

# The Evaluation of Illinois State Board of Education's Regional System of Support Providers (RESPROs)



*April 2009*



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# Table of Contents



|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Introduction</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Methodology</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| Development/Administration of Web-based Surveys                           | 3         |
| Site Visits to RESPRO Sites   | 4         |
| Targeted Telephone Interviews   | 5         |
| Strengths and Limitations of the Study                                    | 5         |
| <b>Contextual Conditions</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| RESPRO Organization and Staffing  | 7         |
| RESPRO Professional Culture and Climate                                   | 9         |
| Support and Guidance from ISBE  | 12        |
| Summary   | 12        |
| <b>Processes</b>  | <b>15</b> |
| RESPRO Reports of Services and Supports Provided to Schools and Districts | 15        |
| School and District Perceptions of Frequency and Need for Services        | 25        |
| Summary   | 31        |
| <b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>  | <b>33</b> |
| RESPRO Reports of Success   | 33        |
| School/District Reports of Success  | 36        |
| School/District Satisfaction with RESPRO                                  | 39        |
| Summary   | 42        |
| <b>Outcomes</b>   | <b>43</b> |
| ISBE and Federal Accountability System                                    | 43        |
| School Status Data  | 43        |
| Summary   | 45        |
| <b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>                                    | <b>47</b> |



# Introduction



The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act authorized sweeping changes in the way federal funds were to be allocated to support schools. The law charges state education agencies (SEA) with creating and sustaining a statewide system of support to assist schools identified as in need of improvement. SEA responsibilities in providing this support are multifaceted. They include establishing school support teams to work in these schools, helping them to improve student achievement, and drawing on the expertise of external resources to assist in this endeavor.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), through corresponding state law established the Regional Service Provider System of Support (RESPRO) in 2003 to comply with NCLB. RESPRO is a network of 10 regional providers comprising regional offices of education, intermediate service centers, professional development service providers, and three state education associations. RESPROs offer services to schools and districts that fail to meet AYP requirements. System priorities are to support and assist schools/districts subject to a) restructuring and corrective action, and b) school improvement. As resources allow, RESPROs also serve Title I schools whose academic performance is marginal.

RESPRO services address four components of school and district improvement: 1) data analysis and improvement plan development, implementation, and monitoring; 2) standards-aligned curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessment; 3) teacher and administrator enhancement; and 4) student, family, and community support services. In targeting these components, RESPROs

- a) focus on school and district improvement planning;
- b) emphasize proven approaches and processes—those most likely to increase student academic achievement;
- c) offer customized interventions to accommodate regional and local differences;
- d) assist in the coordination of resources, especially resources of time, people, and money;
- e) undertake preventive action to improve performance in marginal schools (through fee-for-service programs); and
- f) align and coordinate their efforts with technical assistance activities currently provided by other state, regional, and local agencies.

The bottom line measure of RESPRO effectiveness is the extent to which the services they provide have helped schools/districts meet AYP requirements and move out of accountability status.

To evaluate the work of the RESPROs and their state association partners, ISBE contracted a 7-month independent evaluation to Measurement Inc. (MI) in the fall of 2008. This report includes key findings of the evaluation related to: 1) the RESPRO organization, staffing and professional culture and climate, 2) the nature and frequency of services and supports that were provided to schools and districts by RESPRO staff, 3) the perceived impact of these services on school and district outcomes and 4) a longitudinal analyses of schools' AYP status within the RESPRO network. The report concludes with recommendations for improving the RESPRO system.

# Methodology



Measurement Incorporated (MI) is a nationwide testing and education research company. MI is a national leader in the field of educational measurement and evaluation and has more than three decades of experience helping clients build education systems that work. MI is headquartered in Durham, North Carolina, but has satellite sites in various states, including Illinois. As part of the requirement of the RFP, MI partnered with Ahiman Consulting Company, an MBE certified small business in the state of Illinois. In this section, we provide a detailed accounting of the evaluation methods and procedures that were used in the study.

The evaluation methods were centered on a set of evaluation guiding questions that were developed by MI with input from ISBE staff and an evaluation model for organizing the guiding questions. The model we proposed was a process-outcomes systems model that represents what research has told us about the determinants of educational change. Shown in **Figure 1**, this model indicates that the effectiveness of the RESPROs—their impact on student achievement—is a function of their activities and strategies: what they do, how much they do it, and how well their efforts are received. The model further indicates that RESPRO processes and outcomes were influenced by certain contextual conditions having to do with RESPRO professional climate and supports provided to RESPROs.

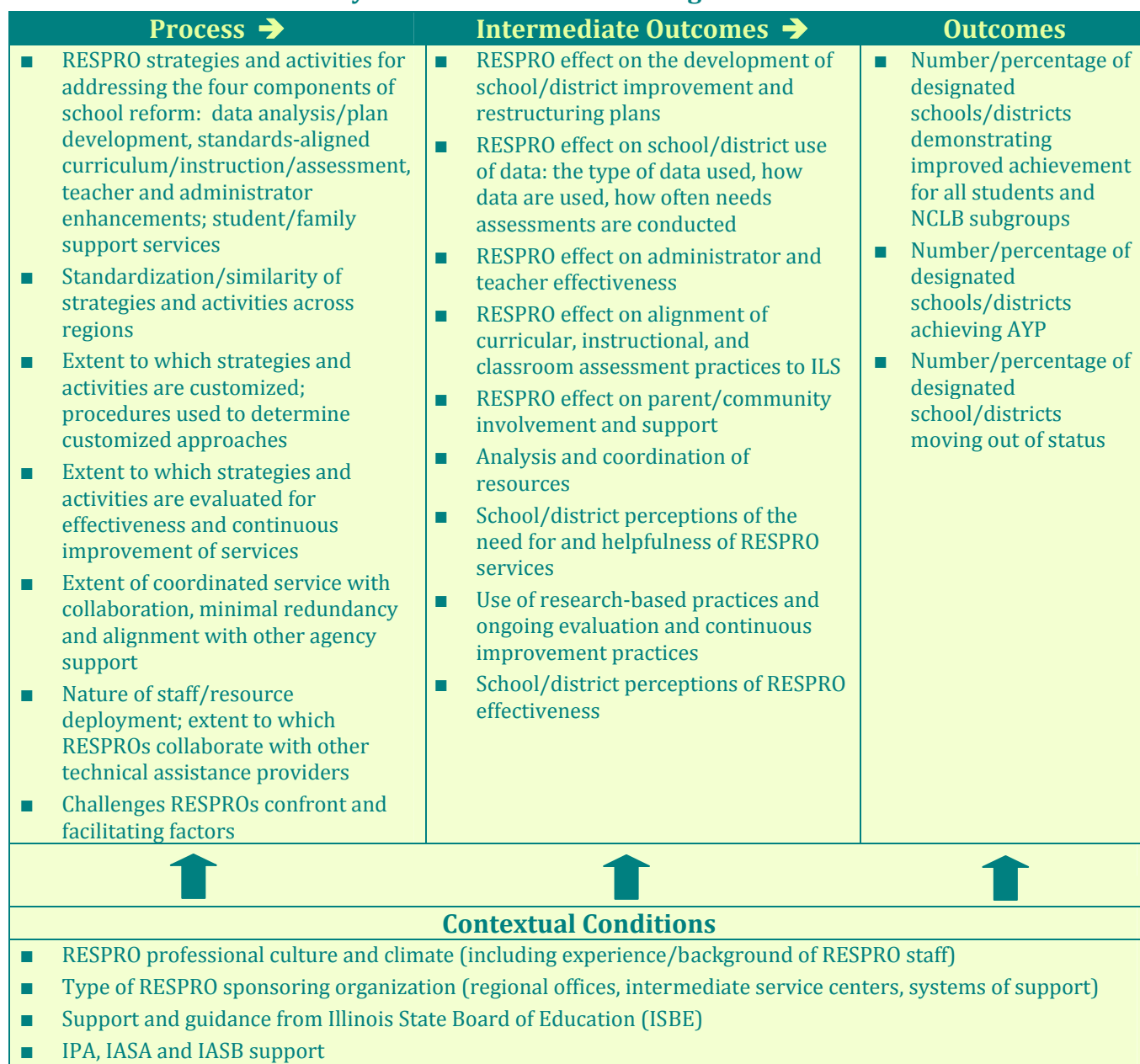
## Development/Administration of Web-based Surveys

MI developed three web-based surveys using *SelectSurvey* software: a RESPRO Staff Survey, District Survey and a School Survey. These surveys were the primary tool for capturing quantitative data about RESPRO processes and intermediate outcomes (seen in **Figure 1**). As part of the instrument development process, MI conducted a thorough review of documents, resources, and the websites of individual RESPRO Areas to accurately identify the range of services and supports that the RESPRO Areas offered to schools and districts.

The RESPRO Survey probed the content, intensity, and frequency of service delivery; the evaluation efforts used to measure impact; job satisfaction, etc. Similarly, the District/School Survey probed the nature/extent of RESPRO assistance; satisfaction with RESPRO services; and changes made—in planning, curriculum, instruction, resource allocation, etc.—as a result of RESPRO services.

The RESPRO Survey was administered to all relevant RESPRO personnel. Surveys were completed by a total of 181 RESPRO staff. For the District/School Survey, MI selected a sample of schools and districts based on geographic representation and accountability status. In total, 244 schools and 56 districts were sampled and 85 schools and 30 districts completed surveys. The resulting response rate was 35% and 54% for schools and districts, respectively.

**Figure 1**  
**Systems Model for Evaluating RESPROs**



### Site Visits to RESPRO Sites

MI, in collaboration with Ahiman Consulting, conducted site visits in November 2008 to each of the ten RESPRO Areas across the state. The purpose of the site visits was twofold: 1) to collect data and in-depth information on the processes and impact of the RESPROs; and 2) to enrich and validate the survey data. The visits included individual and/or group interviews with relevant RESPRO personnel and state partners and a review and retrieval of pertinent data and documents. The site visits were guided by a written protocol, which allowed MI to collect and distill common information from multiple sources and sites.

## Targeted Telephone Interviews

MI conducted telephone interviews with 5 schools and districts served by the RESPROs. We used purposeful sampling process, selecting those schools and districts that a) received a high degree of RESPRO assistance and b) had worked their way off the State's accountability list. The phone interviews allowed us to collect in-depth information to help us better understand why these schools and districts improved and what role the RESPROs played in their success.

## Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The overall thrust of data collection was to establish convergent validity wherein similar information was gathered from different sources to provide multiple perspectives on the guiding questions and indicators (i.e., data triangulation). The data triangulation was the biggest strength of the study. Data collection methods utilized a judicious blend of quantitative and qualitative data, incorporating stringent quality control procedures to ensure data accuracy. Site visit and telephone interviews were standardized to ensure consistency of information collected. Information regarding the long-term status of schools was accessed via the ISBE data department electronically to ensure accuracy.

This study experienced several data collection setbacks that ultimately limited the scope of analyses and conclusions that could be drawn from the data. First and foremost, the timeframe for study was short and most of the data collection occurred during an inopportune period of the academic year. The surveys were distributed to schools and districts two weeks prior to the Winter Recess and due to the tight reporting deadline little time was available to collect survey data. As a result, the response rates for district and schools are low and disproportionate by RESPRO Areas. To the latter result, some RESPRO sites had fewer than five schools or districts that responded to the survey; therefore, we could not provide a fair and representative picture of individual performance by RESPRO Area.

Another major limitation of the study is that not all schools and districts that were eligible for RESPRO services choose to participate in the services. This impeded our ability to draw connections between the services provided and school outcomes related to AYP status movement. At best, we can provide descriptive data on the movement of schools "in" or "out of status" from 2004-06 to 2007-08 and make anecdotal connections between services and outcomes; however we cannot link the success of schools moving "out of status" with RESPRO services statistically. If more schools and districts had participated in the survey, we would have had a better opportunity to capture the link between RESPRO services and AYP status.

Finally, in many cases the work of RESPROs was intertwined with work done with other agencies, namely the Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) or the System of Support (in Chicago). As such, it was difficult to tease out the work done exclusively through RESPRO funds because staff wore the dual hats of RESPRO and ROE/SOS. This was most evident in Area I-A, Chicago. Under the System of Support, staff could be employed through RESPRO money or through other funding sources (e.g., Title II) and most schools (and perhaps all) do not know the distinction between RESPRO and SOS. Again, this limited our ability to establish connections between RESPRO services/supports and schools' AYP progress.



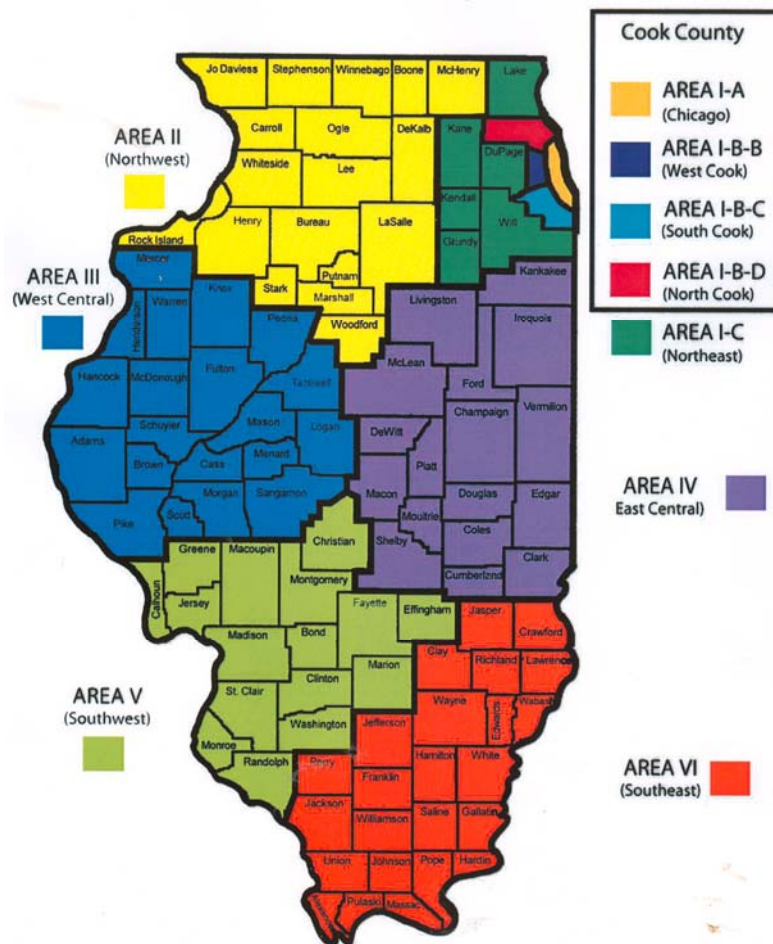
# Contextual Conditions



## RESPRO Organization and Staffing

The RESPRO system spanned the entire state of Illinois and was divided into 10 Areas as seen in **Figure 2**. Each of the 10 Area RESPROs had a slightly different organization structure but most were under the auspices of a Regional Office of Education (ROE). The exceptions were Areas I-B-B, I-B-C and I-B-D, which were all located in Cook County and were under the auspices of Intermediate Service Center (ISC), and Area I-A, which was under the System of Support in the Chicago Public School District. Each RESPRO worked with additional ROEs within the same region; however, RESPRO was the nucleus or governing board that oversaw the grant and budget (except in Area I-A).

**Figure 2**  
RESPRO Regions



Decisions were made collaboratively between RESPRO and the area ROEs. Typically, there was a blend of both common principles that the RESPRO and each area ROEs staff adhered to and tailored services designed to fit the needs of schools/districts in each of the ROEs. To give an example, Area I-C and the six ROEs within the Area collaboratively developed protocols that were used by all to ensure equity of services within the region, including a manual for coaches, surveys for participants, and a SIP monitoring tool. For each of these tools, however, each ROE made some adjustments that were appropriate in meeting their local needs.

RESPRO staffing numbers and characteristics differed across each Area and were determined by the size and scope of the region. The RESPRO staff generally included a Director of the ROE, ISC or SOS, a Coordinator who oversaw the work within the RESPRO, and a group of consultants/coaches/liaisons who worked in the field, along with administrative and fiscal staff. The number of staff varied depending on the number of districts and schools served; while some RESPRO staff employed roughly 7 staff members, others employed a far larger number of staff, between 30-40.

As seen in **Table 1**, RESPRO staff were experienced educators of various backgrounds with advanced degrees. All staff had some type of experience in education, including teaching and/or administrative backgrounds. Others (not shown in the table) had experience as college professors and professional development consultants. The average number of years of experience that staff had as an educator was 11 and the average number of years experience working as a RESPRO staff was 4.4, which dated back to the inception of the RESPRO system.

**Table 1**  
**RESPRO Background and Experience**

|   | Percent (Number) |
|---|------------------|
| <b>Type of Educator*</b>                          |                  |
| Elementary Teacher                                | 51% (93)         |
| Middle School Teacher                             | 36% (66)         |
| High School Teacher                               | 19% (34)         |
| District Administrator                            | 34% (61)         |
| School Administrator                              | 52% (94)         |
| <b>Highest Education Degree</b>                   |                  |
| Bachelor's degree                                 | 6% (10)          |
| Master's degree                                   | 78% (133)        |
| Doctorate   | 16% (27)         |
| <b>Average Years Experience as an Educator</b>    | 11.0             |
| <b>Average Years Experience as a RESPRO staff</b> | 4.4              |

Source: RESPRO Survey: n=181

\* staff could select more than one response, therefore the % do not add up to 100%

As per the interview data, most RESPROs gave hiring preference to exceptional teachers and/or administrators that had extensive experience in school improvement planning, data analyses, professional development and facilitation skills and working knowledge of various school/district climates and challenges. Interestingly, some RESPROs including (but not exclusive to) Areas I-B-B, I-B-C, and I-C hired staff based on their area of expertise. Put by one staff from I-C, “we are not a jack of all trades, rather there is differentiated expertise within our organization and we assign teams of staff to schools based on need.” Having extensive knowledge

and skill in a particular area allowed each person in the Area to serve as the resident expert to others in the field. Some RESPRO staff also pointed out that if the school or district had needs that were outside of the staff’s exceptional experience, they would find the right resource for the school or district from another department in the ROE or an external consultant. Connecting schools and districts to the right resources was just as important as providing the service.

All RESPROs agreed that schools and districts were matched with RESPRO staff who had experience in the area of most need for that school or district. In most RESPROs, a two-person team was assigned to each school and district in status (three person teams were assigned in Area I-B-D); however, one person served as the lead contact. This helped to keep the channels of communication consistent and clear between RESPRO and the school/district. As indicated in the survey, RESPRO staff were assigned to about 7 schools and 3 districts each.

**Table 2** shows that RESPRO staff felt they had good or excellent relationships with schools and districts within their region as indicated through the survey. Indeed, 76% and 73% of RESPRO staff agreed that they had excellent working relationships with schools and districts, respectively.

**Table 2**  
**Nature of the Relationship between RESPRO and Schools and Districts**  
**Percent of RESPRO responding *Most or Nearly All* Schools/Districts**

|   | Schools | Districts |
|---|---------|-----------|
| No working relationship with the school/district: service/support was offered but they have chosen not to receive | 6%      | 2%        |
| No working relationship with the school/district — but would like to in the future                                | 5%      | 3%        |
| School/district is new to status; we have just started a relationship with them                                   | 10%     | 5%        |
| Poor working relationship with the school/district  | 1%      | 2%        |
| Adequate working relationship with the school/district  | 15%     | 13%       |
| Good working relationship with the school/district  | 49%     | 53%       |
| Excellent working relationship with the school/district   | 76%     | 73%       |

Source: RESPRO Survey n=181

## **RESPRO Professional Culture and Climate**

The RESPROs cultivated a professional, collegial community through frequent contact among staff and ongoing opportunities to expand and build upon their knowledge, experience and skills. Most RESPROs met region wide on a monthly basis to discuss what was going on in the field, common challenges, issues and progress. Monthly meetings within each ROE were also typically held in order to discuss local issues. In addition to the monthly meetings, most RESPROs held annual retreats for staff in the spring. The retreats provided an opportunity for staff to reflect upon the work they had done in the previous year and to map out the scope of work for the upcoming school year.

Informal communication was vital to the RESPROs, particularly in those regions that spanned a large geographic area. Informal communication occurred through email, phone calls, and face to face contact. For instance, Area I-B-B had a very dense group of schools and districts, which allowed the consultants easy and frequent access to each other face-to-face. Area IV on the other hand, contained schools and districts spread out over a large area, with a mix of urban and rural areas. To facilitate the lines of informal communication, the Coordinator in Area IV established a professional learning community through YAHOO, which allowed staff from all over the entire region to keep in contact via the internet. The professional learning community site contained an email function and folders labeled by content area where staff could upload and share professional articles, tools, commonly used protocols and other resources with one another. Other RESPROs had similar types of online communication networks.

The RESPRO model of empowering schools and districts through access to the newest information about best practices was also mirrored within their own organization. This sentiment was emphasized by one Coordinator who stated, “we believe that professional development and providing the most updated tools, knowledge, and skills to our coaches is what makes a difference—it is the same model that is used within the schools. It’s about best practices for everyone including the coaches.” RESPROs gained access to the latest in education research, regulatory and political developments through various channels. Regulatory developments were mostly provided through meetings with ISBE, which were attended by Directors and/or Coordinators. Education developments were accessed through various education-related publications, journals, and news sources that were routed to staff through the office such as in Area I-B-B and II. In other Areas, information was shared via monthly meetings and internet, group email and/or list servs. Staff also kept abreast of developments in the research through their involvement with professional organizations such as Association of Supervision Curriculum and Development.

In addition to monitoring developments in the field through the means mentioned above, RESPRO staff maintained and expanded upon their knowledge and skill sets through ongoing professional development. There appeared to be four avenues for professional development opportunities: 1) one or two RESPRO representatives (which could also include school/district staff) attended training in an area of need as specified by a school or district and brought the information back to the group to share through turnkey training, 2) RESPRO staff with a particular expertise provided professional development to others through study groups, book study, etc., 3) the RESPRO site sponsored staff development for all through the monthly meetings or conferences, as is the case in Area VI where they had three conferences a year, and 4) staff attended state and national sponsored conferences, such as ISBE’s Raising Student Achievement Conference, NCLB conference, etc.

All RESPRO staff emphasized that they had ample opportunities for professional development. Said by one consultant, “the professional development is very involved and very focused on what we need. [The organization] fills in the gaps of knowledge between what we should know when we come into this work and what our previous experience provided us.” The staff who were new to the organization were particularly grateful for the professional development and the mentoring provided by other staff. One new member described her first two weeks as “intensive and rewarding. I learned so much that my brain actually hurt.”

Through the survey, RESPRO staff were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the culture and climate of their RESPRO including the level of support they received, job responsibilities, and work load, to name a few. As seen in **Table 3**, in nearly all areas of working conditions, the majority of RESPRO staff (50% or more) were *greatly satisfied*. The top areas of satisfaction included:

- Level of support from other staff within the RESPRO (78%)
- Quality of professional development opportunities (72%)
- Level of leadership and management (71%)
- Job responsibilities (71%)
- Amount of professional development opportunities made available (69%)

These findings were consistent with how the culture and climate was characterized by staff during site visits, particularly in regard to the quality and quantity of professional development. The only areas where staff was less satisfied was in the amount or availability of funds to support the services and activities (37% greatly satisfied) and the opportunities to network and share their ideas with other RESPROs (44% greatly satisfied).

**Table 3**  
**Level of Satisfaction with RESPRO Culture and Climate**  
**as Reported by RESPRO Staff**

|   | Not at all | Somewhat Satisfied | Moderately Satisfied | Greatly Satisfied |
|---|------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Level of support from other staff within the RESPRO                 |            | 7% (11)            | 14% (22)             | 78% (119)         |
| Quality of professional development opportunities                   | 1% (2)     | 6% (9)             | 21% (32)             | 72% (110)         |
| Level of leadership and management                                  | 1% (1)     | 6% (9)             | 23% (35)             | 71% (108)         |
| Job responsibilities  | 1% (1)     | 6% (9)             | 22% (34)             | 71% (110)         |
| Amount of professional development opportunities made available     | 1% (2)     | 10% (16)           | 19% (29)             | 69% (106)         |
| Culture of the RESPRO   | 1% (1)     | 7% (10)            | 26% (39)             | 67% (102)         |
| Level of communication that exists between staff at the RESPRO      |            | 7% (10)            | 30% (46)             | 63% (96)          |
| Resources that are available for the work to be done effectively    | 1% (1)     | 12% (19)           | 30% (46)             | 57% (87)          |
| Work load   | 2% (3)     | 10% (15)           | 34% (53)             | 54% (83)          |
| Level of collaboration with other RESPROs                           | 3% (5)     | 13% (19)           | 34% (51)             | 50% (76)          |
| Opportunities to network and share ideas with other RESPROs         | 7% (10)    | 15% (22)           | 35% (53)             | 44% (66)          |
| Amount/availability of funds to support the services and activities | 4% (6)     | 18% (27)           | 41% (62)             | 37% (56)          |

Source: RESPRO Survey n=181

## Support and Guidance from ISBE

As part of the larger climate and governing body, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provided support and guidance to the work of the RESPROs. For instance, ISBE developed and disseminated resources and tools to facilitate the improvement planning process (e.g., Resource Manual, planning guides and monitoring tool); sponsored professional development in key areas such as NCLB and Title I and on pertinent topics such as developing improvement plans; and regularly informed RESPRO staff about new policies, procedures and regulations through state and region wide meetings.

When asked about the level of support that they received from ISBE, RESPRO staff had mixed reactions. On the one hand, all agreed that the staff who they reported to and worked with were “fantastic,” “accessible,” and “responsive.” RESPRO staff felt that these ISBE staff cared about their work and were doing their best given the resources that they had available.

On the other hand, RESPRO staff cited different issues that hindered the support and guidance that they needed from the State. Specifically, staff felt that timelines from ISBE were unrealistic, communication was inconsistent, and the timeframe for providing schools and districts with student achievement data was slow—all of these issues were directed to the system as a whole and not to the particular people that they worked with.

Many felt the large turnover, reduction in ISBE staff, and change in leadership were at the root of these issues. Put by one consultant, “sometimes, it feels like the State is guessing as to what they want to do. We need more cohesion and direction from the State.” Another consultant expressed her disappointment in the changes she has seen in ISBE over the years, “ISBE used to sponsor a lot of events and trainings, but doesn’t do this as much now.” Most agreed that they would like more networking opportunities during the meetings with ISBE.

## Summary

The RESPRO system was divided into 10 Areas spanning the state of Illinois. Six out of the ten Areas operated through an ROE, an additional three operated through an ISC, and one operated through Chicago’s System of Support. RESPRO staff numbers and characteristics differed across each Area and was determined by the size and scope of the region; staffing numbers ranged from approximately 7 to 40. The staff were experienced educators of various backgrounds with advanced degrees and over 10 years of educational related experience. Indeed, hiring preference was given to exceptional teachers and/or administrators who had extensive experience in school improvement planning, data analyses, professional development skills, and facilitation skills. On average, the number of years that staff worked with the RESPRO Area was 4.4.

Typically, two-person RESPRO staff teams were assigned to schools and districts, but only one person served as the lead contact to ensure consistency in communication. Staff indicated that they served as a lead contact to an average of 7 schools and 3 districts. The majority of staff reported excellent working relationships with the schools and districts.

The RESPROs cultivated a professional community through frequent contact among staff and ongoing opportunities to expand and build upon their knowledge, experience, and skills. Meetings were held monthly both region wide and locally, in addition to annual staff retreats—all of which provided opportunities for staff to discuss challenges, issues, and progress and to reflect upon their work. Frequent, informal communication was maintained through email, phone calls, and face-to-face contact. Professional development opportunities for RESPRO staff to hone and expand their knowledge and skills were ample and encouraged.

Overall, most staff were *greatly* satisfied with their working environment, professional development opportunities, leadership, and support from other staff within the RESPRO.

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# Processes



This section of the report provides a detailed overview of the type of services and supports that the RESPROs provided to schools and districts in status. It begins with findings related to the data that was collected from RESPRO surveys, site visit interviews, and relevant RESPRO documents. Following are survey data from schools and districts on the frequency of various services received from RESPRO and the extent to which the services met their needs.

## **RESPRO Reports of Services and Supports Provided to Schools and Districts**

As per the State requirement, the RESPROs were to offer a menu of services and supports representing best practices in four improvement components:

- 1) District/School Improvement planning (including restructuring planning) and data analysis
- 2) Curriculum, instruction and professional development for teachers
- 3) Administrator support
- 4) Student, family and community support services

In each of the improvement components, it is important to emphasize that the nature and extent of services and supports was based on the needs of the schools and districts; therefore, there was no “one size fits all” approach in any improvement component. This sentiment was echoed throughout all site visits. RESPRO staff also emphasized that the extent of services and supports were dependent upon the leadership knowledge and skills of the administrators. For instance, schools and districts with better leadership may have only needed a brief meeting with RESPRO staff along with some materials and resources to help them with their improvement planning. In schools/districts where leadership was lacking, more intensive services were needed. In this way, quality of service/support far outweighed quantity.

Along the same lines, receptivity and willingness to change also determined the extent of services and supports. One consultant characterized two types of schools and districts, “ones that just want the state off their back and ones that want to dig trenches and make change.” He went on to say that oftentimes, “where we want them to be and where they are at are two very different places; otherwise they probably wouldn’t be in status, quite frankly. So what we do is to bring them closer to where they should be; we are the gentle glue that elevates schools.” Indeed, some schools/districts were more open and willing to change than others.

Due to the amount of work behind real change, relationship building was an integral part of the work of the RESPROs. One coordinator commented that “our work is anchored to the relationship that we have with schools.” The more credible and trustworthy the RESPRO staff were viewed by schools and districts, the more opportunities there were to “dig trenches.” The amount of time it took to build relationships with schools/districts varied and was often related to the leadership skills of administrators.

An extensive review of documents and website information as well as data gleaned from site visits from each of the RESPROs resulted in a list of services and supports that were offered to schools and districts in each of the four components.<sup>1</sup> They are presented throughout this section in **Tables 4-8**. For each list, RESPRO staff indicated the range of schools and districts that they provided the supports and services to over the past year (the median percent range is listed in each table). Please note that these lists are not exhaustive; rather they represent the major services and supports offered by most RESPROs. Further explanation of the services and supports in each improvement component are provided along with examples from the field (note: examples are not necessarily exclusive to the RESPRO site identified for each example).

### ***District/School Improvement Planning and Data Analysis***

As seen in **Table 4**, at least half or more of the schools and districts received the various services and supports in the area of improvement planning and data analyses by RESPRO staff. In some instances, RESPROs reported that they provided the support or service to nearly all schools and districts. These included:

- Assisted in the process of revision and submission of the improvement plan
- Assisted in the analysis of state achievement data
- Provided support in utilizing the Illinois Interactive Report Card
- Clarified important state mandates and requirements

Supporting schools and districts in the development, implementation, and monitoring of their improvement plans was at the heart of the work of the RESPROs. Indeed, it was the most frequently requested and provided service. As per interviews, RESPRO staff stated that the relationship between schools/districts and RESPRO were typically developed through their work on improvement planning. When schools came into status, RESPRO staff made face-to-face contact with administrators. During this first point of contact, RESPRO staff presented administrators with a packet of information about their services and supports. From this point on, the schools and districts determined how much support they needed in the improvement planning process.

Some schools and districts were proactive in the planning process while others were not and needed more facilitation from the RESPROs. For instance, in Area I-B-C, the RESPRO staff guided schools through a comprehensive needs assessment that included input from teachers, parents, students and the community. The needs assessment provided a snapshot of where the schools were overall and provided insight as to where schools needed to focus their efforts. In Area I-A, all RESPRO staff were involved in the improvement planning process; as part of the System of

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<sup>1</sup> The final list of services and supports were verified by the individual RESPROs.

Support (SOS) in Chicago, schools “in status” could not decline services. The improvement plan was a “living document” that centered all the work done in the school and there were certain components that had to be included into the improvement plan, the “non-negotiables.”

**Table 4**  
**Percent of Schools/Districts that were Provided**  
**Support/Services in the Area of Improvement Planning and Data Analysis**

|  | Percent of Schools/Districts |
|--|------------------------------|
| Attended team leadership/planning meetings to discuss data, identify root causes and/or develop objective and action plans | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in the process of revision or submission of the improvement plan  | 76%-100%                     |
| Assisted in monitoring goals and objectives  | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in monitoring funds   | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in monitoring curriculum and instruction  | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in monitoring professional development  | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in monitoring student progress  | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in restructuring planning   | 26%-50%                      |
| Provided training in data analyses to staff involved in the DIP/SIP  | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in the analysis of local achievement data   | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in the analysis of state achievement data   | 76%-100%                     |
| Assisted in disaggregating data for subgroups & analyzing this data  | 51%-75%                      |
| Provided support in utilizing Illinois Interactive Report Card   | 76%-100%                     |
| Provided support for staff in data driven decision making  | 51%-75%                      |
| Gathered relevant resources on initiatives, policies, and mandates   | 51%-75%                      |
| Assisted in budgeting & appropriately allocating funds to program  | 26%-50%                      |
| Assisted in coordinating the DIP/SIP efforts   | 51%-75%                      |
| Clarified important state mandates & requirements  | 76%-100%                     |

Source: RESPRO Survey n=181

While the types of support in the area of improvement planning varied, all supports were aimed at stimulating conversations around the types of data that were appropriate and necessary for informing the process, analyzing the data in order to determine root causes of poor performance, and directing the planning and decision-making that could result in real change and improvement. To this end, all RESPROs included workshops and assistance in using the Illinois Interactive Report Card and full day Data Retreats to focus on the data. Staff indicated that many schools didn’t know how to approach data analysis in a way to move the plan continuously along. In Area III, for instance, data analysis was a heavy focus of the RESPRO staff. Benchmarking was new to some schools and districts and most needed support in how to collect the data and more importantly, how to use data to inform and monitor the improvement plan (as well as to inform instruction).

In addition to staff support, the RESPROs also offered tools and resources to help with the improvement plans. Many had either developed tools such as a school improvement guidebook, observation tools, surveys, monitoring prompts or used tools from ISBE such as the monitoring tool. One RESPRO staff in Area I-A had developed a CD that contained resources that were specific to the needs of her schools.

Schools in restructuring were higher priority schools and received intensive services from RESPRO. For instance, RESPRO staff could have served on the oversight team and brought in the research to build the restructuring plan, which included RESPRO services, monitoring, bi-monthly meetings, etc. RESPRO staff were typically more of an ongoing presence in these schools compared to others and the staff were more integral into the execution and monitoring of the plan.

Assistance in monitoring the improvement plan was also offered by RESPRO staff. They participated in the monitoring team and conducted “walk throughs” or trained others in how to conduct effective “walk throughs” and other types of monitoring. Some were also involved in monitoring budgets, though this occurred to a less extent. The exception was in Area I-A, where staff routinely verified whether or not money was spent as it was intended at the schools.

### ***Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development for Teachers***

**Table 5** shows that in most areas, 50% or less of teachers received services in the area of curriculum, instruction, and professional development. The few exceptions were in providing information about best practices/research-based practices and assistance in coordinating resources for professional development, the latter being typically tied to the improvement planning process. It could also include leveraging resources from content specialists within the ROEs or districts, e.g., Reading First Coaches. The fewest teachers served were in the areas of mentoring support to new teachers and professional development, coaching and modeling in instruction for ELL populations.

The site visits revealed some challenges faced by RESPRO in providing support in curriculum and instruction. One was getting school staff engaged in the process of curriculum mapping and standards-based alignment, an area of high need, which required effort from many people—different grade level teams within and across schools in a district. One consultant summarized that in the area of curriculum and instruction, many teachers and other school staff “needed training and on-site coaching in mapping curriculum, training in sound instructional practices and professional development in assessment. [Many] schools do not have a consistent curriculum that flows from grade to grade and includes standards plus added rigor to challenge students.” In some cases, schools believed that they had a research-based, standards-aligned curriculum when they did not.

Some Areas were successful in assisting schools in curriculum mapping. In Area I-C for instance, RESPRO staff assisted a high school in their efforts to collapse the college readiness standards in all contents and develop pacing calendars. Furthermore, RESPRO staff assisted with the rollout of 4 ½ week assessments by providing workshops on how to create assessments. Consequently, other area high schools requested the same support. Aligning curriculum was also a focus in Area V. The consultants worked with schools to increase rigor by aligning curriculum to state and college readiness standards, implementing common units and semester assessments, and increasing the difficulty of assessments.

**Table 5**  
**Percent of Teachers who were Provided**  
**Support/Services in the Area of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development**

|   | Percent of Teachers |
|---|---------------------|
| Provided support in curriculum mapping across and/or within grades  | 26%-50%             |
| Provided support in using assessments to determine curriculum and instruction priorities                        | 26%-50%             |
| Provided information about best practices/research-based practices  | 51%-75%             |
| Provided mentoring support for new teachers   | 1%-25%              |
| Gathered and provided resources that were relevant to curriculum & instruction                                  | 51%-75%             |
| Assisted in coordinating resources for professional development   | 51%-75%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in differentiated instruction                          | 26%-50%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in standards based instruction                         | 51%-75%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in reading instructional strategies and/or content     | 26%-50%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in writing instructional strategies and/or content     | 26%-50%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in mathematics instructional strategies and/or content | 26%-50%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in instruction for diverse populations                 | 26%-50%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in instruction for ELL populations                     | 1%-25%              |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in effective classroom management                      | 26%-50%             |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in test preparation                                    | 26%-50%             |

Source: RESPRO Survey n=181

Other challenges included pulling teachers out of their classrooms for professional development and providing workshops in regions where schools spanned a large geographic area. To counter these challenges, RESPROs offered workshops at a variety of times to accommodate different schedules, in addition to doing onsite and embedded work with teachers. The goal was to provide more systemic training and less one-shot deal workshops with follow-up to ensure that new skills were implemented.

In more geographically dense Areas, such as I-B-B, consultants had more opportunities to spend in the schools and in classrooms. The consultants in this region focused on instructional support, particularly in the area of engaging students. They were able to “inspect what they expected” as put by one consultant and thereby verify if students were engaged in meaningful discussions. The consultants were able to follow-up with teachers and provide feedback on the instruction. These consultants pointed out that the most successful schools were those where teachers had followed through with the skills that they gained through the workshops, modeling, and other forms of professional development.

RESPRO staff agreed that the services and supports to teachers were differentiated both within schools and between schools. One RESPRO staff from Area I-A stated, “teachers in a particular school may be very strong in instruction, so there are fewer supports and they see us less. In these schools, the communication lines are open and the staff can come to us if they feel there is a need. On the other hand, there are schools that have teachers who need a lot of support in instruction.” One area where much support was needed was in bilingual and special education instruction.

### **Administrator Support**

**Table 6** shows that in most cases at least half or more of administrators received support from the RESPRO in the areas of:

- Acting as a strategist and collaborator in building instructional capacity within the school
- Supporting the development of professional relationships between administrators and teachers
- Assisting in establishing a safe, trusting environment for teachers
- Encouraging and facilitating teacher collaboration
- Assisting in coordinating services
- Providing opportunities for networking

Furthermore, professional development was provided to half or more administrators in a handful of areas including using the Illinois Interactive Report Card. Conversely, RESPRO staff reported that few administrators received professional development in the areas of Survey of Enacted Curriculum use, ELL related topics, teacher qualification, dealing with bullying and drug and violence prevention.

Similar types of supports were echoed during the site visits. According to RESPRO staff much of the support to administrators centered on relationship building with teachers and improving leadership skills. For example, staff cited their work with administrators on how to conduct effective “walk throughs” in classrooms and provide constructive feedback to teachers. Area I-B-C also encouraged administrators to share resources and increase communications between buildings as they saw this as a major need as well. In Area I-B-D, staff provided support to administrators on how to prioritize programs, tie them to the improvement plan and incorporate long-term planning.

The main avenues for formal professional development directed to administrators were through Administrator Academies and Leadership Cadres. The frequency of the Academies/Cadres varied by site, but they generally averaged 4 to 5 times a year. The content of the Academies was needs-driven and determined by the administrators. Discussions centered on hot topics in the field or common issues among the group. Some of these groups came with a book study component. The Academies/Cadres were also designed to provide opportunities for administrators to network with one another and share challenges and solutions. According to many RESPRO staff, this latter component was often viewed as one of the more valuable pieces by administrators.

**Table 6**  
**Percent of Administrators who were**  
**Provided Support by RESPRO**

|  | <b>Percent of Administrators</b> |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Acted as a strategist and collaborator in building instructional capacity within the school                    | 51%-75%                          |
| Supported the development of professional relationships between administrators and teachers                    | 51%-75%                          |
| Assisted in establishing a safe, trusting environment in which teachers can continue to refine their practices | 51%-75%                          |
| Encouraged and facilitated teacher collaboration   | 51%-75%                          |
| Assisted in the coordination of services   | 51%-75%                          |
| Provided opportunities for networking and sharing resources between districts and schools                      | 51%-75%                          |
| <b>Professional development in the areas of:</b>   |                                  |
| RtI related topics   | 51%-75%                          |
| Using Illinois Interactive Report Card   | 76%-100%                         |
| DIP/SIP related topics   | 51%-75%                          |
| Survey of Enacted Curriculum use   | 1%-25%                           |
| Best practices in reading and/or reading related topics  | 26%-50%                          |
| Best practices in mathematics and/or math related topics   | 26%-50%                          |
| ELL related topics   | 1%-25%                           |
| Standards-aligned classrooms   | 26%-50%                          |
| Educator Certification System and other teachers qualification related topics                                  | 1%-25%                           |
| Effective classroom walk throughs and observations   | 26%-50%                          |
| Leadership skills/effective principal topics   | 51%-75%                          |
| Mentoring for new principals   | 26%-50%                          |
| Working with parents and family issues   | 26%-50%                          |
| Dealing with bullying  | 1%-25%                           |
| Drug and violence prevention   | 0%                               |
| New state initiatives  | 26%-50%                          |
| Changes in accountability as measured by the state   | 51%-75%                          |

Source: RESPRO Survey n=181

### **Student, Family and Community Support Services**

As seen in **Table 7**, RESPRO staff provided limited support services to schools and districts in the area of students, families and communities. The most frequent areas of support were in assessment of climate and culture, professional development on topics related to understanding family issues, coordinating efforts to involve parents, and implementing parent involvement goals of the improvement plans.

**Table 7**  
**Percent of Schools/Districts that were Provided**  
**Support Services in the Area of Student, Family and Community**

|  | Percent of Schools/Districts |
|--|------------------------------|
| Assisted in coordinating services/programs for students and families                   | 1%-25%                       |
| Provided support/resources for attendance assistance programs                          | 1%-25%                       |
| Provided PBIS training and/or support in implementation                                | 1%-25%                       |
| Assisted in the assessment of district/ school climate/culture                         | 26%-50%                      |
| Provided professional development on topics related to understanding family issues     | 26%-50%                      |
| Assisted/coordinated efforts to involve parents in schools/district                    | 26%-50%                      |
| Assisted in implementing the parent involvement goals of DIP/SIP                       | 26%-50%                      |
| Assisted in building community support   | 1%-25%                       |
| Assisted in aligning community resources to support & enhance the learning environment | 1%-25%                       |

Source: RESPRO Survey n=181

During interviews, RESPRO staff agreed that student, family and community support services were less frequent. Put by one RESPRO consultant, “there are many other entities that do this work in the area and we didn’t want to stretch ourselves too thin, so we have programmed ourselves out of direct services to students and families.” Assistance in this area generally came in several ways: 1) helping schools and districts to collect data from parents on their perceptions of their child’s education, 2) assisting schools in incorporating a parent involvement component into the improvement plan and ensuring that the format was appropriate (e.g., welcoming to parents), and 3) assisting in connecting schools and districts to the right resources or assisting in coordinating resources in this area. For example, in Area I-C, some RESPRO staff conducted focus groups with parents and students to provide information to the schools about parent and student perceptions. Staff in other regions cited their work on parent surveys for the same purposes.

There were specific examples of work that was done in this area scattered throughout most regions. For example, a coach in Area V worked with schools to develop parent partnerships by collecting the latest research on parent involvement and other valuable resources to assist the partnership. Out of this partnership, schools have established parent book clubs and other activities designed to engage parents in the schools. Area I-B-B sponsored annual “School Citizen of the Year” (SCOTY) awards to students who demonstrated good school citizenship.

### **Evaluating RESPRO Work and Incorporating Best Practices**

RESPRO staff were asked to rate the extent to which they both informally and formally evaluated the impact of their services and supports on schools and districts in the four improvement components (using a four-point scale ranging from not at all to great). In most areas, there was a *moderate* amount of assessment, formally and informally (see **Table 8**). The few exceptions included informal assessments of RESPROs impact on the district and school improvement plans and data analyses and enhancements for administrators and teachers. In these improvement components, informal assessments were conducted to a *great* extent. Conversely, there was only

some formal assessment of students, families and community involvement, which seemed appropriate given the fact that this was an area of less emphasis.

**Table 8**  
**Extent to which RESPROs Informally and Formally Assess Their Impact on Schools/Districts in the Four Improvement Components**

|   | Informal | Formal   |
|---|----------|----------|
| District and school improvement plans and data analyses | Great    | Moderate |
| Curriculum, instruction, and/or classroom assessment    | Moderate | Moderate |
| Enhancements for administrators and teachers            | Great    | Moderate |
| Student, family, and community involvement              | Moderate | Some     |

Similarly, the site visit data revealed that RESPROs evaluation of support to schools and districts ranged from informal to formal with a variety of approaches to evaluation. Most consistent was the tracking of schools’ and districts’ progress on meeting AYP benchmarks. Area I-B-C went one step further by going into schools that had moved out of status and evaluating the RESPRO impact on the success of the school.

A number of RESPROs also administered surveys to districts and schools in order to elicit formal feedback about the services. For instance, Area I-C had recently formalized and systematized their evaluation efforts by developing a services survey that was administered to RESPRO recipients. They also tracked the type and amount of services provided at each district and school via the RESPROdata.org website.

There were a handful of RESPROs that submitted annual evaluation reports completed by an external evaluator consultant.<sup>2</sup> The reports reviewed included: a 2007 report for Area I-B-B, annual reports (2005 through 2008) for Area I-B-D, a 2005-2006 report for Area IV, and a 2007-2008 report for Area VI. One report documented the type of services provided by the RESPRO staff as indicated through a review of monthly meeting reports, notes and discussion. Three of the reports documented schools and district perceptions of services and support provided by RESPROs via surveys. Only the reports from Area I-B-D examined the improvement of schools on AYP benchmarks and compared this data to schools that had not participated in support as a way of determining effectiveness of RESPRO.

RESPRO staff indicated that assessment information and findings were then translated into best practices. The most frequently cited avenue for sharing best practices was through monthly staff meetings within the RESPRO. Coaches/consultants/liasons shared information with each other about what was working in their schools. The group then shared this information with schools informally or through modeling practice. One Coordinator stated that “the needs of each school are different such that the environment, culture and size can impact replication, but strategies such as building relationships, data analysis, successful coaching techniques can be utilized by all schools. Furthermore, core pieces and ideology are shared.”

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<sup>2</sup> Other Areas may have conducted external evaluations but did not submit the reports.

Last year, Area I-B-B conducted a “Success Schools Summit,” a symposium that showcased schools that have moved “out of status.” It featured four schools in the region and was moderated by Area I-B-B staff. The schools spoke to a “full house” audience of educators about how their school had changed in key areas, obstacles to success, and how they overcame the obstacles. The emphasis was on best practices for school improvement and how to move forward.

RESPRO staff indicated that there are few opportunities to share best practices across regions, though many would like to do so.

## **Challenges and Obstacles**

The most frequently cited challenges and obstacles faced by RESPRO staff included district and/or school staff turnover, untimely data and limited funding, and resistance to change and/or dysfunctional climates. Turnover was particularly damaging when it was a district or school administrator for several reasons. One, it often resulted in setbacks to the work that had been done so that RESPRO staff had to take the time to establish a new relationship with the administrator. Two, it could have resulted in discontinued services if the new administrator was not as open to RESPRO as the previous administrator. Essentially, a lot of momentum was lost when turnover was high, which happened often according to RESPRO staff.

Untimely data and limited funding challenged the timeframe for the work that needed to be done and the amount of work that could be done. AYP data came after the improvement planning period had begun, making it difficult to be proactive in the planning. Limited funding occurred at the school/district level and the RESPRO level. Schools and districts had unfunded mandates and high schools seemed to be shortchanged more than elementary schools. RESPROs operated under the same budget despite the fact that the number of schools in status increased every year. Ultimately, the amount of time that staff had to provide direct contact to school staff was constrained. Some RESPROs advocated for an increase in the number of contract days from 120 to 140.

Resistance to change and dysfunctional climates manifested in many different ways. In some cases, schools and districts approached their work reactively rather than proactively, thereby not moving ahead with real change. Some districts were top down and had less involvement with RESPRO. It was difficult for staff to get much needed and requested assistance into the schools that were bound to these districts. Resistance to change could be overt or covert, meaning that some schools and districts flatly refused services and others were in denial that there are systemic problems within. This happened often in affluent schools that came into status.

There were other obstacles that were more regionally based such as geography and distance. One consultant pointed out that she was a lead contact in two schools that were 60 miles apart, making it difficult to conduct a lot of onsite work. As noted previously, the large distances between schools also made it difficult to come up with a central location for workshops. Geography could also limit some of the talent pool and monies appropriated to small, rural districts.

Another obstacle that was reported by some was the lack of monitoring and follow-up. Though monitoring the improvement plan was a service offered by RESPRO emphatically, not all schools

and districts involved them in this process, making it difficult for the staff to see what had been implemented and how.

## School and District Perceptions of Frequency and Need for Services

School and district administrators were asked to rate via online surveys their perceptions of 1) how often they received support from RESPRO and 2) what their school's/district's level of need for support was within the area of improvement plans, curriculum and instruction, and student, family and student and community support services. The choices for frequency of services included: none, quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily. The choices for level of need included: no need, greater need than support received, right amount, and more support provided than needed. These findings are displayed in **Tables 9-12**. For each area, the median responses for both schools and districts are reported. As a reminder, the response rates for the school and district surveys were low; therefore, we heed caution in interpreting these results as being reflective of the entire group of schools and districts served.

### District/School Improvement Planning and Data Analysis

**Table 9** presents the median responses from school and district surveys in the area of district and school improvement plans and data analysis. Worth noting is the fact that the level of agreement between schools and districts was very high; indeed for frequency of service, schools and districts agreed 94% of the time. Similarly, districts and schools showed moderately high agreement on the level of need for services, i.e., 78%.

The data in the table reveals that in most areas, schools and districts received services from RESPRO on a *quarterly* basis. The one exception was in the area of assistance in monitoring professional development in which case, schools reported that services were received *monthly*.

Furthermore, schools and districts agreed that the amount of service that they received in most areas was the *right amount*. There was one exceptions, districts were in more need of support to budget and appropriately allocate funds to the program.

Though the response sets were different between the RESPRO staff survey and the district/school staff survey, there was a lot of consistency between the reports, particularly as the site visit data were incorporated. In both survey and site visit data, RESPRO staff reported that much of their work with schools and districts was in the area of improvement planning and analysis and indeed schools and districts reported that support was provided consistently in all areas and that it matched their needs.

**Table 9**  
**Frequency and Level of Need for Services in Improvement Planning and Analysis**  
**as Reported by Schools and Districts**

|  | Frequency of Service |           | Level of Need |              |
|--|----------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|
|  | School               | District  | School        | District     |
| Attended team leadership/planning meetings to discuss data, identify root causes and/or develop objective and action plans | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in the process of revision or submission of the plan  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in monitoring goals and objectives  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in monitoring funds   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in monitoring curriculum and instruction  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in monitoring professional development  | Monthly              | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in monitoring student progress  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in restructuring planning   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Provided training in data analyses to staff involved in the DIP/SIP  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in the analysis of local achievement data   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in the analysis of state achievement data   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in disaggregating data for subgroups & analyzing this data  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Provided support in utilizing Illinois Interactive Report Card   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Provided support for staff in data-driven decision making  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Gathered relevant resources on initiatives, policies, and mandates   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in budgeting & appropriately allocating funds to program  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Greater Need |
| Assisted in coordinating the DIP/SIP efforts   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Clarified important state mandates & requirements  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

## Curriculum and Instructional Support to Teachers

**Table 10** presents the median responses from school and district surveys in the area of curriculum and instructional support to teachers. The agreement rate between schools and districts for frequency of service and level of need was moderately high, 80% and 73%, respectively.

In most areas, schools and districts reported that teachers received services and support *quarterly*. In some areas, either schools or districts or both reported that teachers did not receive any services or support. The areas where both districts and schools reported no services was mentoring for new teachers and professional development, coaching or modeling in instruction for ELL populations.

In 12 out of 15 areas, or 80% of schools and/or districts reported that the need for services and supports to their teachers was greater than what was received. In particular, schools and/or districts felt that teachers needed more support in the following:

- curriculum mapping across and/or within grades
- using assessments to determine curriculum and instruction priorities
- mentoring support for new teachers
- professional development, coaching or modeling in...
  - differentiated instruction
  - standards-based instruction
  - reading instructional strategies and/or content
  - writing instructional strategies and/or content
  - mathematics instructional strategies and/or content
  - instruction for diverse populations
  - instruction for ELL populations
  - effective classroom management
  - test preparation

Again, there appeared to be agreement between RESPRO reports and school and district reports. For instance, RESPRO staff provided at least half or more teachers with best practices, resources that were relevant to curriculum and instruction, and coordinated resources for professional development, which both schools and districts agreed was the right amount needed. Though in the opposite direction, both RESPRO staff and schools and districts agreed that minimal mentoring was provided to new teachers and support for instruction with ELL populations. Also, RESPRO staff provided support in curriculum mapping to 26%-50% of teachers. School administrators felt that there was more need for support. As per the site visit data, RESPRO staff would probably agree that more work was needed in these areas (ELL and curriculum mapping specifically). Similar report patterns were seen in the content areas, effective classroom management, and test preparation.

In one area, there was some disagreement between the groups. Specifically, RESPRO staff provided professional development, coaching and modeling in standards-based instruction to over half of the teachers, though school administrators felt that there was a greater need for support. Conversely, district administrators felt it was the right amount.

**Table 10**  
**Frequency and Level of Need for Services in Curriculum and**  
**Instructional Support to Teachers**  
**as Reported by Schools and Districts**

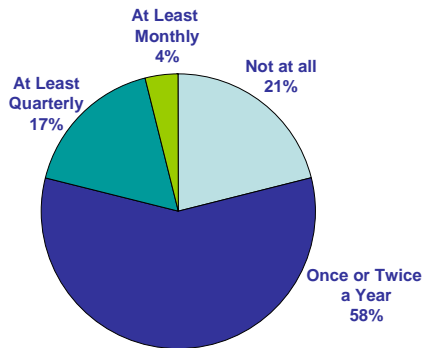
|   | Frequency of Service |           | Level of Need |              |
|---|----------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|
|   | School               | District  | School        | District     |
| Provided support in curriculum mapping across and/or within grades  | None                 | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Right Amount |
| Provided support in using assessments to determine curriculum and instruction priorities                        | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided information about best practices/research-based practices  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Provided mentoring support for new teachers   | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Gathered and provided resources that were relevant to curriculum & instruction                                  | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Assisted in coordinating resources for professional development   | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Right Amount  | Right Amount |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in differentiated instruction                          | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Right Amount |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in standards-based instruction                         | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Right Amount |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in reading instructional strategies and/or content     | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Right Amount |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in writing instructional strategies and/or content     | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in mathematics instructional strategies and/or content | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in instruction for diverse populations                 | Quarterly            | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in instruction for ELL populations                     | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in effective classroom management                      | Quarterly            | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided professional development, coaching, or modeling in test preparation                                    | Quarterly            | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

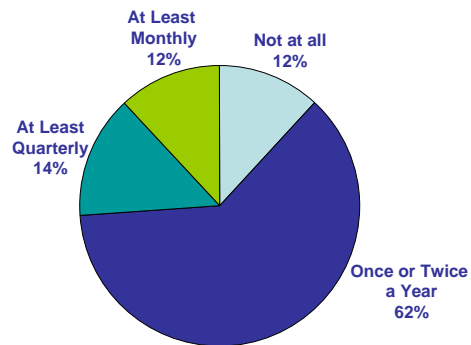
## Administrative Support

Figures 3 and 4 indicate the frequency of district and school administrators' participation in the Administrator Academies. Over half of the district and school administrators were most likely to participate in Academies once or twice a year (58% and 62%, respectively). On the flip side, 21% of district administrators did not participate at all while only 12% of school administrators did not participate in the Academies.

**Figure 3**  
Frequency of School Administrators Participation in Administrator Academies  
*District Survey*



**Figure 4**  
Frequency of School Administrators Participation in Administrator Academies  
*School Survey*



**Table 11**  
Topics Addressed in Administrator Academies Attended  
by School and District Administrators

|  | Schools<br>% (frequency) | Districts<br>% (frequency) |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| RTI related topics   | 31% (26)                 | 47% (14)                   |
| Using the Illinois Interactive Report Card                                   | 31% (26)                 | 33% (10)                   |
| DIP and SIP related topics   | 31% (26)                 | 43% (13)                   |
| Survey of Enacted Curriculum (SAC) use                                       | 4% (3)                   | 0%                         |
| Best practices in reading and other reading related topics                   | 29% (25)                 | 23% (7)                    |
| Best practices in math and other math related topics                         | 20% (17)                 | 23% (7)                    |
| ELL related topics   | 9% (8)                   | 10% (3)                    |
| Test preparation   | 17% (14)                 | 13% (4)                    |
| Standards-aligned classrooms   | 22% (19)                 | 13% (4)                    |
| Curriculum mapping   | 13% (11)                 | 17% (5)                    |
| Educator Certification System and other teacher qualification related topics | 13% (11)                 | 17% (5)                    |
| Effective classroom walk throughs and observations                           | 28% (24)                 | 23% (7)                    |
| Effective leadership skills  | 39% (33)                 | 27% (8)                    |
| Mentoring for new principals   | 13% (11)                 | 7% (2)                     |
| PBIS training  | 15% (13)                 | 17% (5)                    |
| Working with parents and family issues                                       | 8% (7)                   | 13% (4)                    |
| Dealing with bullying  | 8% (7)                   | 3% (1)                     |
| Drug and violence prevention   | 6% (5)                   | 7% (2)                     |
| Social and emotional development of students                                 | 13% (11)                 | 7% (2)                     |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

**Table 11** lists the various topics that were addressed during the Administrator Academies, according to school and district administrators. For the most part, this data does not line up with RESPRO reports of administrator participation.

### **Student, Family, and Community Support Services**

**Table 12** presents the median responses from school and district surveys in the areas family, student, and community support services. The agreement rate between schools and districts for frequency of service and level of need was 78% and 100%, respectively.

In nearly all services and supports, schools and districts did not receive RESPRO support. The few exceptions were in the areas of assessing district or school climate and implementing the parent involvement goals of the improvement plans, in which case, *quarterly* support was provided. These findings jive with RESPRO reports of service in these areas. In all areas, though, schools and districts agreed that their need for support was greater than what they received.

**Table 12**  
**Frequency and Level of Need for Services in Students, Family and Community Support as Reported by Schools and Districts**

|  | Frequency of Service |           | Level of Need |              |
|--|----------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------|
|  | School               | District  | School        | District     |
| Assisted in coordinating services/programs for students and families                   | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided support/resources for attendance assistance programs                          | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided PBIS training and/or support in implementation                                | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Assisted in the assessment of district/school climate/culture                          | Quarterly            | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Provided professional development on topics related to understanding family issues     | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Assisted/coordinated efforts to involve parents in the district                        | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Assisted in implementing the parent involvement goals of DIP/SIP                       | None                 | Quarterly | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Assisted in building community support   | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |
| Assisted in aligning community resources to support & enhance the learning environment | None                 | None      | Greater Need  | Greater Need |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

## Summary

The RESPROs were charged with the task of providing a menu of services and supports to schools and districts “in status” in four improvement component areas: 1) district/school improvement planning and data analysis, 2) curriculum, instruction, and professional development to teachers, 3) administrator support, and 4) student, family and community support services. RESPRO staff reported that service provision was largely based on the needs of the school and district; there was no “one size fits all” approach to their work. Also contributing to the nature and extent of services and supports was the type of administrative leadership and staff’s receptivity and willingness to change within the schools and districts. To help break down barriers, much of the efforts of the RESPRO were directed toward building relationships based on trust, credibility, and collegiality with schools and districts.

Supporting schools and districts in the development, implementation, and monitoring of their improvement plans was at the heart of the work of the RESPROs. Though the type of services and supports ranged greatly and included a variety of tools and resources, the goals of support were to stimulate conversations around the types of data that were appropriate and necessary for informing the process, analyze data in order to determine root causes of poor performance, and direct planning and decision making that could result in real change and improvement. Monitoring the implementation of the improvement plan was also part of the services provided by RESPRO, though the amount varied. In general, schools in restructuring received the most intensive services.

RESPRO staff provided the most teachers with information about best practices/research-based practices and assistance in coordinating professional development resources. Staff agreed that the biggest areas of need were in curriculum mapping and standards-based alignment as well as effective instruction for ELL and special education populations. They highlighted challenges in working with more teachers including resistance to change, geography, and pulling teachers out of their classrooms.

Administrator support centered on helping administrators to build relationships with their teachers and to improve their leadership skills. The main avenues for formal professional development included the Administrator Academy and Leadership Cadres, which met approximately 4 to 5 times a year and were focused on topics decided by administrators. These activities also provided administrators with much appreciated opportunities to network with other administrators.

RESPROs provided limited services and supports to schools and districts in the areas of students, family and community. The most frequent areas of support were in assessment of parents’ perceptions of climate and culture, professional development on topics related to understanding family issues, coordinating efforts to involve parents, and incorporating parent involvement goals in the improvement plans.

The RESPROs conducted a variety of evaluation activities to determine the impact of their work that included both informal and formal efforts. Most consistent was the tracking of schools’ and districts’ progress on meeting AYP benchmarks. The evaluation information was translated into best practices and shared via monthly staff meetings.

The most frequently cited challenges to the work of the RESPROs included district/staff turnover, untimely data and limited funding, and resistance to change and/or dysfunctional climates.

According to school and district staff, the *quarterly* support provided by RESPRO in the areas of improvement plans and data analysis was the right amount needed. Schools and districts also reported, on average, *quarterly* support to teachers in the areas of curriculum, instruction and professional development; however, in 80% of areas, either schools or districts felt there was greater need for support to teachers. Support in the areas of students, family and communities primarily included assessing district or school climate and implementing the parent involvement goals of the improvement plans, in which case, *quarterly* support was provided. Again, districts and schools reported a greater need for support. Though the response sets were different between the RESPRO staff survey and the district/school staff survey, there was a lot of consistency between the three groups, particularly as the site visit data were incorporated.

# Intermediate Outcomes



This section of the report presents data on intermediate outcomes—RESPRO’s impact on areas of school and district functioning where services and supports were provided directly. Similar to the previous section, the findings are presented through the eyes of the RESPRO staff and the schools and districts. This section also includes a report on the level of satisfaction that schools and districts expressed over the quality of services and supports provided by RESPRO.

## RESPRO Reports of Success

RESPRO staff were asked to indicate areas where they felt that they had an impact on schools and districts. They are listed in **Table 13** on the following page. Over half or more RESPRO staff indicated success in nearly all outcome areas and most of the success was in the area of improvement planning and data analysis as well as meeting AYP benchmarks. The areas where most staff reported impact included:

- 85% felt that schools/districts improved their ability to analyze data and identify root causes
- 84% felt that schools/districts improved their ability to develop an action plan for improvement
- 80% felt that schools/districts made continuous improvement in meeting benchmarks for AYP

Similar successes were identified during site visits. Indeed, the most frequently cited success of their work was greater commitment by schools and districts to the entire improvement plan process. RESPRO staff felt that the schools and districts they worked in were making decisions that were more data-driven. Schools and districts were more vested in understanding what went wrong and how they could move forward with change. There was also more accountability around the implementation of the improvement plan and schools took the process more seriously. As a result, all RESPROs cited that some schools moved “out of status” while others made considerable progress.

*“You can’t impose change otherwise you would only get compliance. We develop relationships and we get commitment.”*

RESPRO Coordinator, Area I-C

Staff underscored that this success had much to do with the time that was spent building relationships that were based on collegiality and collaboration with district and school staff. Consequently, more doors opened to RESPRO services and there was increased willingness to change. RESPRO staff were particularly satisfied when this happened in schools or districts that had a history of resistance. They were also pleased when schools and districts initiated contact with RESPRO because it spoke to the reputation that RESPRO staff had within the community.

**Table 13**  
**Perceived Impact of RESPRO**

| As a result of RESPRO services, schools/districts....   | Percent of RESPRO staff |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b><i>AYP outcomes</i></b>  |                         |
| have made it “out of status”  | 58%                     |
| have made continuous improvements in meeting benchmarks for AYP                                       | 80%                     |
| <b><i>Relationships</i></b>   |                         |
| have opened their doors to more support from RESPRO   | 77%                     |
| <b><i>Improvement Plans and Data Analysis</i></b>   |                         |
| have improved their ability to analyze data & identify root causes                                    | 85%                     |
| have improved their ability to develop an action plan for improvement                                 | 84%                     |
| have improved their ability to implement an action plan for improvement                               | 79%                     |
| have improved their ability to monitor implementation of the plan for improvement                     | 73%                     |
| have improved timely submissions of DIP/SIP   | 67%                     |
| <b><i>Curriculum and Instruction</i></b>  |                         |
| teachers’ have moved towards a standards based curriculum   | 65%                     |
| teachers’ have improved their ability to provide effective research-based instructional practices     | 66%                     |
| teachers’ are trying new and improved ways of providing instruction to meet the needs of all students | 73%                     |
| teachers’ improved alignment of curriculum and instruction to standards                               | 76%                     |
| teachers’ began or improved development or curriculum maps to ensure consistency within/across grades | 58%                     |
| teachers’ have improved mathematics instruction   | 63%                     |
| teachers’ have improved reading instruction   | 72%                     |
| teachers’ have improved writing instruction   | 52%                     |

Source: RESPRO Survey n=181

Staff also highlighted improvements in curriculum and instruction in schools that they worked in. Schools were engaging in more curriculum mapping. Teachers were moving toward standards based curriculum and instruction; undoubtedly some were further along than others. More teachers were empowered because they were succeeding in trying new things and building their instruction repertoire. RESPRO staff indicated that instruction was sloppy prior to the new era of accountability under NCLB, but working with RESPRO has shifted teachers’ attitudes from benign neglect to embracing change. Staff saw more teachers asking the right questions, “who’s learning, who’s not, and why aren’t they?”

In addition to common successes, each Area had specific examples that exemplify how their work translated into success. These are bulleted below by Area.

- Area I-A: Staff cited the work on the improvement plan as a major area of success. The process has been systemized. Many cited the improvement plan as a true “living document” that guided the work of the schools and tied all the pieces together. Schools were more focused on data; they had student data readily available when needed and teachers had taken ownership over the data.

- Area I-B-B: Several districts, Berkeley and Cicero, made marked improvements. Several middle schools in Berkeley went from restructuring to making it out of status and one elementary school moved out of status, too. RESPRO staff worked with this district to improve its math and reading curricula. Cicero has a large bilingual population and made remarkable gains on tests, despite the challenging population. RESPRO staff worked with this district to ensure that appropriate instruction was provided to the ELL population. In addition to these successes, 57 schools in this Area made Illinois Honor Roll in 2007.
- Area I-B-C: Over the past two years, 24 schools have come out of status. RESPRO staff felt that this was a result of good partnerships and collaboration between schools, districts, and RESPRO. Schools shared resources with one another and believed that if one could make progress, then all could make progress.
- Area I-B-D: Since 2006, 25 schools, mostly middle schools have come out of status. Staff have also noted the increased communication between high school buildings. The improvement plans have become more coordinated and focused on addressing the needs of the students. There was a strong commitment to using data to inform the improvement planning and programming. RESPRO staff felt that they had a great administrative team to work with and that there was consensus among the groups about what needed to be done to improve schools.
- Area I-C: Staff cited noteworthy changes in curriculum and instruction in several high schools. One example was provided in an earlier section of this report whereby staff worked with the school on curriculum mapping and formative assessments. This work resulted in a 40% increase in English performance. Several other high schools approached RESPRO staff for support in developing and implementing pacing calendars. The successful schools have instituted two weekly planning periods for teachers, one as a grade level team and one for individual teachers.
- Area II: Several elementary schools have made it out of status and another elementary school had transformed into a data-driven school after much hard work and real change. To keep the momentum, Area II conducted monthly “what’s to celebrate” meetings with coaches to celebrate both big and small changes as a result of their work.
- Area III: Staff felt that strong linkages and collaborations between schools and districts had resulted from the work of RESPRO. Staff advocated for better use of the IL standards. In one high school, Galesburg, the staff undertook a multi-year commitment to changing the school culture and instruction. Teachers participated and implemented Project CRISS and Ruby Payne training and the math department engaged in curriculum mapping and developed shared lesson plans. The school improvement team implemented regular “walk throughs.” These activities have all been supported by RESPRO staff.
- Area IV: All three elementary schools and the middle school in Champaign have come out of status. Staff felt that schools were looking at data differently and teachers had taken responsibility for change. Professional development was less “hodge podge” and more focused; in other words the staff selected workshops tied to the improvement plan. RESPRO staff worked with schools and districts to think of the bigger picture and select services that were focused on the improvement that was needed.
- Area V: Staff noted that schools that have participated in RESPRO services have been removed from status. At the organizational level, RESPRO had set up an area wide framework for developing, implementing and monitoring improvement plans that was used with schools.

The coaches had long-term relationships with the schools that dated back to the work with the ROEs, which enabled them to get into schools effortlessly and work with staff on improvement without resistance.

- Area VI: Eight schools have come out of status in the past two years. RESPRO staff cited strong relationships with the schools which has allowed for real change to take place. Schools have built up their capacity and have taken ownership of the improvement planning process. They shared information and resources with other schools.

### School/District Reports of Success

Schools and districts rated the extent to which RESPRO contributed to a similar list of outcomes on a scale that included minimal, somewhat, moderate, and extensive. If the school or district had not achieved the outcomes, they reported “not achieved yet.” The evaluation found differences in the contribution ratings between schools and districts that reported better relationships with RESPRO as compared to those who reported no, new or poor relationships with RESPRO. To better understand the results, **Table 14** presents the data on the relationship categories and the percent of schools and districts that reported each type of relationship. For schools, 86% indicated that they had an adequate relationship or better with RESPRO. For districts, 75% had an adequate relationship or better with RESPRO.

**Table 14**  
Perceived Relationship between Schools/Districts and RESPRO

|  | Percent (#)<br>Schools | Percent (#)<br>Districts |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Our school does not have a working relationship with the RESPRO/SOS. While services/support have been offered we have chosen not to receive services/support | 2% (1)                 | 13% (3)                  |
| Our school does not have a working relationship with the RESPRO/SOS, however we would like this to change in the future                                      | 8% (5)                 | 4% (1)                   |
| Our school is new to status; we have just started a relationship with RESPRO/SOS   | 3% (2)                 | 4% (1)                   |
| Our school has a poor working relationship with RESPRO/SOS   | 2% (1)                 | 4% (1)                   |
| Our school has an adequate working relationship with the RESPRO/SOS  | 12% (8)                | 8% (2)                   |
| Our school has a good working relationship with the RESPRO/SOS   | 27% (18)               | 21% (5)                  |
| Our school has an excellent working relationship with RESPRO/SOS   | 47% (31)               | 46% (11)                 |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

**Table 15** lists the outcome areas and the median contribution ratings assigned to RESPRO by schools and districts. In over one-third of the responses, schools and districts that had an adequate relationship or better with RESPRO rated RESPRO as contributing more to the outcome. These ratings are provided in parenthesis when they occurred.

**Table 15**  
**Level of Contribution of RESPRO to Outcome Success**  
**as rated by Schools and Districts**

| <b>Our school/district...</b>   | <b>Schools</b>       | <b>Districts</b>     |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b><i>AYP outcomes</i></b>  |                      |                      |
| has made it “out of status”   | Not achieved         | Not achieved         |
| has made continuous improvements in meeting benchmarks for AYP  | Moderate             | Moderate (Somewhat)  |
| <b><i>Relationships</i></b>   |                      |                      |
| has opened its doors to more support from RESPRO/SOS  | Moderate (Extensive) | Extensive            |
| climate has improved  | Moderate             | Somewhat             |
| <b><i>Improvement Plans and Data Analysis</i></b>   |                      |                      |
| has improved our ability to analyze data & identify root causes                                       | Moderate             | Moderate             |
| has improved our ability to develop an action plan for improvement                                    | Moderate (Extensive) | Moderate (Extensive) |
| has improved our ability to implement an action plan for improvement                                  | Moderate (Extensive) | Moderate (Extensive) |
| has improved our ability to revise the improvement plan   | Moderate (Extensive) | Moderate (Extensive) |
| has improved our ability to monitor implementation of the plan for improvement                        | Extensive            | Moderate (Extensive) |
| has improved our use of data to make decisions  | Moderate             | Moderate (Extensive) |
| has improved timely submissions of DIP/SIP  | Moderate (Extensive) | Moderate (Extensive) |
| <b><i>Curriculum and Instruction</i></b>  |                      |                      |
| teachers’ have moved towards a standards-based curriculum   | Moderate             | Moderate             |
| teachers’ have improved their ability to provide effective research-based instructional practices     | Moderate (Extensive) | Moderate             |
| teachers’ are trying new and improved ways of providing instruction to meet the needs of all students | Moderate (Extensive) | Moderate             |
| teachers’ improved alignment of curriculum and instruction to standards                               | Moderate             | Moderate             |
| teachers’ began or improved development or curriculum maps to ensure consistency within/across grades | Moderate             | Moderate (Somewhat)  |
| teachers' have improved mathematics instruction   | Somewhat             | Moderate             |
| teachers' have improved reading instruction   | Moderate             | Moderate             |
| teachers' have improved writing instruction   | Moderate             | Moderate             |
| <b><i>Student, Family, and Community</i></b>  |                      |                      |
| parents and community are more involved in the school in positive ways                                | Somewhat             | Minimal (Somewhat)   |
| students have improved attitudes and behavior   | Moderate (Somewhat)  | Somewhat             |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

In 81% of the outcomes, all schools regardless of the type of relationship they had with RESPRO rated RESPRO as *moderately* contributing to the successes of the school. More importantly, schools that reported an adequate or better relationship with RESPRO rated the contribution of RESPRO as *extensive* in the following areas:

- opened doors to more support from RESPRO
- improved ability to develop an action plan for improvement
- improved ability to implement an action plan for improvement
- improved ability to revise the improvement plan
- improved ability to monitor implementation of the plan for improvement
- improved timely submission of the school's improvement plan
- teachers have improved their ability to provide effective research-based instructional practices
- teachers trying new and improved ways of providing instruction to meet the needs of all students

*"The RESPRO worked with the school through the entire development and implementation of the improvement plan. They made the teachers feel more confident in their abilities and our culture is becoming one of a professional learning community with a 'yes we can' mentality. The RESPRO helped instill confidence and gave us the skills and tools that we needed."*

School Principal

For all districts, regardless of the type of relationship, RESPRO contribution was rated as *moderate* in 67% of the success outcomes. Similar to schools, districts that reported an adequate relationship or better with RESPRO rated them as *extensively* contributing to the following areas:

- improved ability to develop an action plan for improvement
- improved ability to implement an action plan for improvement
- improved ability to revise the improvement plan
- improved ability to monitor implementation of the plan for improvement
- improved timely submission of district's improvement plan
- improved use of data to make decisions

*"The RESPRO provided an end of year formal report on their observations of the schools and district. They provided us with a good understanding of where we are and where we need to go. It helped us to focus on the areas that are in need of improvement."*

District Superintendent

These results, particularly for those schools and districts that reported adequate or better relationships with RESPRO are consistent with RESPRO staff reports of their impact on schools and districts. Most noteworthy are the similarities between schools, districts, and RESPRO staff in the areas of improvement plans. Schools and districts felt that RESPRO had *extensively* contributed to the development, implementation, revision, monitoring, and timely submission of

the improvement plan. Between 67% and 84% of RESPRO staff indicated that schools/districts had made improvements in the same areas as a result of their work.

This data also jives with the frequency and nature of support provided by RESPRO that was reported in the **Processes** section of the report (see pages 15-17 and 24-25). There, RESPRO staff indicated that they provided the most work to schools and districts in improvement planning areas, and schools and districts also reported that they received the right amount of support for their improvement plans. It seems to follow that the concentration of work that was spent in the areas of improvement planning, implementation, and monitoring paid off for schools and districts.

Schools and RESPRO staff were also in agreement about teachers' improvements in several areas including their ability to provide effective research-based instructional practices and trying new and improved ways of providing instruction to meet the needs of all students.

*"The RESPRO helped us to develop a workable schedule that was good and right for the school. RESPRO also gave the teachers tremendous staff development. First grade teachers are now doing guided reading where before the district only required it for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The teachers now want to do things that have value even if they aren't required to do it."*

School Principal

## School/District Satisfaction with RESPRO

Schools and districts rated their level of satisfaction with RESPRO staffs' interpersonal skills, responsiveness, and knowledge base on a four-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *greatly* satisfied. In nearly all areas, schools were *moderately* satisfied with RESPRO staff and in one area, knowledge of federal and state mandates, schools were *greatly* satisfied (**Table 16**). The results differed slightly for schools that reported an adequate relationship or better with RESPRO. This group was *greatly* satisfied with the RESPRO staffs...

- Ability to act as a strategist and collaborator in building instructional capacity within the school
- Responsiveness to school's needs
- Knowledge of federal & state mandates (similar to the whole group response)
- Provision of high quality & useful materials and resources

**Table 16**  
**School and District Level of Satisfaction with RESPRO Staff**

|   | <b>Schools</b>   | <b>Districts</b> |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Ability to act as a strategist and collaborator in building instructional capacity within the school/district | Moderate (Great) | Moderate         |
| Ability to develop professional relationships with administrators and teachers                                | Moderate         | Great            |
| Ability to establish a safe, trusting environment in which teachers can continue to refine their practice     | Moderate         | Moderate         |
| Encouragement and facilitation of teacher collaboration   | Moderate         | Moderate         |
| Responsiveness to school's/district's needs   | Moderate (Great) | Great            |
| Responsive to school's/district's communications in a timely manner   | Moderate         | Great            |
| Provision of support in the coordination of programs & services   | Moderate         | Moderate (Great) |
| Knowledge base of curricula that we use   | Moderate         | Moderate (Great) |
| Knowledge base of the programs & initiatives that were implemented in school                                  | Moderate         | Moderate (Great) |
| Knowledge of federal & state mandates   | Great            | Moderate (Great) |
| Provision of high quality & useful materials and resources  | Moderate (Great) | Moderate (Great) |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

*"The RESPRO have always been respectful and complimentary in their reports of our areas of success and very professional in discussing the areas in need of improvement. Over time, we saw them as a fantastic resource and our relationship has cemented and based on one of trust and value."*

School Principal

Similarly, all districts were *moderately* satisfied with RESPRO staff in most areas; however they were *greatly* satisfied with the RESPRO staff's responsiveness to the districts needs, timely communications with the district and staff's ability to develop professional relationships with administrators and teachers. In addition to these areas, districts that reported adequate or better relationships with RESPRO were also *greatly* satisfied with staff's...

- Provision of support in the coordination of programs & services
- Knowledge base of curricula that we use
- Knowledge base of the programs & initiatives that were implemented in school
- Knowledge of federal & state mandates
- Provision of high quality & useful materials and resources

*“The RESPRO has given us the ability to build positive relationships within the schools and the ability to get everyone on the same page. They served as a fine model of being all inclusive. This team concept has been invaluable and is embraced by teachers and staff. It is now part of their consciousness.”*

District Superintendent

School and district administrators rated the quality of the Administrator Academies on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. **Table 17** shows that in most areas (60%), school administrators *strongly agreed* that the Administrator Academies:

- were informed by current research
- were well-matched to goals for professional growth
- were logically related and sequenced
- were designed to provide an understanding of theory and practice
- were designed to build my repertoire of instructional leadership
- provided the opportunity to discuss challenges and successes with other administrators
- were helpful to the work of an administrator

The responses did not vary for those schools that reported better relationships with RESPRO with the exception of the usefulness of materials and resources.

**Table 17**  
**District and School Administrators Satisfaction with Administrator Academies**

| The Administrator Academies.....   | Schools                   | Districts                 |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| were informed by current research  | Strongly Agree            | Agree<br>(Strongly Agree) |
| were well-matched to goals for professional growth                                 | Strongly Agree            | Strongly Agree            |
| were logically related and sequenced   | Strongly Agree            | Agree<br>(Strongly Agree) |
| were followed up with support and feedback   | Agree                     | Agree                     |
| were designed to provide an understanding of theory and practice                   | Strongly Agree            | Agree<br>(Strongly Agree) |
| were designed to build my repertoire of instructional leadership                   | Strongly Agree            | Agree<br>(Strongly Agree) |
| provided opportunities to discuss challenges & successes with other administrators | Strongly Agree            | Strongly Agree            |
| led me to think about providing leadership in a different way                      | Agree                     | Agree                     |
| included useful materials & resources  | Agree<br>(Strongly Agree) | Agree<br>(Strongly Agree) |
| were helpful to the work of an administrator                                       | Strongly Agree            | Agree<br>(Strongly Agree) |

Sources of data: School Survey n=85, District Survey n=30

All district administrators were more likely to *agree* with the statements; however, districts with adequate or better relationships with RESPRO *strongly agreed* with most statements that the Administrator Academies were:

- informed by current research
- well-matched to goals for professional growth
- logically related and sequenced
- designed to provide an understanding of theory and practice
- designed to build my repertoire of instructional leadership
- provided opportunities to discuss challenges and successes with other administrators
- included useful materials and resources
- helpful to the work of an administrator

“RESPRO staff provides professional development in any area that is needed. They have provided training in the Instructional Practice Inventory to the principals. *What Great Leaders Do* was a particularly valuable workshop.”

District Superintendent

## Summary

RESPRO staff reported a variety of successes at the schools and districts as a result of their work. Most successes centered on schools’ and districts’ ability to develop improvement plans and conduct data analyses to identify root causes. Additionally, RESPRO staff cited schools/districts continuous improvement in meeting benchmarks for AYP. Staff felt that much of this success was related to the time that was spent building collegial and collaborative relationships with schools and districts.

Staff also highlighted some improvements in curriculum and instruction, for instance, some schools were more engaged in curriculum mapping. Teachers had either moved or were moving toward the direction of standards-based instruction. Teachers were starting to ask the right questions about their students’ progress.

The evaluation found differences in the contribution ratings between schools and districts that reported better relationships with RESPRO as compared to those who reported no, new or poor relationships with RESPRO. Therefore, it seemed fair to place heavier emphasis on the reports from schools and districts that reported better relationships with RESPRO. These schools and districts rated the contribution of RESPRO services and support as *extensive* in all areas of school improvement as well as in other areas. These results are consistent with RESPRO staff reports of their impact on schools and districts. This data also jives with the frequency and nature of support provided by RESPRO that was reported in the **Processes** section of the report on the concentration and frequency of services provided in these areas of improvement.

For the most part, schools and districts were *moderately* or *greatly* satisfied with RESPRO staffs’ interpersonal skills, responsiveness, and knowledge base. Furthermore, district and school administrators *strongly agreed* with the quality of the Administrator Academies.

# Outcomes



This section of the report provides a brief overview of the ISBE and federal accountability systems and tracks schools that were designated as “in status” by these accountability systems from the academic years 2004-05 to 2007-08. The data is presented statewide, that is, aggregated across all 10 RESPRO Areas. Due to the study’s limitations, we could not establish a statistical link between quantity and quality of RESPRO services and movement of schools in and out of status; therefore, this data is presented descriptively, only.

## ISBE and Federal Accountability System

The ISBE accountability system, as mandated by NCLB, calculates performance targets for mathematics and reading annually. Schools that fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two years are placed in status and are labeled as “Academic Early Warning” (AEW); these schools are typically also placed in “Improvement/Choice” status under federal mandate. AEW schools are subject to several consequences including a revision of their school improvement plan and additional school analysis. The schools are also eligible for additional supports, including RESPRO support.

If schools have not met their AYP benchmarks after two years of being in AEW status, they are bumped up to “Academic Watch” (AW) status. These schools are also typically increased to “Corrective Action” status under federal mandate. AW schools have additional consequences. Each additional year that a school fails to meet AYP resulted in increased consequences and supports. For instance, after five years of missing AYP benchmarks, schools are placed in “restructuring planning” status under federal mandate, which means that they are required to develop a plan to revamp the school’s education programs and staffing. After six years of failing to meet AYP, schools are required to follow through with plans to restructure; school are also placed in state intervention status (see Appendix A for list of consequences and supports by status category).

## School Status Data

Data on schools “in status” were tracked from 2004-05, one year after the initiation of the RESPRO system, to 2007-08, the most current year of status data. As seen in **Table 18**, there were a total of 913 schools in state status in 2004-05, with 609 of these schools classified as “in status” by federal requirements. There was a decrease in the number of schools “in status” by 2005-06 and in 2006-07, representing a total of 223 fewer schools in state status and 109 fewer in federal status during this two-year period. In 2007-08, however, the number of schools “in

status” increased to 791, adding 101 schools back into state status, with 44 of those schools on federal status list. Even still, the total number of schools in status in 2007-08 was less than in 2004-05.

**Table 18**  
**Number of Schools in “In Status” from 2004-05 to 2007-08**

|         | State Status | Federal Status |
|---------|--------------|----------------|
| 2004-05 | 913          | 609            |
| 2005-06 | 826          | 565            |
| 2006-07 | 690          | 503            |
| 2007-08 | 791          | 547            |

To gain a better understanding of the movement of schools “in” and “out of status,” **Table 19** presents the number and percent of schools that were new “in status”, had advanced “in status”, had stayed the same, and had moved out of federal status from 2005-06 to 2007-08, these are bulleted below.

- **New:** Few schools came into status between 2005-06 and 2006-07; however, the percent of new schools in status doubled to 16% in 2007-08
- **Advanced in Status:** For each year, the majority of schools advanced to the next category (e.g., moving from Choice/SES to Corrective Action or Choice to Supplemental Educational Services). The largest increase was between 2005-06 and 2006-07 when the percent of schools that advanced in status increased from 47% to 61%. One year later, the percent increase was only 5 points to 66%.
- **Stayed the Same:** In 2005-06, 36% of schools remained in the same status category from the previous year. This percent dropped in 2006-07 to 12% and then increased slightly to 14% in 2007-08.
- **Moved Out of Status:** The percent of schools that moved “out of status” in 2005-06 was 13%, which increased to 20% in 2006-07. Unfortunately, the percent of schools that moved out of status dropped 16 points by 2007-08 to only 4%.

**Table 19**  
**Statewide Change in Status Categories per Year**

| Year               | New |     | Advanced in Status |     | Stayed the Same |     | Moved Out of Status |     |
|--------------------|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----------------|-----|---------------------|-----|
|                    | N   | %   | N                  | %   | N               | %   | N                   | %   |
| 2005-06<br>(n=950) | 37  | 4%  | 446                | 47% | 343             | 36% | 124                 | 13% |
| 2006-07<br>(n=866) | 58  | 7%  | 535                | 61% | 107             | 12% | 176                 | 20% |
| 2007-08<br>(n=824) | 135 | 16% | 543                | 66% | 113             | 14% | 33                  | 4%  |

## Summary

The ISBE accountability system, as mandated by NCLB, calculates performance targets for mathematics and reading annually. Schools that fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for two years are placed in status and are labeled as “Academic Early Warning” (AEW); these schools are typically also placed in “Improvement/Choice” status under federal mandate. Each additional year that a school fails to meet AYP would result in increased consequences and supports.

Data on schools “in status” were tracked from 2004-05, one year after the initiation of the RESPRO system, to 2007-08, the most current year of status data. The first two years showed a gradual decline in the number of schools “in status”; however, by 2007-08, the number increased. Even still, the total number of schools in status in 2007-08 was less than in 2004-05. This section also tracked the annual number and percent of schools that were new, advanced, stayed the same, and moved out of status. The percent of new schools “in status” doubled by 2007-08. Schools that advanced in status increased yearly; conversely, schools that stayed the same decreased yearly. The percent of schools that moved out of status increased from 2005-06 to 2006-07, but then declined steeply by 2007-08.



# Conclusions and Recommendations



This report represents a first year effort to document and evaluate the RESPRO system, statewide. Through the triangulation of a variety of data collection activities, this report captured the voices of key constituents including RESPRO staff and a range of schools and districts that were “in” and “out of status.” Moreover, the report amassed a fair amount of information about the RESPRO system in order to paint a picture of the nature and extent of services that were provided to schools and districts. Through our analyses of the data, many commonalities across Areas arose, which contributed to the strengths of the system. The common features of all Areas are bulleted below.

- There was demonstrated strength and stability in the staffing of the RESPROs. The staff came from exceptional education related backgrounds and the majority of them had been with RESPRO since its inception. Equally important, most staff were very satisfied with culture and climate of their RESPRO including the amount of professional development opportunities, the support they received from other staff, the leadership, etc.—all of which contributed to the overall stability of the system. More importantly, this stability lent credibility to their work and reputation in the field with school and district staff.
- Building relationships with schools’ and districts’ staff was the cornerstone of all work. Though not part of the menu of services, building relationships based on trust and collaboration was essential to the work of RESPROS. In particular, strong relationships supported real change in the schools and districts. Indeed, district and staff turnover was so detrimental because it resulted in a setback to the momentum of the work of RESPRO. The amount of time needed to build relationships varied greatly, but RESPRO staff deemed it as an ongoing priority.
- There was no “one-size fits all” approach to service delivery rather their approach could be described as “responsive and differentiated services.” Indeed all RESPRO agreed that the nature and extent of services was needs driven. Furthermore, quality outweighed quantity. Some schools and districts needed less contact to benefit from RESPRO whereas others needed frequent and intensive support.
- RESPRO staff focused much of their efforts working with schools and districts in the areas of improvement plans and data analysis. It appears that the process for engaging schools and districts that came into status was similar across Areas. For instance, RESPRO staff made a first point of contact with the school/district and presented a packet of materials and information about the services and supports that could be provided through RESPRO.

Additionally, there were some commonalities to the types of supports, tools and resources, and the goals of the work. Data retreats, participation in the improvement planning team meetings are examples of common services.

In addition to the common features of the Areas, our analyses revealed differences between the Areas, which could contribute to the strengths of particular Areas, but could also highlight where more improvement is needed in others. These are bulleted below.

- The organization structures varied and resulted in the intertwining of RESPRO services with other systems of support. Some RESPRO staff appeared to be in the dual role of a RESPRO provider and an ROE/SOS/ISC provider. This was most common in Area I-A where RESPRO is one part of the larger System of Support. This structure has the advantage of providing schools access to a myriad of services; however, it also makes it difficult to tease out the impact of RESPRO and to clearly define the work of the RESPROs.
- It appears that service provision in the areas of curriculum and instruction varied both within and across Areas. Some RESPROs were doing more onsite work directly with teachers coupled with follow-up, while others did this less frequently. Undoubtedly, geography impacted some RESPROs ability to provide ongoing work with teachers, while resistance to change was obstacle for others. Further documentation of services and supports are needed in order to get a clearer picture of the nature and frequency of curriculum and instruction services and supports within each Area.
- Efforts to evaluate the impact of RESPRO services on schools and districts varied. In most cases, the efforts were informal and while these efforts do have their merits, they do not provide the rigor needed to establish stronger links between services and outcomes. Some RESPROs had more rigorous external evaluations than others and some didn't conduct formal or external evaluations.
- Documentation of service/support provision varied. Some RESPROs used the [www.RESPROdata.org](http://www.RESPROdata.org) database to document and track their services more diligently than others and some didn't use the database at all (e.g., Area I-A). It is still unclear how staff kept track of the work that they did in each school and district, if at all. Indeed, at the outset of this study, we asked each Area to provide us with a list of schools and districts that they served since the inception of RESPRO; some were able to supply this information with ease, while others had more difficulty.

While there were several limitations to the study that prevented our ability to establish a statistical link between the quantity and quality of RESPRO services and supports and schools' movement "out of status," the findings from this report suggest some links, anecdotal or otherwise. Most obvious is the consistency of data on the nature and frequency of RESPROs services in the area of improvement plans and successful outcomes in this area reported by RESPRO staff, schools, and districts. In other words, RESPRO staff provided much of their services in this area, schools and districts felt that their needs were met, and all groups agreed that there were improvements in schools/districts ability to develop, put into action, and monitor their improvement plans as a result of RESPRO.

Additionally, RESPRO staff, schools, and districts were mostly consistent in reporting on supports provided and outcomes related to teachers' use of best practices and standards-based instruction. Furthermore, RESPRO staff, schools, and districts all agreed that teachers were trying new and improved ways to meet the needs of all students.

This study was unable to determine whether or not these findings could predict schools' movement "out of status" or progress in moving out, but given the consistency of information, they are real possibilities. Certainly, the findings of this report do identify the successes of the RESPRO system in many areas. The findings also point to some areas where more work can be done. In order to improve and expand upon the system, we offer the following set of recommendations.

- 1) Conduct annual statewide evaluations of the RESPRO system. In order to establish a link between RESPRO services and schools AYP outcomes and rigorously identify the most effective services and supports, annual evaluation efforts are encouraged. The present evaluation provides the methodology to ISBE and we strongly encourage ISBE to administer surveys to RESPRO staff, schools, and districts annually in order to document changes and improvements in services and supports over time. This includes strong buy-in from the RESPRO staff to help support efforts to collect the data. Furthermore, a larger number and a more representative group of school and district survey responses will enable ISBE to conduct more rigorous analyses to determine impact of RESPRO on schools and districts AYP outcomes.
- 2) Conduct more formalized assessments within each Area. Each Area is encouraged to "beef up" its evaluation efforts in order to more rigorously identify best practices. Furthermore, more rigorous evaluation efforts within each Area can serve to better inform the statewide evaluation. ISBE can facilitate this work by providing workshops on evaluation via internally or through external consultants.
- 3) Document service/support provision in schools and districts more consistently and diligently. Again, this goes back to efforts to evaluate the impact of RESPRO on schools and districts. While we know that quality is more important than quantity, it would be worthwhile for staff to keep a better track of where and how much time is spent in schools and districts. This data, coupled with quantitative or qualitative data on the nature of services, including challenges could help inform RESPRO the types of services that have an impact and how much is needed in different types of schools.
- 4) Build in more opportunities for RESPRO Areas to come together and network across Areas. Each Area has its own strengths and best practices, which can and should be shared with others. Furthermore, each Area has developed tools, documents, and resources that are used in their work, which could also be a benefit to others. ISBE could consider gathering these resources into one binder organized by content to share with all Area RESPROs.
- 5) Conduct annual self-assessments to monitor the entire system including the relationship between RESPRO and ISBE. The Center on Innovation and Improvement ([www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)) has resources to conduct a self assessment of the system of supports across states, which include an examination of the organizational structure, the

coordination between systems of support and state agencies, operational coherence and completeness, and strengths and weaknesses.

- 6) Consider narrowing the scope of services. Given the wide range of services that are offered and certain limitations in providing services, ISBE might consider narrowing the scope of the work of RESPRO. Clearly the work in improvement planning and data analyses is the most frequently provided service and strength of the RESPRO system. On the other hand, services and supports in the areas of students, families and communities are far less frequent; moreover, some RESPRO cited other organizations that also provide these services. We suggest that ISBE have discussions with the RESPROs on ways that they can hone in on certain services and develop a niche within this narrowed scope of work.
- 7) Increase state level support and guidance to the RESPRO Areas. Given the current limited capacity at the state level, it appears that more support and guidance may be difficult to achieve. To rectify this issue, ISBE should consider staffing up the state level office that is responsible for providing leadership and guidance to the Regional System of Support. This office should have sufficient staff to not only provide the leadership and guidance to the RESPRO Areas, but also have the capacity to coordinate and leverage resources with other state offices that are responsible for federal programs (e.g., Titles I and II, Special Education, etc) and which have an impact on the work of RESPROs. Better coordination and leveraging of resources between offices will ensure greater consistency of information that is fed back to RESPRO staff, schools and districts.



**The Evaluation of Illinois State Board of Education's  
Regional System of Support Providers (RESPROs)**