

Welcome and Updates

The meeting began with introductions and an overview of the day's agenda. Although there is budgeted time to discuss the 2019 iteration of the SLDS grant, no RFP has been published by the Department of Education. However, continuing thought and discussion is still warranted because we anticipate that once the RFP is out, the application deadline will come quickly. By all accounts, the Department still wants the grant to begin at the beginning of the fiscal year (October 1, 2019).

Brad and Kerry L. updated the group on the status of the current SLDS work to evaluation DPI's continuous improvement process (CIP). A workgroup has been created with cross-division membership and representatives from the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) and the Wisconsin RTI Center. The group meets every 1-2 months as schedules allow to make sure the members stay engaged and momentum is sustained towards an evaluation plan with cross-division/team support. Accomplishments to date include the creation of a living scope of work detailing overall goals and potential evaluation questions as well as a data inventory to see what information we are already collecting as part of our current business processes/contracted evaluations. Upcoming work will focus on specifying DPI's theory of action for our coordinated CIP work and creating a logic model that reflects this theory and outlines our current activities and our expected outcomes.

There was also a brief back-and-forth about the extent to which educator preparation programs (EPPs) and education leadership programs incorporate/train students in the DPI supported CIP process in general and the WISEdash-Data Inquiry Journal (DIJ)-WISElearn-Educator Effectiveness software ecosystem, specifically. Kerry K. mentioned that, to her knowledge, this was done conceptually, but teaching specific tools is a bit problematic, since teachers may end up in districts that use other tools.

Annalee and Tony updated the group on the Wisconsin Knowledge Mobilization project (KMb). A primary goal of the project is a sustainable process for curating research artifacts and making them discoverable in DPI's resource repository WISELearn. The KMb team has worked with WISELearn and other DPI stakeholders to determine how to best structure the curated artifacts on the platform. As it stands, the team will create one Knowledge Mobilization hub that will serve as the parent to several subsections, called root cause hubs. Each root cause hub will correspond to one of the critical component features of an equitable multilevel system of support (e.g., family and student engagement; positive culture). Equity will be embedded into each of these root cause hubs. Systemic inequity will also be treated in a stand-alone root cause hub.

The group described how the CIP evaluation and KMb projects intertwine, with the CIP evaluation also serving as a process evaluation of KMb. For example, the CIP evaluation will examine how people are using the root cause hubs that the KMb project creates. Kurt emphasized the interactions among the software tools we provide to help schools engage in CIP (i.e., WISELearn, DIJ, WISEdash). How well do these tools align and achieve coherence? How do the platforms evolve as part of the feedback loops created by the KMb project?

Annalee and Tony went into more detail on how the curation process is evolving:

- They are currently hearing from educators about how many resources they want to receive when they have a question or need an evidence-based practice. Too few and they likely won't adopt one of the strategies. Too many and they will become overwhelmed by options.
- One challenge is how you accommodate for different important school-level features in the synthesis of evidence.
- In many cases, curation has already been addressed through published meta-analyses.

Another goal for KMb is to create communities of practice around the curated evidence-based strategies. WISELearn software has some capability for this--users can become "members" of a hub and view other members.

Tony updated the group on a KMb sub-project: "Mapping the Landscape". A document analysis of CESA activities in schools was conducted. One thousand three hundred fifty-one CESA professional development offerings were condensed into 21 themes. More detail on the results may be found [in his Google Slide]. The project only examined titles and descriptions of the sessions, a next step will be to figure out how best to learn whether or not the actual content taught in the PD activities is grounded in research evidence.

Action Items from Fall 2018

The group revisited the sustainability action items identified during the Fall 2018 meeting pertaining to faculty-graduate student engagement with DPI. How will we make sure that these connections are being created and maintained? Hilary will work with Carl on engaging student fellows at the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP). Carl and other DPI researchers will visit IRP annually to discuss the agency's research priorities. Hilary will work to set up a Learning Exchange. Tony is working with the new Network Fellows coordinator at DPI to better align the Network Fellowship program to the research agenda. Kurt emphasized that, for all the faculty/student partnership work, our research agenda should be the organizing frame.

Since we will be engaging student groups from across UW-Madison, would it be useful to organize opportunities for the students to meet and talk with one another? For the Interdisciplinary Training Program fellows, one or two meetings per year may be helpful, but there isn't a need for the students to form a cohort-like group that meets regularly. A convening in the fall and possibly another meeting at the annual CESA conference in spring would suffice.

Kerry L. would like to schedule a poster session-like event each spring as an effort to get more DPI involvement in the student research community. A time for a group of students to be available at DPI to discuss their work. It can be difficult to get broad DPI representation to research seminars, especially if they are on campus. Kerry thinks that a space for people to stop and chat about project(s) for 5-10 minutes might get significantly more participation than one where people commit an hour to one or two topics at a time.

Unanswered questions from this discussion include:

- How do we track who is doing what on the research agenda given the new interactions and student engagement?
- How can we increase partnership activities with IHEs other than UW-Madison?

Kurt discussed the possibility of sustaining grant partnership efforts via a unified contract. In this situation, DPI would annually appropriate a pot of money (from across divisions) and work collaboratively with our research partners to set a work plan. Questions we would like investigated would come from a combination of the Research Agenda and our CIP process. A benefit in packaging services in this way is increased coordination towards mutual goals (e.g., equity), and better forecasting of resources. Coordination of efforts within UW-Madison offices/departments is likely feasible, but there are significant logistical barriers to using this approach across departments.

Because the data inquiry journal plays an integral role in knowledge mobilization/coordinated improvement, we projected the DIJ and walked through the software as a group (for an overview see [DIJ At-a-Glance](#) and [DIJ Overview Slides](#)). Conceptually, there are three parts to a journal entry:

- How do you ask a good question capable of promoting improvement?
- Questions to prompt a team conversation about "What are you doing?"
- Questions to help teams operationalize improvement steps: How will you monitor the plan? How will you measure success? Who is responsible?

How can the DIJ and resulting data be linked to the SLDS? Eric suggested we use the SLDS to identify schools with the biggest gaps. We can then look to see whether these schools use the

data inquiry journal. And if they are, do they identify equity gaps as a problem they need to address? Kurt mentioned this idea is a great example of a project arising from our continuous improvement efforts.

Another SLDS Opportunity

DPI will begin applying for the next SLDS grant as soon as the RFP comes out. We anticipate a large part of this application will focus on system interoperability and modernization. In addition, we would also like to submit an application with a component to continue the research-practice partnership work, with a focus on supporting continuous improvement. We also anticipate there being room for collaboration on research projects enabled by, or take advantage of, the interoperability and modernization work. For example, create additional warning indicators or making DPI's existing indicators better by including more than just K-12 data in the predictive models.

Kurt ran through some other ideas from DPI's internal brainstorming. They included:

- Automating the annual process by which districts affirm their participation in data collection. The process would also be modified so districts can opt to a) grant CESAs access to student-level data for instructional support, b) affirm their participation in research projects and using their local data (e.g., PALS, STAR) for research, and c) allows administrators to indicate research areas they are interested in. If this third aspect is realized, the annual process that districts already complete could also form the backbone of a research registry in support of the continuous improvement knowledge mobilization work.
- Work with WCER to stand up an instance of Ed-Fi. This would create better consistency in data structure by using a common data standard. There are many benefits in terms of efficiency, especially with regards to business rules and data transfer. By adopting the same data standards, it is also much easier for DPI to operationalize research results into decision-support tools that we can then make available to districts.
- Work on the E-Cumulative folder concept. Getting all the data to transfer may be a big lift, but we at least want to be able to get a student's IEP moved digitally across districts, regardless of the student information systems the districts use. This is a civil rights issues--students have a right to appropriate placement as soon as possible upon entering a school.
- Finalizing DPI's master data use agreements with IRP and WCER.

Kurt asked the group for projects they would like to see proposed in a new grant and emphasized that DPI is open to projects not on our internally-developed list provided they a) riff on the Ed-Fi

and interoperability concepts and/or fit within our framework and support our continuous improvement efforts.

A project to increase interdepartmental data sharing was proposed. This project could be designed to help DPI more easily obtain student-level socio-economic indicators, especially for schools who meet community eligibility requirements. The work could also support DPI's vision for a community indicators project (i.e., using GIS spatial data to map community resources alongside educational indicators). Another idea would be to build out the Wisconsin Readiness Equity Network (WREN) project started in the last grant cycle. More information on WREN may be found [in the Google Doc].

Research Agenda 2020-2021

Carl F. started this conversation by updating the group on our progress fulfilling the 2018-19 research agenda WERAC helped create. Overall, of the 12 projects that were initially proposed, there are only three that have not been addressed in some way. Other updates:

- DPI is continuing to work with the UW system on the project to better understand predictors of the need for remediation when students begin postsecondary work.
- A tool to predict success in AP courses is currently being piloted.

The group very briefly discussed the possible impact, if any, a new administration might have on DPI's research priorities. Kerry L. and Carl F. did not anticipate major changes. However, there may be a greater focus on both early childhood and student mental health.

Discussing the development of the department's 2020-2021 research agenda, DPI's internal capacity for research projects is estimated to be 1 to 1.5 projects per year per analyst. Assuming two analysts, we will be looking to specify 4-6 projects. If another analyst is supported by another SLDS grant, 6-8 internal projects are possible. As the agenda setting process moves forward, we will be seeking input from WERAC on topics and projects. At the moment we expect the general topic areas to be largely the same as 2018-2019. However, a little reorganization/reprioritization is possible. For example, changing the current Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) topic to Mental Health, of which SEL would be considered a component.

Reflection on WERAC

The last topic of the day was the utility and effectiveness of WERAC. Carl F. asked the group for their thoughts on the utility of WERAC, their satisfaction as members, and suggestions for improving the council. The group provided the following suggestions:

- Greater diversity:

- Race-ethnic, rural-urban, non-UW Madison based researchers.
- More practitioner (i.e. teacher) involvement. Possible ideas include:
 - Evening meetings
 - Going to them (perhaps at some statewide conferences?)
 - Phone/Video conferencing in
 - Find funding to pay for substitutes if meetings remain as they are
 - Collaborate with WI teachers of the year or other advisory groups that include teachers/practitioners.
- Representatives from EPPs.
- University student involvement
- More emphasis on advisement/better clarification of our goals for each meeting

One idea for accomplishing the first two bullets above would be to keep a core group that meets regularly and add an extended group that attends based on the topics to be covered. For example, have bulk of the meeting focus on one or two areas/projects from DPI's research agenda (or emerging root causes from CIP) and invite/recruit interested DPI (and other key state agency) folks and guest researchers/students that would be organized by the core group. During this discussion, Carl F. also indicated his support if members wanted to bring a graduate student to also participate.

Miscellaneous Notes

- The Statewide CESA conference is scheduled for the end of May, 2019. The Network, DPI, and WCER are co-sponsors of the event. The focus is knowledge utilization for continuous improvement.
- How can the KMb project support instructional mentorship and coaching? This is a significant need. It is also a component of DPI's unified technical assistance contract with WISExplore.