



# **The IRIS Center Quarterly Report**

**Year 1, Quarter 1**

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## Quarterly Report October – December 2022

**Our Quarter At-A-Glance:** The IRIS Center presents these quarterly reports as a narrative of our efforts and a detailed account of our work and progress. Below are just a few highlights from the previous three months. We invite you to read on for further details of all this and so much more.

- IRIS 5 is off to a great start:
  - The IRIS 5 Kick-off Meeting, which was held virtually on November 4, 2022, was well attended by OSEP staff.
  - The Cooperative Agreement is nearing completion.
  - A draft of the IRIS 5 Logic Model was submitted to CIPP on December 15, 2022.
- We are excited to announce that Kim Paulsen will be joining our team in January 2023.
- Two IRIS Prep Talks—one with NCEO and one with CIDDL— are scheduled for next quarter and preparations are underway.

**PROJECT INFRASTRUCTURE:** *IRIS is engaged in a continuous effort to improve and expand the quality and reach of our resources through ongoing infrastructure development and enhancement.*

⇒ **IRIS Kickoff Meeting:** The kickoff meeting for the IRIS Center was held virtually on November 4, 2022. The one and a half hour meeting was hosted by OSEP. The meeting began with opening remarks from Sarah Allen, OSEP Project Officer; Valerie Williams, OSEP Director; David Cantrell, OSEP Deputy Director; and Larry Wexler, OSEP Research to Practice Director. Naomi Tyler, the IRIS Project Director, began the presentation with an overview of IRIS for those unfamiliar with the past work of the center. This included a summary of the center’s overarching work; what the center does and how we do it; and use of IRIS resources across career stages, at colleges and universities, across the nation, and throughout the world. She then overviewed the accomplishments of IRIS 4 (i.e., the previously funded center), which was largely our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which informed the work to be completed by the new center. She then introduced the new center’s purpose and proposed outcomes: to develop open educational resources (OERs); to disseminate those OERs; and to build the capacity of pre-service and professional development providers to increase the knowledge and skills of special education personnel to use evidence-based practices with cultural and linguistic competence to improve results for students with disabilities, including those from underserved populations. Next Kim Skow, the IRIS Deputy Director, discussed the first of these, product development. This included an overview of our most popular resources, the benefit of the resources, and the facts surrounding three common myths about the development process. Because of a

delayed start and questions during the previous presentation segments, time did not allow for the completion of the entire presentation, which included an overview of our proposed communication and dissemination efforts and our technical assistance and training activities by Naomi Tyler, and a discussion of our evaluation efforts by Sarah Heinemeier of Compass Evaluation, the IRIS external evaluator. Although not starting with IRIS until January and therefore not slated to present, Kim Paulsen, the new IRIS Associate Director, was also in attendance.

- ⇒ **Cooperative Agreement:** In October, Naomi Tyler and Kim Skow met with Project Officer Sarah Allen to review and refine the Cooperative Agreement. Although a majority of the document was reviewed, this process will be completed early next quarter.
  
- ⇒ **Personnel:** For the most part, the *multidisciplinary* IRIS team from IRIS 4—with backgrounds in general and special education, multicultural education, elementary, middle and high school, psychology, evaluation, programming, audio engineering, graphic design, publishing, technology, and business—will remain intact. However, this quarter we bid farewell to Pamela Lehman, our resource development coordinator. We wish her the best in her future endeavors at the Tennessee Department of Education. Next quarter, we are excited that Kim Paulsen, currently a Professor of the Practice in Vanderbilt’s Department of Special Education as well as the department’s Associate Chair, will join the IRIS Team as Associate Director. She will be responsible for overseeing the development and revision of faculty and PD provider resources (technical assistance), creating content for IRIS products (development), and conducting virtual and in-person presentations and workshops (training, e.g., Future Faculty Workshops for doctoral scholars). Her proposed role at IRIS is supported by her extensive experience and expertise in both teacher preparation and professional development.
  
- ⇒ **Logic Model:** On November 18, IRIS team representatives, Naomi Tyler, Kim Skow, Sara Ioannou (IRIS Internal Evaluation Coordinator), and Sarah Heinemeier (IRIS External Evaluation Coordinator), met with representatives from the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance (CIPP) to begin revising the IRIS Logic Model. After a second meeting on December 1, IRIS and Sarah H. met to revise the Logic Model. A draft was submitted to CIPP on December 15. CIPP had two comments that IRIS and Sarah H. will discuss and address early next quarter and then subsequently resubmit for CIPP’s review. Once the Logic Model draft has been submitted to the Project Officer, we will begin revising the IRIS Evaluation Plan (see the Evaluation section for more on this).
  
- ⇒ **Year 1 Workplan:** IRIS will develop a Year 1 Workplan next quarter. As you will learn below, IRIS has already begun work on a number of Year 1 resources and dissemination activities. Additional activities will be identified in the Workplan.
  
- ⇒ **Logos:** Although new logo designs were considered for the current center and IRIS staff were excited by the new designs, we decided to turn to our Ambassadors for their thoughts and opinions. Overwhelmingly, these trusted partners, many of whom are long-time IRIS

users, commented that we should keep the current design. As such, we made an ever-so-slight tweak to the existing logo.

**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT:** *IRIS develops online resources about evidence-based instructional and behavioral practices to help improve the education outcomes of all students, particularly struggling learners and those with disabilities. Created with the assistance of many of the top experts in their fields, IRIS resources—whether modules, case studies, fundamental skill sheets, or many others—are innovative, interactive, and practical for use in college and university coursework, by PD providers, and by teachers in today’s classrooms.*

**Product Development Identification Process:** IRIS will continue to use data to guide the development and revision of IRIS resources.

- ⇒ **Identification of Resources:** We are sending out a User Survey as part of the IRIS 4 evaluation efforts. To reduce effort duplication, additional questions about desired resource types and topics will be included. Instead of conducting a Needs Assessment for IRIS 5, we will use this data to guide IRIS 5 resource development. In addition, IRIS will review the U.S. Department of Education and OSEP priorities as well as analyze the IRIS analytics data. Proposed topics and resources will be reported in the next quarterly report. (See more on this in the Evaluation section below.)
- ⇒ **Revision of Existing Resources:** To identify and prioritize resources to be revised, IRIS will conduct a crosswalk between the date the resources were developed, the number of visits they receive (analysis of GoogleAnalytics data), and current need (based on the IRIS 4 User Survey data and the Secretary’s priorities).

**Modules:** The signature resource of our center, IRIS Modules cover information about fundamental topics and evidence-based instructional and behavioral practices on a wide variety of topic areas, including classroom behavior management, MTSS/RTI, and high-quality IEPs, to name but a few.

- ⇒ **Identification of Year 1 Modules:** In the proposal, IRIS identified two modules to revise during Year 1: *Universal Design for Learning: Creating a Learning Environment that Challenges and Engages All Students* (see the next entry for detailed information) and *Functional Behavioral Assessment: Identifying the Reasons for Problem Behavior and Developing a Behavior Plan*. Using the process for the revision of existing resources process listed above, we determined that not only were both modules developed in 2009, but according to our GoogleAnalytics data, they consistently ranked in the top 5 to 10 modules accessed. Additionally, they align with the U.S. Department of Education’s priorities. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is highly recommended throughout legislation: IDEA, the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, and the National Education Technology Plan of 2017. And Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) aligns with the recently released discipline guidance from the Department of Education’s

Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and OSERS to help public schools fulfill their responsibilities to avoid the discriminatory use of student discipline.

⇒ **Universal Design for Learning:** Our module, *Universal Design for Learning: Creating a Learning Environment that Challenges and Engages All Students*, will be the first to be revised. The original content, developed by IRIS, was reviewed by CAST to make sure it aligned with UDL principles and recommended practice. Since that time, changes have been made to the UDL framework and thoughts regarding UDL have advanced (e.g., focus on equity). For that reason, we met with CAST this quarter to discuss the revision of the content. Two CAST Implementation Specialists will review the content and provide written recommendations in January, which will be followed by a phone call to discuss the recommendations. They will then revise the content and deliver it by March 30. Although the review and revision by CAST will be covered under IRIS 4, the process of “IRISizing” the content and building the module will be covered under IRIS 5. We anticipate posting the revised module at the end of the spring semester so as to not interrupt course activities.

**Case Studies:** These multi-part resources ask users to analyze and respond to a number of problem-based classroom issues and challenges—for example classroom norms and expectations, algebra instruction, or classroom arrangement—through increasing levels of complexity and detail.

⇒ Although IRIS is slated to develop or revise one case study per year for Years 2 through 5, in Year 1 while waiting on the User Survey data and the completion of the Year 1 Workplan, we will focus on revising the content for one or more of the following IRIS Case Study units: *Comprehension and Vocabulary: Grades 3-5, Early Reading, and Fluency and Word Identification: Grades 3-5*. These case studies were developed in 2003 and 2004 and address a high-need area. Additionally, the original author Kim Paulsen will be joining our staff in January and can easily update the content. This eliminates the need to outsource the content revision, which typically results in a three to six month wait period before receiving the content. This quarter, three Vanderbilt Master’s students conducted the research to update this content.

**COMMUNICATION & DISSEMINATION:** *IRIS communicates and disseminates news of its resources through a wide variety of means, both universal, targeted, and individualized. The IRIS Website, awareness activities, conference presentations and exhibition appearances, and a multi-part social media presence, all are key components in our plan to reach and communicate with IRIS consumers.*

**Communication and Dissemination Strategic Planning:** IRIS will continue to use data to guide our communication and dissemination efforts.

⇒ **Consumer Feedback:** The IRIS 4 User Survey that will be sent out early next quarter will also ask users about preferred ways to receive updates or information from IRIS. In the coming quarter, IRIS will analyze the data and strategically plan how to best communicate and



disseminate information to are constituents. (See more on this in the Evaluation section below.)

⇒ **Dissemination Community of Practice:** During the past quarter, IRIS representatives have been participating in the Dissemination Community of Practice (CoP) for OSEP’s Technical Assistance Centers. The goals of the CoP are to amplify each other’s voices; gain knowledge and strategies to further each center’s dissemination reach; make communications more accessible and culturally appropriate; and improve evaluation of dissemination efforts. By participating in this group, IRIS hopes to discover innovative ways to reach new and diverse audiences.

**Awareness Activities:** Key to our center’s ongoing dissemination efforts is the development and expansion of multiple elements that, together, form the basis of our campaign to get the word out about IRIS and our resources. More about these can be found in the items below.

⇒ **IRIS Prep Talks:** During Spring 2023, IRIS will host a series of Prep Talks—webinars that introduce college and university faculty to other OSEP-funded centers and offer an opportunity to learn about free, ready-to-use resources to support course instruction in key topic areas. The first will be held on January 13 with the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO). The second will be conducted on February 10 with the Center for Innovation, Design, and Digital Learning (CIDDL). Potentially, a third Prep Talk will be held in April. To improve attendance and engagement, we are currently seeking feedback and testing new formats.

**Presentation & Outreach Efforts:** Throughout the year, IRIS attends local, regional, and national conferences to keep target audiences up to date on new and revised IRIS resources. Information about upcoming presentations is below.

**CEEDAR:** Kim Paulsen will represent IRIS at CEEDAR’s Cross State Convening on February 7-9 in San Francisco, CA. This year’s theme is: “CEEDAR GOAL Rush: Growth and Outcomes for All Learners.” CEEDAR state teams will be meeting to share how they are working to prepare teachers and leaders to support students with disabilities and to ensure that every student has an equitable opportunity to achieve. As a partner center, IRIS will interact with state participants during a “Lunch and Learn” event on Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> during which we will share information on IRIS resources that align with key components of their mission and work.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** *IRIS works to increase the capacity of teacher preparation programs to expand the range of resources about evidence-based practices (EBPs) in their courses and program curricula, state and local education agencies as well as PD providers to deliver effective professional development, and independent learners to enhance their knowledge and skills regarding EBPs.*

⇒ **Micro-credentials:** This quarter, we proposed discontinuing the IRIS MCs. The reason for this was multi-fold. First, they take considerable staff time to develop and maintain, yet

they lack the large scalability of other IRIS resources due to the time-intensive assessment component. Second, the revenue generated is negligible (roughly \$600/year after Digital Promise fees) and does not cover the staff time required for assessment. Third, IRIS pays an annual hosting fee to Digital Promise, which was due in December. Finally, we only had one MC submission from June-December, indicating that there is scarce consumer demand. Our Project Officer approved this request on December 1.

**EVALUATION:** *The IRIS evaluation plan is designed to yield information to guide project activities and to assess whether our goals, objectives, and outcomes have been achieved. Formative and summative data are used to monitor project implementation procedures.*

⇒ **Needs Assessment:** IRIS will send out a User Survey early next quarter as part of the IRIS 4 evaluation effort. Additional questions have been added that ask users about desired resource topics, the type of resources they would like, and preferred ways to receive updates or information from IRIS. Although the data will be used to determine shifts in desired products and preferred means of dissemination across the five-year funding cycle of IRIS 4, we will also use that data to inform the work of IRIS 5. For that reason, we will not need to conduct an IRIS 5 Needs Assessment.

⇒ **Evaluation Plan:** As mentioned in the Infrastructure section above, once the IRIS Logic Model is finalized, we will work with CIPP to revise the IRIS Evaluation Plan. The evaluation plan will be our primary roadmap for guiding and monitoring the success of IRIS goals and objectives.

**COLLABORATION & WORKGROUP ACTIVITIES:** *IRIS works in collaboration with other national centers, nationally recognized education experts, and our own IRIS Ambassadors and Workgroups to improve our ability to develop resources, disseminate information about all things IRIS, and offer technical assistance and training.*

⇒ **Partnerships:** IRIS develops partnerships with other organizations to develop and disseminate information about our resources. Read on to learn about our work in this area this quarter.

❖ **CEEDAR:** As mentioned earlier, IRIS will attend the CEEDAR Cross State Convening on February 7-9 in San Francisco, CA and share information about IRIS resources that align with state teams' goals.