Year Six: Quarter 1
CFDA: 84.326B  The National Institute for Urban School Improvement
THE MISSION OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR URBAN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (NIUSI) is to partner with Regional Resource Centers to develop powerful networks of urban local education agencies and schools that embrace and implement a data-based, continuous improvement approach for inclusive practices. Embedded within this approach is a commitment to evidence-based practice in early intervention, universal design, literacy and positive behavior supports.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), of the U.S. Department of Education, has funded NIUSI to facilitate the unification of current general and special education reform efforts as these are implemented in the nation’s urban school districts. NIUSI’s creation reflects OSEP’s long-standing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all children, specifically those with disabilities, in communities challenged and enriched by the urban experience.
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Overview

IDEA ‘04 mandates that students with disabilities receive their education with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. The national trend is toward this goal: In 1998-1999, according to the U.S. Department of Education, 47.42% of students with disabilities nationally were being educated for more than 80% of the day in general education classrooms. In contrast, for most urban school districts the average percentage is about 30%. The National Institute for Urban School Improvement (NIUSI) has ten years of experience and success in supporting capacity building in urban schools and school districts so that students with disabilities are engaged in high quality curriculum and learning experiences that improve their ability to succeed in school and in post-school opportunities. Previously headquartered at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center, NIUSI has recently relocated to Arizona State University.

The mission of NIUSI is to partner with Regional Resource Centers to develop powerful networks of urban local education agencies and schools that embrace and implement a data-based, continuous improvement approach for inclusive practices. Embedded within this approach is a commitment to evidence-based practice in early intervention, universal design, literacy and positive behavior supports. The work addresses five broad goals that together support the capacity of urban schools and school districts to engage students with disabilities in high quality curriculum and learning experiences that improve their ability to succeed in school. These goals include (1) a focus on Continuous Improvement; (2) continued Research and Development; (3) coherent and culturally responsive Professional Development; (4) national Networking and Dissemination; and (5) Participatory and Multi-Method Evaluation.

NIUSI OUTCOMES

1. Increased number of students with disabilities served effectively in general education settings.
2. Increased use of research validated culturally responsive practices in early intervention, reading, behavior, and universal designs for learning.
3. Increased number of inclusive schools with records of effective, achievement oriented, culturally responsive success with students with disabilities.
4. Increased number of effective improvement strategies for special and general education professional development and technical assistance that are unified and coherent across schools in large, urban school districts.

This report details NIUSI’s work in the four arenas of Continuous Improvement, Research and Development, Professional Development, and Networking and Dissemination during the reporting period of July 17th through October 16th, 2007.

Continuous Improvement

GOAL 1: Increase knowledge and understanding through evaluation of current practice, change efforts and impact.

1.1 Collaborate with 9 Synergy Sites.
1.2 Develop a web-based, sensitive and responsive continuous improvement system.
1.3 Assist Synergy Site in developing annual and tri-annual cycles of improvement

SUMMARY

The work of the Continuous Improvement Core Team has focused on responding to the professional development needs of the Synergy Sites currently involved with the Project through a variety of technical assistance activities. We continued developing a District On the Move for each district, collecting data in Memphis and Madison. The On the Move series highlights districts’ systemic change efforts.
In October, Dr. Kozleski traveled to Madison Public Schools (MPS) to tour buildings, attend district data review meeting, and provide technical assistance. In collaboration with MPS, Dr. Kozleski reviewed the district’s coaching model for teacher support. She also met with district leaders regarding a new early intervening services model, data systems, and procedures for ensuring culturally responsive practices for special education referral.

In October and December, Dr. Kozleski traveled to Memphis, TN to lead training for 150 school personnel on how to use NIUSI and NCCRESt tools and products to inform practice, particularly in addressing IDEA and NCLB. Dr. Kozleski reviewed national policy and law, provided a foundation for understanding disproportionality, and described a model for support at school and district level to provide support for inclusive, culturally responsive practices.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**
- Technical assistance provided in Madison and Memphis

**NEXT STEPS**
- Continued development of District on the Move for Memphis, Madison, and Las Vegas.

## Research and Development

**GOAL 2: Synthesize and expand research-based practices for linguistically and culturally diverse students.**

2.1 Use a conceptual framework for analysis and synthesis of available information.

2.2 Produce and update an accessible series of synthesis products and working papers.

2.3 Produce products grounded in the work of participating SEAs and LEA’s achievement

2.4 Create materials and products and test research-based strategies.

### SUMMARY

The Research and Development Core Team has been busy with a number of tasks related to the development of research-based instruments and tools to be used in technical assistance and the change process. A new OnPoint addressing the importance of creating social networks to help students gain access to social capital is in development. The OnPoint includes vignettes that provide examples of service learning, school change, and civic engagement projects that exemplify ways to develop social networks within schools and with the community at large, as well as tools to help schools begin this process on their own. Staff also presented at the Teacher Education Division of CEC national conference in Milwaukee.

NIUSI’s Legacy Project is now underway. The project brings together scholars and educators from throughout the country to create a book addressing an array of important topics that contribute to building systems of urban, inclusive education. Contributors met in October to review the systemic change framework that grounds NIUSI’s work and to discuss the essential features of urban school life that must be included in each section of the book. Based on NIUSI’s ongoing initiatives in 12 of the largest urban school systems in the United States, along with the research and experiences of our Advisory Board, authors of our On Points, and ongoing collaborations with the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, the Centre for Urban Education at the University of Manchester, data from all 50 states in the US as well as our own GIS maps, collaborators identified five key themes: Systemic Reform as a Work in Progress,
Democraticizing Schools, Bureaucratizing School Systems, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Leadership; and Emancipatory Policy. The book will address the preceding themes from a variety of perspectives, grounded in the knowledge that we operate within systems of practice, policy, and research that constrain and emancipate our knowledge. Each chapter in this book will open with a one page case study that is drawn from authentic situations and is used to anchor and frame the issues discussed within the chapter. Contributors include Cynthia Alexander, Sue Abplanalp, Beverly Cross, David Garcia, Dorothy Garrison-Wade, Jo-Etta Gonzalez, Donna Hart Tervalon, Jack Jorgenson, Kathleen King, Elizabeth Kozleski, Evelyne Milorin, Elaine Mulligan, Sheryl Petty, Marlene Simmons, Anne Smith, Joanne Vattiato, Grace Zamora Duràn, and Shelley Zion.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- Legacy Project underway
- Social networks OnPoint in progress

NEXT STEPS
- Prepare papers for 2008-2009 national conferences.
- Continue Legacy Project.

Professional Development

GOAL 3: Leverage continued improvement in Inclusive Practices in Urban Schools through regional technical assistance plans, collaborative work with Leading Urban Districts focusing on Research Validated Practices in early intervention, reading, behavior, and Universal Design.

- 3.1 Support knowledge through Virtual and Real-Time symposia and Leadership Academies.
- 3.2 Professional Development planned and personalized.
- 3.3 Online mentoring and Critical Feedback: Our Professional Learning Portfolios (PLP).

SUMMARY
The work of the Professional Development Core Team focused on professional development on topics of diversity and inclusive education at state or district request. Assistance in moving towards work plan goals was also a priority. Professional development materials continue to be researched and designed; in particular, Universal Designs for Learning.

Professional learning modules are developed by NIUSI for the networks of schools engaging their faculty, staff, families, students, and community members in ongoing renewal and systemic change. NIUSI’s professional learning team creates every module by first, creating a visual matrix that covers all of the desired outcomes and activities for reaching these outcomes to be included in the module, and then moving forward to create the materials. The current module on Universal Designs for Learning has its roots in Universal Design, which foregrounds equitable opportunities and access to spaces, information and participation for all by creating environments and products that accommodate as many individuals as possible from the beginning. Universal Designs for Learning (UDL) extends Universal Design into the field of education. While initially defined as a method to minimize barriers students may experience when learning new concepts, NIUSI’s newest professional learning module presents UDL as an approach to providing access to robust opportunities to learn for a diverse range
of learners in inclusive educational environments. NIUSI’s professional learning team designed this module from the “ground up” as this is a topic not addressed in professional learning materials available from other sources. Accordingly, this module leads participants through UDL activities and short informational presentations that focus on applying UDL across the curriculum, designing inclusive classroom learning environments, assessing students’ ongoing progress, adjusting instruction, and addressing legislation that impacts curricula and assessment utilized in schools. Our team engaged in a collaborative process to create effective professional learning materials for this module, which are in the form of visual presentations, activities for learning groups to engage in, and guides for facilitators to use while guiding learning groups through the module. The process for creating materials included extensive research on the concept of UDL, discussions about the utility of UDL for inclusive educational systems, and multiple run-throughs of all material in “real time” in order to ensure quality.

A new Professional Learning Module entitled, Whole School Learning Communities is also currently in development. The goal of the module is to allow participants to engage in the transformation of their schools into learning communities that are a reflection and product of the surrounding community. The module achieves this goal by using the Systemic Change Framework as a guide for participants to follow and utilize in the identification of possible strengths and weaknesses within their own school systems. By using the framework participants will identify and implement ways to initiate change through empowering the voice of staff, students, families, and the community at large.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**
- Continued development of the UDL module
- Continued development of the UDL module

**NEXT STEPS**
- Complete UDL Module

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**Networking and Dissemination**

**GOAL 4:** Engage national discourse in local, professional practice, and policy communities on improving educational outcomes for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Urban Districts focusing on Research Validated Practices in early intervention, reading, behavior, and Universal Design.

4.1 Develop a strategic cycle for the Institute’s products and events.
4.2 Design, develop, and maintain a technology infrastructure for the Institute.
4.3 Use the Institute’s technology infrastructure to collaborate with institutions.

**SUMMARY**

A continued focus of the N&D team has been on promoting the website and EquiNews as a means of steering educators, researchers, and families toward meaningful resources and to highlight individual, district, and state efforts to create inclusive educational systems. Monthly editions of the EquiNews were developed for distribution to the listserv, which currently includes 9,077 members throughout the nation.

The NIUSI Library is also being expanded and improved. New articles, reports, and books consistent with the NIUSI mission and systemic change framework are being added and existing resources are being updated so that the library can continue to serve as an important resource to educators, scholars and families.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**
- 185,571 web hits
- 9,420 unique visitors to website
- 232 NIUSI documents and tools downloaded from website
- 9,077 members currently included on listserv

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**EVENT** | **DATE** | **ATTENDEES** | **ACTIVITY/PRESENTATION**
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Marcus Institute on FASD | October 22-26 | Elizabeth Kozleski | Attendee
Next Steps

- Continue development of EquiNews
- Continue development of library

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Synergy Site Quarterly Update

Memphis Public Schools, Memphis, TN

In October and December, 150 school personnel in Memphis participated in training on how to use NIUSI and NCCREST tools and products to inform practice, particularly in addressing IDEA and NCLB. Content also included national policy and law, foundations for understanding disproportionality, and a model for support at school and district level to provide support for inclusive, culturally responsive practices.

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Synergy Site Quarterly Update

Clark County Schools, Las Vegas, NV

Clark County Schools is a large urban district, operating 326 schools and serving 302,763 students in the 2006-07 school year. CCSD has working with the National Institute for Urban School Improvement to create inclusive schools for the diverse population of Las Vegas. CCSD teachers use research-based practices, current technology, and community involvement to help all students participate in classroom learning activities.

- This year, CCSD Superintendent Walt Ruffles introduced his "Keep Your Eye on the CAP" program. CAP stands for Climate, Academics and Participation. All three of these elements are areas that the school district and members of the public can focus on to improve education:
- Climate: CCSD is working to improve the culture in CCSD and create a more welcoming atmosphere in which parents, students and teachers can work together to build a better learning environment. By allowing schools and teachers to tailor their educational approach to the needs of their students, CCSD is creating a climate that encourages and fosters achievement.
- Academics: CCSD is creating a climate that encourages and fosters achievement.
- Participation: CCSD is increasing parent involvement by inviting conversation and showing respect to the people who serve as education’s biggest allies. This includes reaching out to local businesses, elected officials and members of the general public who all benefit from an improved public education system.

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Synergy Site Quarterly Update

Boulder Valley School District, Boulder, Colorado

The Boulder Valley School District in Colorado’s staff development initiative addressing equity and diversity issues within the district has been developing over the past seven years. Community leaders have supported the district in the creation of an equity initiative within a strategic plan that included hiring a director of instructional equity and multicultural education, the development of district and school wide goals related to equity, and the creation of the Equity Leadership Institute. In its first year the ELI attracted 35 participants; today there is a waiting list. So far over 400 educators have attended this year-long institute which begins with a retreat, followed by four-hour monthly meetings plus an additional mid-year retreat.
**NIUSI Tools: Demographic Profile of Users**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Status</th>
<th>Document Searched Or Downloaded</th>
<th>Intended Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77 Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>124 Improving Education Bklt</td>
<td>64 Group PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Students</td>
<td>35 Leadership Academies</td>
<td>85 Personal Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 School Administrators</td>
<td>24 Transformed Schools</td>
<td>32 Classroom Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 District Staff</td>
<td>49 Others</td>
<td>37 Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Faculty Members</td>
<td></td>
<td>13 No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 TA Providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Researchers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Synergy Site Quarterly Update**

Madison Public Schools continue to partner with NIUSI to improve the educational outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse students. During October, NIUSI visited 4 of the 10 schools within this partnership to discuss the instructional designs these schools are using to support teams of general and special education teachers who work closely together to plan and implement universal curriculum in the general education classroom.

**Electronic Monitoring of NIUSI Products and Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Individual Computer Hits</th>
<th>Unique Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 16-31</td>
<td>43,901</td>
<td>2,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>66,251</td>
<td>3,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>50,510</td>
<td>2,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1-15</td>
<td>24,909</td>
<td>1,869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes
GREAT URBAN SCHOOLS:

- Produce high achieving students.
- Construct education for social justice, access and equity.
- Expand students’ life opportunities, available choices and community contributions.
- Build on the extraordinary resources that urban communities provide for life-long learning.
- Use the valuable knowledge and experience that children and their families bring to school learning.
- Need individuals, family organizations and communities to work together to create future generations of possibility.
- Practice scholarship by creating partnerships for action-based research and inquiry.
- Shape their practice based on evidence of what results in successful learning of each student.
- Foster relationships based on care, respect and responsibility.
- Understand that people learn in different ways throughout their lives.
- Respond with learning opportunities that work.
Great Urban Schools: Learning Together Builds Strong Communities