In Year 3, the Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation (CSAI) has continued our work on research and technical assistance projects that support the goals of the U.S. Department of Education and the Regional Comprehensive Centers (RCCs) in building capacity at the state education agency level to improve achievement of all students and help close the achievement gap of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students.

We continue to refine our strategies through the collaboration of our partners at the North Central, South Central, Northwest, and West Regional Comprehensive Centers, drawing on their direct relationship with their State leadership and Indian Education advisory boards to help identify critical issues and support needs. As a result of the discussions held by the joint advisory board members at the Cross-Center Indian Education Advisory meeting in Phoenix, AZ on October 7, 2014, we have included the priorities of teacher/leader effectiveness and turning around lowest performing schools as areas of focus in our Indian Education projects. Specific Year 3 project strands are discussed below.

Continued research on the American Indian Achievement Gap

In Year 3, CSAI is building upon our prior work, which began with a thorough literature review on the American Indian Achievement Gap, and synthesized the existing research to create a comprehensive overview of the gap that has existed for AI/AN students across multiple measures of academic achievement and educational attainment. We presented this as an infographic summary at the October 7, 2014 Cross Center Advisory meeting in Phoenix, AZ. Based on the response and feedback provided at that meeting by the Joint Advisory Boards, the CSAI has continued the research on the American Indian Achievement Gap, to look at both the systemic obstacles creating barriers for AI/AN students as well as the impact they have on measures of academic achievement and lifetime educational attainment. This new infographic will be distributed during the June meeting of the Joint Indian Education committees in Oklahoma.
Guidance on Strategies to Support American Indian Students

Based on our research into the obstacles that AI/AN students face in meeting academic goals, the CSAI is working on a guidance document to help schools support their American Indian and Alaska Native students by addressing the significant barriers described in our model. We outline the need for a master plan for American Indian student improvement, addressing each key barrier. We will share an initial draft of this with our partner RCCs and their Joint Indian Education Advisory Board members in Oklahoma, and plan on completing this by the end of Year 3.

Collection on Culturally Responsive Instructional Resources for AI/AN Students

In Year 3, we have expanded upon our review of instructional resources to support AI/AN students in the classroom and have uploaded a collection of vetted resources available through the CSAI website. The Culturally Responsive Instructional Resources for American Indian/Alaska Native Students collection are grouped by topic area and opens with research focusing on how effective teachers can use the learning styles of AI/AN students to improve student engagement and achievement in the classroom. The collection also includes case studies which dive more deeply into the issues related to the implementation of particular practices, programs, and curricula in schools. English Language Arts (ELA) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) resources, including classroom activities, instructional modules, reading lists, and guidance documents are also showcased, along with a final section on resources focusing on promoting the value and importance of cultural perspective when developing, implementing, and assessing academic standards in the classroom.

Knowledge Brief on Educational Reforms and American Indian and Alaska Native Learner Success

CSAI has partnered with Sharon Nelson Barber, Senior Program Director of WestEd’s Culture and Language in STEM Education to produce a guidance document examining the long and complex history of educational reform in AI/AN communities, which have almost invariably failed to improve educational outcomes for AI/An students as promised. The current concern is that the implementation efforts of the new college- and career-readiness standards (CCRS), whose primary goal is to prepare students for college and careers that demand high level thinking skills, will also fall short of its promise in these communities.

One central problem with implementing reforms in AI/AN schools is that best practices for majority culture schools do not readily translate to AI/AN cultural environments. Examples abound from the era of No Child Left Behind and more recently from the Turnaround Schools movement. The proposed knowledge brief will describe examples of outcomes (both positive and negative) associated with past reforms and examine what has been learned from these efforts to shed light on the question of how the Common Core and other CCRS can be implemented so as to increase the likelihood of its success in AI/AN schools.