about what they need and how they want to proceed.

Karen - all of these covid dollars have few strings attached right now, but we should be able to account for how we used it to make up for issues introduced by the pandemic. How will we measure the impact of what we plan to do before we start doing it? We should actively position ourselves to answer the questions that will come.

Action Items for Next Time

- Coordination efforts re: the three groups. Have we gotten to a point where the three groups are working together in a complementary manner?
- Progress on Research Agenda Projects
- Newsletter (Karen) / channel (Percival) for ongoing discussions to keep the discussion going and provide more frequent interactions