



Illinois State Board of Education

The Illinois State Department of Education has contracted with WestEd to provide support to educator preparation providers in their efforts to implement the state standards for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading

WestEd's strengths as an expert on culturally responsive teaching and leading standards in educator preparation

Deep expertise in culturally responsive teaching and leading

The WestEd team has extensive knowledge and expertise in the research- and evidence-base for culturally responsive education, assessment, teaching and leading. Members of the team have conducted research and published articles and studies that are part of that research base. Members of the team have experiences, as culturally responsive and sustaining educators themselves, in K–12 and post-secondary classrooms.

Expertise in educator preparation, assessment, and licensure systems

The WestEd team has extensive knowledge and expertise in research- and evidence-base on educator preparation, assessment, and licensure systems. Members of the project team have experience as educators and teacher educators in educator preparation programs and have led program redesign efforts at their respective institutions, including implementing standards and assessments.

Coaching and technical assistance

WestEd brings more than 50 years of experience in providing high-quality technical assistance (TA) to state and district leaders. WestEd directs multiple national and regional centers spanning the fields of research (Regional Educational Laboratories), English language learners, state implementation of ESSA (Regional and National Comprehensive Centers), charter schools, social–emotional learning and school safety, school mental health services, mathematics cognition, and learning, and special education by impacting thousands of K–12 students and adult learners nationwide. WestEd's consistent and successful track record of engaging educators and stakeholders in TA and support has led to increased state and local capacity to lead change and enact effective policy and practice.

High-quality research- and evidence-based resource development

WestEd is well known for conducting rigorous and reliable research, generating high-quality resources and useful tools to meet the educational needs of clients and the field. The team has deep content knowledge about the research-, evidence-, and practice-base on culturally responsive teaching and leading and educator preparation, and expertise in research, writing and technical assistance and are highly skilled in creating high-quality resources that will be useful for both ISBE and EPP leaders to support this change effort.

WestEd’s Experience Facilitating CRTL Learning and Initiatives in Educational Settings

Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Learning Partner to the Gates Foundation

Since October 2020, WestEd has been serving as the *Culturally Responsive and Sustaining (CRSE) Learning Partner* to the K–12 team at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In this role, WestEd has been providing expert consultation, coaching, and facilitation services, and developing resources and materials to support equitable outcomes for students of color and those who have not historically experienced high achievement in K–12 contexts, particularly in mathematics. The theory of action that guides our work as the CRSE Learning Partner is that if mathematics curriculum materials were culturally responsive and sustaining, then all students, particularly students of color and those who have not historically experienced high achievement or felt a sense of belonging in mathematics classrooms, will have increased learning outcomes in K–12 mathematics classrooms. To that end, WestEd is facilitating the development of guidance for mathematics curriculum materials to make them culturally responsive and sustaining and doing so in partnership with leading researchers, scholars, practitioners, and school leaders in the field of CRSE. This guidance will be piloted with curriculum developers in 2024.

Implementing Culturally Responsive Data Literacy in EPPs

From 2019 to 2020 WestEd, in partnership with the [Regional Educational Laboratory–Northeast and Islands \(REL NEI\)](#),¹ developed and facilitated a two-part workshop series for EPPs in the region titled [Using Data to Promote Culturally Responsive Teaching](#). Over the course of the two-part series, 200-plus EPP leaders and faculty representing more than two dozen EPPs in seven states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands learned about culturally responsive data literacy (CRDL) and how to integrate it into their programs. Participants learned (a) how to identify where within existing content, methods, and clinical courses teaching and learning opportunities existed for preparing candidates to develop CRDL and (b) tools, resources, and supports that can be used in EPP courses to teach CRDL.

Systemic Equity Review for the Lansing School District

Beginning in the fall of 2021, WestEd partnered with the Lansing City School District in Lansing, Michigan, to conduct a Systemic Equity Review (SER). WestEd’s approach to conducting a SER—commonly referred to as an “Equity Audit”—focuses on building the capacity of partners to become genuine collaborators and co-researchers examining student data and working to identify the beliefs, policies, and practices driving and sustaining inequities in the district. To accomplish this, WestEd convened a District Equity Team (DET) comprised of teachers, family members, school and district leaders, school board, and community members. This DET engaged in 11 three-hour online working sessions. The first of these sessions supported equity team members to develop critical consciousness,² an awareness and understanding of the ways race, power,

¹ The REL NEI is one of 10 such centers funded by the Institute of Education Sciences’ (IES) and works with school districts, SEAs, and other education stakeholders to help generate and apply evidence to improve learner outcomes. The REL NEI serves Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, and the Virgin Islands.

² Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053001003>

privilege, identity, and culture influence education processes, experiences, and outcomes. Equity team members considered the ways that various forms of bias-based beliefs³ (e.g., deficit thinking, color-blindness/color-evasiveness, implicit bias, poverty disciplining) combine with—or drive—inequitable practices and policies to negatively influence the experiences and outcomes of Black students and other students of color, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, students from low-income/working-class households, and LGBTQ+ students, among others. In later sessions, the DET began reviewing and analyzing district data. In these sessions, members’ growing critical consciousness enabled them to view various forms of data (e.g., survey data related to topics such as discipline and graduation) with an equity mindset and to consider the ways that culturally responsive and sustaining education can serve as a systemic remedy for disproportionality and other inequities. In the course of its data review, the equity team also worked to identify the root causes of any inequities they were finding and then develop recommendations to address those inequities. This project culminated in the creation of a Systemic Equity Review Report, the contents of which were co-presented by WestEd and DET team members.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching Professional Development

The California Department of Education (CDE) contracted with WestEd to design and implement an institute on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (CLRT) for Migrant Education Program (MEP) staff across California. This institute was designed as a trainer-of-trainers (ToT) model, with the expectation that attendees of the institute use the materials to train subgrantee staff at their own sites. The purpose of these trainings at the local level is to support subgrantee staff to implement key strategies and measurable program objectives within California’s State Service Delivery Plan (SSDP). WestEd designed materials for the CLRT institute, revising through multiple iterations based on feedback from the CDE and participant subgrantees. WestEd then facilitated three institutes using these materials: one serving eight subgrantees in the Central Valley (February 8–10, 2022), one serving five subgrantees in Northern California (February 22–24, 2022), and one serving seven subgrantees in Southern California (April 14–14, 2022). Approximately 97 subgrantee staff attended the institute, with representation across all 20 subgrantees. After attending an institute, most participants reported a moderate or significant increase in knowledge of concepts and ideas related to CLRT across institute topics. The institutes were well-received by participants, with most participants rating the training design and materials as excellent and strongly agreeing that the institute was meaningful to their work with the MEP.

Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center Initiative—Increasing Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness of the Educator Workforce

In 2019, WestEd worked with leaders, including state chiefs, from four states (DE, MD, NJ, and PA) and the District of Columbia through the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center to strengthen their educator workforce with a focus on increasing educator diversity and culturally responsive teaching and leading. WestEd designed and delivered technical assistance, research- and evidence-based resources, and tools to support state education agencies to identify, collect, and analyze relevant workforce data; conduct root cause analyses to identify challenges; define measurable goals and benchmarks; implement high-leverage strategies; and engage in continuous improvement and progress-monitoring routines to meet goals.

³ Fergus, E. (2017). *Solving disproportionality and achieving equity: A leader’s guide to using data to change hearts and Minds*. Corwin.

Project Director: Saroja R. Warner, Ph.D.

Dr. Saroja Warner is the Director of Culturally Responsive Systems at WestEd and in this role, she provides strategic leadership for WestEd’s technical assistance, research, and policy work with state education agencies, district leaders, post-secondary programs, and school-based educators focused on developing and sustaining an effective, culturally responsive, racially, and linguistically diverse educator workforce. She has served as co-director of two Comprehensive Centers, federally funded education services centers, run by WestEd serving states in the mid-Atlantic and northeast regions of the U.S. Dr. Warner launched a national initiative at the Council of Chief State School Officers prior to coming to WestEd to increase educator diversity and culturally responsive practice (CRP) and authored an anchor paper for that work: [A Vision and Guidance for a Diverse and Learner-Ready Teacher Workforce](#) (2019), which provides guidance to states to meet these goals and identifies model best practices. Prior to CCSSO, she was the Branch Chief for Educator Preparation Program Approval and Assessment at the Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) where she had oversight for the review and approval of over 34 EPPs in the state. Prior to that, Dr. Warner was the Senior Director of Performance, Measurement, and Research at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) where she supported dozens of states and hundreds of EPPs across the nation in the implementation of the first nationally available performance assessment of teacher candidates (edTPA)—including training and coaching of deans and faculty and policy development. She served as the edTPA Implementation Director at the University of Maryland before AACTE, where she led the EPP—one of the first in the nation to adopt the performance assessment—in program and curriculum mapping efforts and faculty training related to implementing the new performance assessment with fidelity. She is also a nationally board-certified social studies teacher and taught high school social studies for 15 years. She received her PhD in Teacher Education and Professional Development from the University of Maryland.



Research Lead: Carlos Sandoval, Ph.D.

Carlos Sandoval is an Improvement Specialist with the Improvement Science team, which specializes in the use and spread of improvement science to address educational problems of practice. Prior to joining WestEd, Carlos led an improvement network of teacher preparation programs across the University of California system as part of the California Teacher Education Research and Improvement Network (CTERIN). This network focused on improving candidates' capacity to build on multilingual students' strengths. He has also consulted on a number of improvement-focused projects, such as the development of a network health survey and the implementation of a student-centered elementary mathematics curriculum in Orange County. Carlos received a Ph.D. and M.A. in Education from UC Irvine. Prior to graduate school, he spent three years working at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He currently lives in San Diego.



Coaching Lead: Sean S. Warner, Ed.D.

Dr. Sean Warner is currently a professor in educational leadership and higher education policy at Clark Atlanta University (CAU) in Georgia. Dr. Warner has extensive higher education leadership experience as the former dean of the CAU School of Education, prior to that the dean of the College of Education at Grambling State



University in Louisiana, and before that the department chair for Secondary Education and School Leadership at Norfolk State University in Virginia. Over the course of his career, he has led institutional reform efforts and coached leaders in their reform efforts. He has deep knowledge of the standards for educator preparation established by CAEP, a recognized national accreditor in the field, and of best and innovative practices for educator preparation, including increasing educator diversity and culturally responsive teaching and leading. Dr. Warner is an expert on adaptive leadership and understands the challenges EPP leaders often face in effectively achieving change efforts—like the alignment of programs to new standards—and brings a wealth of knowledge and practical guidance related to messaging, communications, and garnering support and buy-in from stakeholders.

Training Lead and Coach: Sandra Leu Bonanno, Ph.D.



Dr. Sandra Leu Bonanno is a Research Associate at WestEd. She currently thought partners with state and local agencies to ensure multilingual and multicultural communities have access to equitable and high-quality education. In addition, she is the Regional 15 Comprehensive Center co-project lead in service of the Migrant and English Learner Programs in the Nevada Department of Education and partnership lead for the Supporting Integrated English Learner Instruction initiative with Regional Educational Laboratory West. Her research examines multilingual and multicultural education and leadership, with particular attention to culturally sustaining approaches to education and dual language spaces. Dr. Leu Bonanno served as an assistant professor at MSU Denver as well as a bilingual educator and administrator in San Diego public schools. She holds an MEd from UCSD and a Ph.D. from the University of Utah in educational leadership and policy.

Coach: Dr. Lamar Johnson



Lamar Johnson is a Research Associate also approaching a year at WestEd in the Culturally Sustaining and Multilingual Education group and an Associate Professor of Language and Literacy for Linguistic and Racial Diversity in the Department of English at Michigan State University. His work explores the intricate intersections of language, literacy, anti-Black racism, Blackness, and education. His current projects focus on the following questions: (1) How do Black lives matter within ELA classrooms? (2) How are white supremacy and anti-blackness re-inscribed through educators' disciplinary discourses and pedagogical practices? and, (3) How can Critical Race English Education (CREE) be an analytic framework and methodological tool for literacy teacher educators of Color and teacher educators more broadly? To tackle these questions, Lamar has developed a working theory and pedagogy—Critical Race English Education (CREE). CREE is a theoretical and pedagogical construct that tackles white supremacy, race, and anti-black racism within English education, ELA classrooms, and beyond. Moreover, CREE centers the Black literacies educators can use to disrupt violence and curricula and pedagogical inequities against Black youth in schools.

Coach: Larry Walker, Ed.D.



Dr. Larry Walker is Assistant Professor and Academic Program Coordinator at the University of Central Florida in the Department of Educational Leadership and Higher Education. Previously Dr. Walker served as a lecturer at Loyola University Maryland. In addition, he held a faculty appointment at Howard University. He has nearly a decade of experience working in rural, urban, and suburban school districts. Dr. Walker's research has three threads including 1) examining the impact leadership and policy decisions have on education and society; 2) investigating the experiences of Black students throughout the education pipeline (PreK-PhD) and 3) analyzing school district, preservice program, and school-based efforts to recruit and retain minoritized teachers. In addition, Dr. Walker has appeared on regional and national television networks discussing his research and written several Op-Eds for the Orlando Sentinel among other platforms. Dr. Walker has co-edited two books, authored/coauthored several peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. Further, he served as the Legislative Director for former Congressman Major R. Owens.

Coach: Ramon Goings, Ed.D.



Dr. Ramon Goings is Associate professor in the Language, Literacy, and Culture doctoral program. Dr. Goings' research interests are centered on exploring the academic and social experiences of gifted/high-achieving Black males PK-PhD, diversifying the teacher and school leader workforce, and investigating the contributions of historically Black colleges and universities. His scholarship has been featured in leading academic and popular press outlets including Teachers College Record, Adult Education Quarterly, Gifted Child Quarterly, Inside Higher Ed, Education Week, and Diverse: Issues in Higher Education. Prior to working in higher education, Goings was a music education and special education teacher in several urban school districts including Baltimore City Public Schools, and was a foster care and youth probation counselor/advocate in New Haven, Connecticut. In 2013 he served as a fellow with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans. He earned his Doctor of Education degree in urban educational leadership from Morgan State University, Master of Science in human services from Post University, and Bachelor of Arts in music education from Lynchburg College (now the University of Lynchburg).

Coach: Erica McCray, Ph.D.



Dr. Erica D. McCray is the Associate Dean of Personnel Affairs, Inclusive Excellence, and External Engagement at the University of Florida, where she is also Director & Professor in the School of Special Education, School Psychology, and Early Childhood Studies. She earned her doctorate at the University of South Florida, Tampa. Dr. McCray's experience as a special educator for students with behavioral and learning disabilities in elementary and middle school settings led to her interest in issues of equity and diversity. Dr. McCray is currently co-principal investigator of the CEEDAR Center, an Office of Special Education Programs-funded technical assistance project as well as a National Science Foundation research project to broaden participation in engineering.

Coach: Brittany Chambers, Ph.D.



Dr. Brittany Chambers is a Program Associate II with the Culturally Responsive Systems content area (Division 1). Throughout her professional career, she has worked with students and teachers from all levels of education, including early childhood, K-12, and higher education. Previously, she was an adjunct faculty member and STEM researcher at Morehouse College where she led multiple projects, collaborated with other Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the country and published 7+ articles around her work. Chambers has also served as a middle school teacher and high school assistant principal where she supported teachers, parents, and students and led an initiative called “Capturing Kids Hearts.” Since then, her work has focused on building equity-focused initiatives and interventions for students and teachers that center diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups. She is passionate about mentorship and co-created the “Program for Educating Emerging Researchers” within the HBCU STEM Undergraduate Success Research Center at Morehouse College. Chambers earned her BA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, MSA from North Carolina Central University and Ed.D from Clark Atlanta University.

Coach: Khamia Powell, Ph.D.



Dr. Khamia Powell is a Research Associate II with the Regional Educational Laboratory West and Research Practice Partnerships. She supports states, districts, and schools in using evidence to make data-informed decisions that improve interventions and programs to ultimately advance educational equity for historically and persistently marginalized groups. Previously, she was a K-12 public school educator who served over 10 years in Title I schools as a teacher, team leader, and district coach. She brings a diverse skill set based on her professional experience, interdisciplinary lens, and mixed methods research approach. Her research and partnerships create positive change through capacity building, systems change, and implementing asset-based coaching assistance aimed to promote culturally responsive thinking, decision making, and thus practice. Dr. Powell earned her BA in psychology from Hampton University (HBCU), her M.S.W. in policy and social welfare from the State University of New York at Stony Brook (SUNY), and her M. Ed and Ph.D. from the University of California Irvine (UCI).

Coach: Jackie Peng



Jackie Peng is a Program Associate in the Culturally Responsive Systems team at WestEd. She supports states, school districts, regional education agencies, and higher education institutions in strengthening their capacity to implement and sustain culturally responsive and equitable systems. Her expertise includes K–12 education and professional teacher learning, teacher education and certification, educational equity, and culturally responsive practices. Prior to joining WestEd, Jackie provided instructional coaching and professional learning for culturally responsive pre-service educators in Baltimore City through the Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). She has over a decade of experience as a public-school teacher and was distinguished as *The Washington Post* Teacher of the Year for Montgomery County, MD, and by The National Education Policy Center for her innovative school-based professional development about racial equity.

Lead Resource Developer and Coach: John Jacobs



John Jacobs is a Senior Technical Assistance Specialist at WestEd where he delivers professional learning, technical assistance, coaching, and consultation and develops research- and evidence-based tools, guides, and comprehensive equity audits. This work builds on his previous experience providing technical assistance to school districts throughout New York state to address disproportionality. This included developing approaches and materials and facilitating collaborative districtwide reviews of student behavioral and academic data to identify inequities, as well as reviews of beliefs, policies, and practices driving disproportionality. This work culminated in the collaborative development of multiyear systemic improvement plans. In his current role, John supports state education agencies and district- and school-based leaders and educators in creating culturally responsive and equitable educational systems, practices, dispositions, and environments. To do this work, he leverages professional learning on effective coaching and leading (e.g., Cognitive Coaching and Adaptive Schools), as well as best practices for utilizing data and improvement science to facilitate district and school improvement. John is a skilled facilitator in areas related to culture and identity (e.g., race, ability, gender, social class) and an experienced collaborator who has worked to embed equity and cultural responsiveness throughout district- and state-level policies and programs (e.g., coaching, MTSS, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Social–Emotional Learning).

Project Coordinator: Yvonne Allen



Yvonne Allen is a Research Associate II in WestEd’s Culturally Responsive Systems content area. Yvonne provides coaching and technical assistance to state, regional, and local education agencies to support their efforts in building a diverse educator workforce and promoting culturally responsive systems. Yvonne has a diverse skill set that spans from providing technical assistance to Florida’s preschool programs to teaching in Florida’s department of juvenile justice schools. Yvonne worked in Doha, Qatar assisting Qatari students and families navigate the English language in educational spaces and with Tuskegee University in the development, delivery, and evaluation of out-of-school time, health and wellness, and career preparation programs throughout Alabama’s Black Belt communities. Yvonne leverages her vast experiences and skills as she helps schools, districts, and state systems create positive spaces and equitable opportunities for all learners. She is a Florida-certified teacher and holds a Bachelors in Elementary Education w/Reading and ESOL from Saint Leo University and a Master’s in Public Administration, and Graduate Certificate in Data Analysis and Policy Evaluation from Auburn University at Montgomery.