



# The IRIS Center Quarterly Report Year 1, Quarter 2

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## Quarterly Report January – March 2023

**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 Cooperative Agreement was completed.
  - The IRIS 5 Logic Model was approved.
  - The IRIS 5 Evaluation plan is in progress.
  - The identification of resources to develop and revise and topics to address is underway.
- We are excited to announce that Kim Paulsen joined our team in January.
- Two IRIS Prep Talks—one with NCEO and one with CIDDL— were completed and another with NCIL will occur next quarter.
- Almost 37,000 free PD Certificates for Educators were accessed this quarter.

**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.*

⇒ **Cooperative Agreement:** As noted previously, 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 at that time, this process was completed early this quarter.

⇒ **Personnel:** This quarter, Kim Paulsen joined 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 Seminars for doctoral scholars). In addition, we expect further team expansion in the coming quarter. This past quarter, we have been reviewing applicants for four other positions: Communication Coordinator (who will serve as our editor), Educational Consultant (who will help develop resources), Video Editor (a part-time, temporary team member who will assist with graphics and other visual elements), and Senior Programmer (a Web Developer with advanced programming qualifications). We hope to hire the most qualified candidates and fill all positions as soon as possible. We have extended an offer to an applicant for the Educational Consultant position. As of the end of the quarter, she had indicated that she will accept the position. Official acceptance is expected at the beginning of the next quarter.

- ⇒ **Logic Model:** On February 2, IRIS team representatives Naomi Tyler, Kim Skow, Sarah Heinemeier, and Sara Ioannou met with representatives from the Center to Improve Program and Project Performance (CIPP) to discuss two comments they had regarding the IRIS Logic Model draft. After making a few changes, a revised version was submitted to CIPP on February 7, who then passed it on to OSEP for review and feedback. The Logic Model was approved, which allowed us to move forward with the development of the Evaluation Plan.
- ⇒ **Evaluation Plan:** With the approval of the IRIS Logic Model, work began on the IRIS 5 Evaluation Plan—our primary roadmap for guiding and monitoring success toward meeting IRIS goals and objectives. A draft was submitted to CIPP on March 22, who then submitted it to OSEP for review on March 24. While awaiting feedback, IRIS will continue to refine the document. See the *Evaluation* section for more on this.
- ⇒ **Year 1 Workplan:** IRIS continues work on the remainder of the Year 1 Workplan this quarter. This plan will be completed early next quarter using data from the IRIS 4 final User Survey. These data will help inform work related to development, dissemination and communication, and TA and training. For example, it will allow us to determine high use resources, which we will then prioritize for revision. Likewise, it will allow us to identify resources that are less frequently used and therefore should be archived. 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.

**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:** A part of the IRIS 4 final evaluation efforts, we sent out a User Survey. To reduce effort duplication, additional questions about desired resource types and topics were included. Instead of conducting a Needs Assessment for IRIS 5, we will use these 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 Google Analytics data), and current need (based on the IRIS 4 User

Survey data and the Secretary's priorities). Resources to be revised will be reported in the next quarterly report.

**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 Google Analytics 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. In January, two CAST Implementation Specialists reviewed the currently posted content and provided written recommendations, which was followed up by a phone call to discuss the recommendations. The Implementation Specialists, who are currently revising the content to reflect changes to the UDL framework and to incorporate principles around equity, will deliver it by April 30. Although the content is being developed under IRIS 4, IRIS staff will then "IRISize" the content and post the revised module using IRIS 5 funding. We anticipate posting the revised module at the end of the summer, so as to not interrupt course activities.
- ⇒ **Functional Behavioral Assessment:** Dr. Johanna Staubitz, Director of Vanderbilt University's applied behavioral analysis (ABA) program, has agreed to revise the content this summer. Because consumer feedback indicates that this module takes a considerable amount of time to complete and contains an abundance of information, we anticipate dividing the content and posting two modules: one that focuses on the process of conducting a functional behavioral assessment and another that focuses on developing a behavioral intervention plan (BIP). Because filming for these modules will most likely occur this fall, we anticipate posting this module at the end of the fall semester.

**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 joined 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. The revisions will include updated STAR Sheets for decoding, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary strategies as well as graphic organizers. New STAR Sheets will include explicit instruction and close reading. The STAR Sheets will also provide examples for use in both elementary and secondary settings.

**Course/PD Activities:** Handy, focused resources for use as independent assignments or to promote classroom discussion, IRIS Course/PD Activities cover a diverse range of topics, including behavior management, language disorders, and many others.

⇒ **Activity Revisions:** Although the majority of our Course/PD Activities were revised under IRIS 4, revisions to the rest of the collection (approximately twenty activities) will be completed in the coming year.

**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 that was sent out in January asked 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 our constituents. (See more on this in the Evaluation section below.)

⇒ **Dissemination Community of Practice:** In March, IRIS representatives participated 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.

⇒ **CEEDAR Cross State Convening:** Kim Paulsen represented IRIS at CEEDAR’s Cross State Convening on February 7-9 in San Francisco, CA. This year’s theme was “CEEDAR GOAL Rush: Growth and Outcomes for All Learners.” CEEDAR state teams met 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 interacted with state participants during a “Lunch and Learn” poster session event on February 8, sharing information on IRIS resources, with an emphasis on the most recent modules. Kim spoke with many faculty who shared how they use the IRIS resources often and were happy to learn that several modules would be updated. Kim also met with state teams from Utah and Vermont. The Utah team wanted information on how to effectively use IRIS Center resources in their courses. While Utah has used IRIS in the past, many of the individuals at the meeting were new to both higher education and the state department. Kim demonstrated how to use the IRIS Resource Locator and shared planning resources for integrating IRIS resources into coursework. Because Vermont was interested in how to use IRIS resources when training mentor teachers, Kim shared resources and also explained how she has used IRIS in mentor training sessions.

⇒ **IRIS Prep Talks:** During Spring 2023, IRIS is hosting 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 from those centers to support course instruction in key topic areas. This spring series includes webinars with the following centers:

- National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO)—held on January 13
- Center for Innovation, Design, and Digital Learning (CIDDL)—held on February 10
- National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL)—scheduled for April 14

To improve attendance and engagement, we are currently seeking feedback and testing new formats. One change we instituted with the CIDDL Prep Talk was replacing the more formal post-webinar survey with a very brief (2-3 questions) exit poll in the Zoom session. Because response rates have consistently been low for these activities and these formative data are used to improve the quality and usefulness of the Prep Talks, we are testing this format to see if we get a better response rate. Initial data indicate that this type of data collection is more effective for Prep Talks: 75% of participants completed the CIDDL Prep Talk exit poll using

#### Participant Feedback

*“Perfect time - 30 minutes - informative presenters - great connections!”*

this new process, compared to only 46% of the participants who completed the NCEO Prep Talk post-webinar survey.

- ⇒ **Listserv Notices:** Our current contacts list, through which we disseminate our newsletters as well as occasional e-blasts (e.g., announcements about new or revised modules, field-testing opportunities), continues to grow at an outstanding rate, increasing to over 52,000 enrollees this quarter. Note that this number may be artificially lowered compared to last quarter because, per Vanderbilt guidelines early this quarter, we archived contacts that had not opened or received mailings in the last 52 weeks.
- ⇒ **Social Media:** Our center's social media following and number of engagements continue to grow at a steady pace. As of this report, IRIS has 3,102 on Facebook, 1,527 on LinkedIn, and 1,220 YouTube subscribers. Because of recent controversies surrounding Twitter, IRIS has not been active on that platform since October 28, 2022, though we still have 4,731 followers.

**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.

- ⇒ **2023 Florida CASE Special Education Leadership Symposium:** On April 4, IRIS will share information with Special Education Directors from across Florida. This will include handouts about our resources, how these resources can be embedded in Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities, and how to develop personalized learning plans to help current and future educators gain the knowledge and skills they need to work effectively with all students, particularly struggling learners and those with disabilities.

**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.*

- ⇒ **Approved PD Provider Status:** IRIS continues to pursue approved provider status in states that maintain an approved provider list. IRIS TA has secured Approved Provider Status for California, Texas, Nevada, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Arkansas. Montana, Louisiana, and Indiana applications are under review. IRIS continues to work to ensure that state Websites contain up-to-date information about IRIS PD Options.
- ⇒ **IRIS Stories:** While at the Council for Exceptional Children Conference, which was held in Louisville, KY in early March, numerous attendees shared how they use IRIS resources. We will be following up with nine of these attendees to learn more about their use, and we will possibly feature them in an IRIS Story on the Website or for an IRIS Impact Story (see the Evaluation section below for more about this).

⇒ **Free PD Certificates:** This quarter 36,855 PD Certificates were accessed. The top-five certificates accessed this quarter are noted below.

| Module Title  | Certificates Accessed |
|---|-----------------------|
| Addressing Challenging Behaviors (Part 1, Elementary): Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle | 2,517                 |
| Classroom Behavior Management (Part 1): Key Concepts and Foundational Practices           | 2,395                 |
| Differentiated Instruction: Maximizing the Learning of All Students                       | 2,033                 |
| Addressing Challenging Behaviors (Part 2, Elementary): Behavioral Strategies              | 1,844                 |
| Classroom Diversity: An Introduction to Student Differences                               | 1,842                 |

**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 sent out a User Survey in January as part of the IRIS 4 evaluation effort. Additional questions were 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. This will increase efficiency and lower costs, as we will not need to conduct an IRIS 5 Needs Assessment.

⇒ **Evaluation Plan:** As noted in Project Infrastructure, this quarter we began working on the IRIS 5 Evaluation Plan and submitted a draft to CIPP on March 21, which was then submitted to OSEP on March 24. While waiting on feedback, IRIS and our External Evaluator, Sarah Heinemeier, will continue to refine the document. This will involve carefully reviewing each proposed evaluation question, data collection methods, and how that data will be used to inform the work of the center. The final Evaluation Plan will be submitted to CIPP in May.

⇒ **External Evaluator:** Sarah Heinemeier of Compass Evaluation and Research continues to analyze data accessed through Google Analytics, which helps the IRIS team make development, dissemination and communication, and technical assistance and TA decisions. Her full analysis of our quarterly data is included in the attached report, which includes information on Website visits, visitors, user acquisitions, pages viewed per session, page depth, session duration, and more.

⇒ **Module Feedback:** The IRIS Module Feedback Form, an online survey, asks respondents to self-identify their current positions and to rate our modules' quality, relevance, and usefulness on a five-point Likert scale (5 being the highest rating). This quarter there were 3,521 respondents to this survey. The tables below contain a bit more information about



those respondents. Note that instructional assistants/paraeducators are the top respondents, an indication of growth in use with this user group. Of note is that 43% of respondents are from general education (i.e., General Education and Early Childhood Education), indicating high levels of use outside of special education. More, even though IRIS resources focus on K-12 and 18-21 populations, 23% of respondents represent birth to five environments (i.e., Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Early Intervention Services), indicating relevance and usefulness for those working with infants, toddlers, and young children.

**Table 1. Current Positions**

| Respondents                           | Number       |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Instructional Assistant/Paraeducators | 821          |
| College Student                       | 818          |
| Graduate Student                      | 600          |
| Experienced Teacher                   | 596          |
| New Teacher                           | 292          |
| Other                                 | 168          |
| School Leader                         | 99           |
| Missing                               | 41           |
| PD Provider                           | 39           |
| College Faculty                       | 25           |
| Parent                                | 22           |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>3,521</b> |

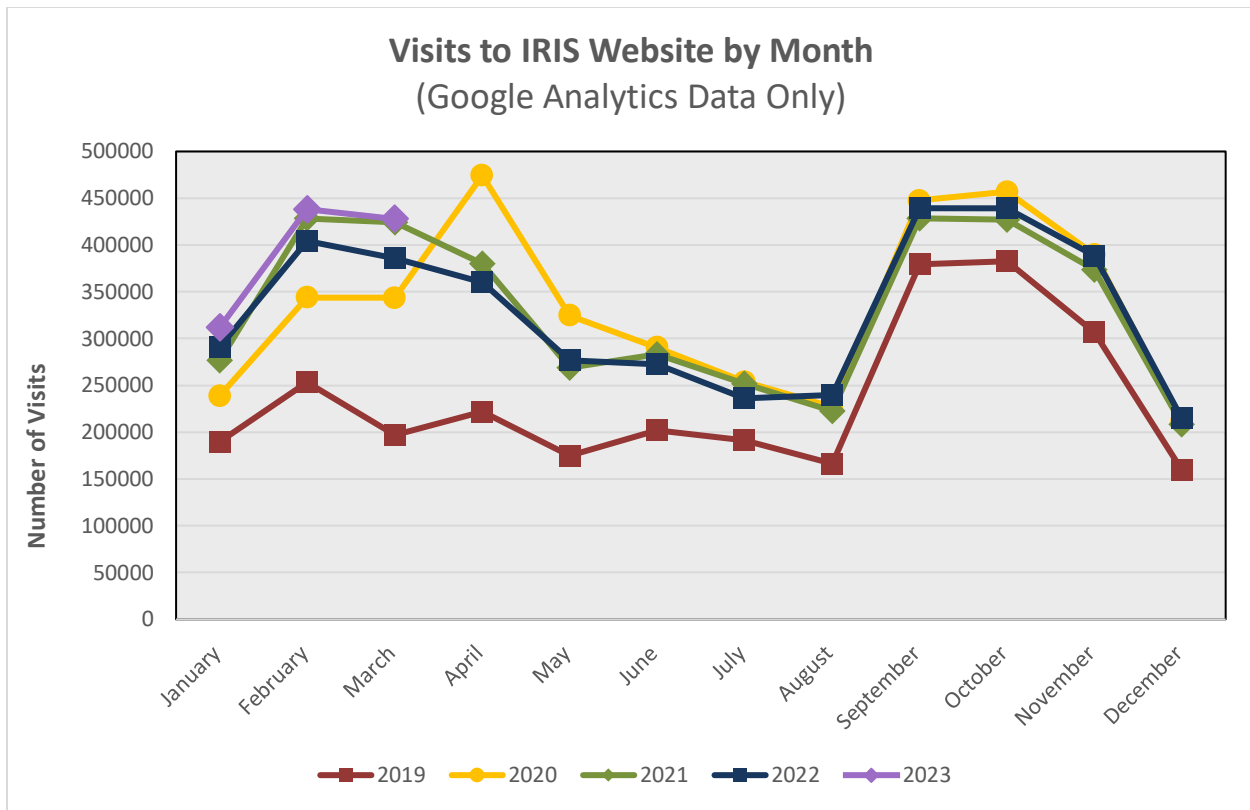
**Table 2. Education Areas**

| Response                          | Number       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Special Education                 | 1,422        |
| General Education                 | 941          |
| Early Childhood Education         | 562          |
| Early Childhood Special Education | 210          |
| Other                             | 267          |
| Missing                           | 90           |
| Early Intervention Services       | 29           |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>3,521</b> |

**Table 3. Module Ratings**

|            | Mean Ratings |
|------------|--------------|
| Quality    | 4.6          |
| Relevance  | 4.6          |
| Usefulness | 4.6          |

⇒ **Website Visitor Data:** During this quarter, Google Analytics data showed 1,178,413 visits to the IRIS Website, an increase of 8.9% over the same period in 2022. As depicted in the graph below, this quarter’s monthly data reflect the typical “IRIS spider” pattern (monthly use increases at the beginning of the spring semester—January and February—and subsequently decreases throughout the rest of the spring.



⇒ **IRIS Impact Stories:** IRIS will be adding a new evaluation method to its already rigorous data collection. The team will complete several Impact Stories each year with IHEs and districts that show high use of IRIS resources. IRIS will identify IHEs and districts through the frequent review of analytics (e.g., Module Feedback Form data, PD Certificates for Educators registration data). After identifying these entities, team members will reach out to representatives to follow-up on the nature and circumstances of use and to see if they are willing to participate in the Impact Story process, which will include interviews and focus groups with faculty, administrators, educators, and other professionals. Surveys also may be conducted with educators and paraeducators to gauge changes in classroom practices. Through these Impact Stories, we hope to gather information about the increased capacity to infuse OERs about EBPs into IHE educator preparation coursework and State- or district-initiated PD activities.

**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 attended the CEEDAR Cross State Convening on February 7-9 in San Francisco, CA and shared information about IRIS resources that align with state teams' goals.
- ❖ **NCII and PROGRESS Center:** Representatives from IRIS, the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII), and the PROGRESS Center meet monthly (as needed) to share ideas and discuss possible collaborative efforts.
- ❖ **CAST:** IRIS is collaborating with CAST to revise our module, *Universal Design for Learning: Creating a Learning Environment that Challenges and Engages All Students* (see the Product Development section above).
- ❖ **ELEA:** IRIS has joined the Educating All Learners Alliance (ELEA) Partner Community, an "alliance of more than 90 organizations that represent voices from a diverse range of communities, including disability advocacy, parent, special education, civil rights, and K-12 nonprofit education organizations." As an ELEA partner, information about the IRIS Center and our resources will be disseminated to the larger EALA Network and their consumers. We will also have the opportunity to partner on podcasts and webinars.