



The IRIS Center Quarterly Report

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Administrative Progress Report:

Year 2/Quarter 2

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Serving: Higher Education Faculty • PD Providers • Practicing Educators
Supporting the preparation of effective educators with the knowledge and skills to use evidence-based practices to improve outcomes for all students, especially struggling learners and those with disabilities.



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Quarterly Report April – June 2019 [Year 2/Quarter 2]

The IRIS Center produces these quarterly reports as both a narrative of our efforts and a detailed account of our work and progress. The information in this document represents the very latest activities of the IRIS Center. Read on to learn more about everything that took place over the last three months.

SPECIAL MENTION: AMY HARRIS: It is with bittersweet feelings that the IRIS Center bids farewell to our own AMY HARRIS. For more than 12 years, Amy has brought her warmth, intelligence, compassion, and expertise to her role as Program Manager and Dissemination Coordinator. And through her work in early childhood and with families of children with disabilities, she has been lead developer on some of the IRIS Center’s most celebrated and popular resources. Her optimism, unflagging good humor, and teamwork will be missed. We wish Amy all the best in the brilliant future ahead and only wish we could put into words how much she has meant to making the IRIS Center into everything that it is today.

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

- ⇒ **3+2 Meeting:** The IRIS Center’s 3+2 Meeting was held in Washington, DC, on May 21. There, Project Director Naomi Tyler overviewed the accomplishments of IRIS during the first 16 months of the this funding cycle, discussed some of the center’s challenges and the ways in which we have faced and overcome them, and offered a look at what’s ahead for IRIS.
- ⇒ **Annual Performance Report (APR):** On May 3, IRIS submitted its annual performance report to OSEP.
- ⇒ **Website Programming Updates & Improvements:** Many of the significant improvements to the IRIS Website happen “behind the scenes” at the programming level and are therefore virtually invisible to our users and visitors. Whether immediately noticeable or not, however, these adjustments and fine tunings are indispensable to a smooth running, user-friendly online experience. A log of some of our recent activities follows.

- ❖ **New Data Account:** Due to changes implemented by our Web platform provider, IRIS has established a new Google account to help us keep better and more accurate track of our Website data. Because of the staged transition process, however, a small gap in our most recent data occurred.
- ❖ **PHP Changes:** IRIS is adjusting our code to be compatible with upcoming PHP version changes that will make opening and closing programming tags more strict.
- ❖ **Online PD:** Changes to our answer keys section are being implemented to prevent PD customers from logging in as “instructors” in order to view module Assessment answers before returning to the PD area.
- ❖ **Behavior Tool:** A feature of our *Classroom Management (Part 2): Developing Your Own Comprehensive Behavior Management Plan* module, our online behavior tool is designed to help users create and save their own detailed classroom behavior management plan. We are currently working to make the tool—which requires users to log-in—more secure.

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

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

- ⇒ **IEP Module for School Leaders:** This second module on IEPs is specifically designed with school administrators in mind, going further than the legal context in which high-quality IEPs are required and offering guidance on how to support and facilitate the development and implementation of high-quality IEPs. David Bateman provided content for this second module. We submitted a completed draft to OSEP in late May for review.
- ⇒ **Module Revision:** IRIS is currently revising a number of modules and module series with updated information and revised and expanded resources.
 - ❖ **Vision Series:** Our three-module series on working with students with visual disabilities is undergoing significant revision. Brenda Naimy of California State University-Los Angeles has delivered updated content for *Accommodations to the Physical Environment: Setting Up a Classroom for Students with Visual Disabilities*,

Instructional Accommodations: Making the Learning Environment Accessible to Students with Visual Disabilities, and *Serving Students with Visual Disabilities: The Importance of Collaboration*. As part of this process, IRIS will also update the overall look of the modules to match our current standards, reformatting individual elements as well as replacing existing illustrations with photographs.

- ❖ **Disability Awareness:** Our much-used module on disability awareness—*What Do You See? Perceptions of Disability*—has been updated with new content, including more recent data and statistics, and reformatted to match our current standards. Additional updates will be completed prior to the beginning of the upcoming fall academic semester.
- ❖ **Classroom Assessment Series:** Our two-module series on classroom assessment—*Classroom Assessment (Part 1): An Introduction to Monitoring Academic Achievement in the Classroom* and *Classroom Assessment (Part 2): Evaluating Reading Progress*—is currently undergoing revision. We have received content from Erica Lembke of the University of Missouri and Robert Alexander Smith of the University of Southern Mississippi. We anticipate completing and posting at least one of the revised modules prior to the fall semester.
- ❖ **Assistive Technology:** An updated version of this resource on the importance of assistive technology for students with special learning needs—*Assistive Technology: An Overview*—is currently in early development. Dave Edyburn of the University of Central Florida has reviewed the original module and offered feedback regarding needed updates, and will revise the content this fall.
- ❖ **Modules in Spanish:** A Spanish-language version of our *STAR Legacy Module Evidence-Based Practices (Part 3): Evaluating Learner Outcomes and Fidelity* is now available on the IRIS Website. Another Spanish-language module—this one covering student accommodations—will be available early in the new quarter.
- ❖ **Module Outlines:** Spanish-language versions of our module outlines now accompany all of our modules available in Spanish.

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

⇒ **Room Arrangement:** A revision of our “Effective Room Arrangement: Elementary” case study unit is underway. We anticipate posting prior to the fall semester.

Fundamental Skill Sheets: Practical and informative, fundamental skill sheets offer educators quick primers (or reminders!) about discrete skills and practices indispensable to their role as effective classroom teachers. Fundamental skill sheets cover everything from specific praise to proximity control.

- ⇒ **Opportunities To Respond:** IRIS is developing a new fundamental skill sheet on enhancing students' opportunities to respond to teacher questions and requests. Content from the University of Virginia's Lysandra Cook has been delivered to IRIS.
- ⇒ **Corrective Feedback:** Lysandra Cook is currently developing another fundamental skill sheet, this one on the use of corrective feedback. She plans to deliver the content during the next quarter.

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

- ⇒ **Course/PD Activities Update:** IRIS is reviewing and editing our course/PD activities collection (110 resources in all) to change or remove outdated terminology and information, as well as to update the resources' format and design to match our current standards. We hope to complete this task in the coming quarter.

Micro-Credentials: Focused and intense, micro-credentials allow educators to concentrate on discrete instructional skills and practices to improve the education outcomes for all of their students. By successfully completing an IRIS Micro-credential, users receive a digital badge to document their accomplishment and that they can share with others online and via social media.

- ⇒ **New MC Stack:** A new "stack" of four IRIS Micro-Credentials—this one covering data collection—is currently in development.

IRIS Online Tools: From a glossary of terms related to disabilities to the IRIS Book and Film Tools to our Evidence-Based Practices Summaries, IRIS online tools are user-friendly, informative, and always growing.

- ⇒ **EBP Summaries:** IRIS is currently updating our collection of evidence-based practice summaries. These research summaries covering instructional strategies and interventions offer information that includes level of effectiveness as well as the age groups for which a given strategy or intervention is designed. Links to the original reports are also provided for those who might wish to explore further. IRIS Evidence-Based Practices Workgroup lead Bryan Cook and Lysandra Cook of the University of Virginia have reviewed the summaries tool, offering feedback and suggestions for revision and improvement.

⇒ **IRIS Glossary:** This searchable glossary of definitions for the disability-related terms covered in many of our resources is currently undergoing revision. We have created a master list of terms and will begin the process of reviewing and updating them in the new quarter. Once complete, we will share this resource with the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII). For more on this, see the **Collaboration** section below.

Information Briefs: These online resources developed by other programs and centers are collected and curated by IRIS as supplemental materials. Information briefs cover everything from accommodations for students with disabilities to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and peer-assisted interventions.

⇒ **Collection Update:** An ongoing process, IRIS is taking a look at our collection of 338 information briefs with an eye toward removing older or outdated resources and, if possible, replacing them with more recent versions. This effort will be completed in Year 2. Meanwhile, this resource has been updated with information briefs matched to our updated and expanded module on instructional and testing accommodations and high-quality IEP development.

Film Tool: This searchable online database represents an attempt to catalogue the representation of people with disabilities in motion pictures.

⇒ **Film Tool Update:** Our film tool has been updated with numerous new films and documentaries and now includes MPAA ratings.

Web Resource Directory: IRIS maintains this list of other federally sponsored projects and centers that provide resources and information useful for educational professionals.

⇒ **WRD Update:** The Web Resource Directory has been updated with new centers and more information about existing centers. It has been reposted to the IRIS Website.

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

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

⇒ **IRIS Information Packets:** IRIS is actively compiling a list of all community colleges with education programs in the United States, with an eye toward disseminating information packets to those in select states prior to the fall academic semester. Packets will be disseminated to those in other states in the coming quarters.

- ⇒ **Social Media:** Our center's social media following and number of engagements continue to grow at a rapid rate. As of this report, IRIS has 2,119 followers on Twitter and 2,336 on Facebook. Our Twitter impressions for June totaled 31,200, up from 19,000 the previous month, an increase of 40.5%. Likewise, our Twitter mentions (the number of times Twitter users talked about the IRIS Center) increased by 850% over the previous 28 days.
- ⇒ **NCII Webinar:** During this quarter, the National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) hosted a Webinar, "Recommendations and Resources for Preparing Educators in the *Andrew F. Era.*" A PowerPoint presentation accompanying the event highlighted IRIS resources and included our modules *Intensive Intervention (Part 2): Collecting and Analyzing Data for Data-Based Individualization* and *IEPs: Developing High-Quality Individualized Education Programs*. IRIS also took part in the event, ready to answer questions from participants. This collaboration dovetailed nicely with our dissemination plan to get the word out about our new module series on IEPs.

Presentation & Outreach Efforts: Throughout the year, IRIS attends local, regional, and national conferences to present on our training and instructional resources and to keep audiences up-to-date on everything that is new with IRIS. Information about our recent presentations is below.

- ⇒ **Strategic Plan:** IRIS has developed a strategic plan as part of our preparations for the fall 2019/spring 2020 conference season. The plan is designed with the goal to increase awareness and use of IRIS resources with general educators and school administrators.
- ⇒ **ESEA:** IRIS has submitted a pair of presentation proposals to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Network's 2020 conference to be held in Atlanta, Georgia. If accepted, this would represent an opportunity for IRIS to make further inroads with a largely new constituency. IRIS will also host a booth in the exhibition hall.
- ⇒ **CEC:** IRIS has submitted a presentation proposal about our high-quality IEP module series to the 2020 conference of the Council for Exceptional Children to be held in Portland, Oregon, next February.
- ⇒ **STATE CEC:** IRIS has also submitted proposals—one covering our module series on high-quality IEPs, another an introduction to the IRIS Center and our resources—to state CEC conferences in Utah, California, Florida, and Tennessee. IRIS Ambassadors will make presentations in three of those states.

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

- ⇒ **South Dakota & IRIS PD:** IRIS is now officially recognized as an authorized provider of professional development in the state of South Dakota.

- ⇒ **School & District Platform Expansion:** Our School & District Platform is a user-friendly and flexible online tool that can help school leaders to organize and track their teachers' ongoing professional development activities. Recent items of note include:
 - ❖ In May, Florida's Orange County Public School District began using the School & District Platform.
 - ❖ In June, a quote was provided to the Frisco Independent School District in Frisco, Texas, for 30 teachers to access our School & District Platform.
 - ❖ In June, IRIS began to update existing accounts in the IRIS School & District Platform. We also began to contact school and districts whose accounts have expired regarding possible renewal.
 - ❖ IRIS continues a dialogue with the Texas Department of Education and the District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington, D.C., to better meet their unique professional development needs, specifically their ability to track PD offered through the use of IRIS Modules.

- ⇒ **Expanded Contacts:** IRIS is developing a list of contacts in Washington State and Tennessee with support from Nick French and our student workers. Our goal for the next quarter is to create resources for communication (e.g., email, updated webpage, brochures) specific to these audiences for dissemination during the summer.

- ⇒ **U.S. Department of Defense:** IRIS Ambassador ShedeH Hajghassemali is working with Tina Diamond at the U.S. Department of Defense about the introduction and use of IRIS resources in DOD schools.

- ⇒ **Micro-Credentials:** In collaboration with Digital Promise, IRIS offers a "stack" of micro-credentials (MCs) on accommodations for students with disabilities. These focused PD units allow educators to learn and gain mastery of discrete instructional practices.
 - ❖ **A Popular Resource:** IRIS received a record 80 MC submissions during the second quarter, keeping our in-house assessors quite busy. Submissions were particularly heavy during May and June; we speculate this could be due to end-of-year deadline requirements imposed by school districts.
 - ❖ **MC Pilot Program:** Three of the four micro-credentials in our first stack have cleared the required pilot program period (each must be field-tested by 50 educators),

allowing us to charge a fee (\$40) for initial submissions. The fee helps to cover the cost of assessing each submission.

⇒ **Navigation Videos:** An updated and revised Website requires updated navigation videos. These brief video tutorials will help our visitors to use the IRIS Resource Locator, navigate our modules, and explore our various professional development options. The videos are scheduled for development later this year.

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

⇒ **Project Outcomes:** IRIS continues to collect data related to the project outcomes outlined in our logic model: increased awareness and knowledge of evidence-based practices and IRIS resources.

⇒ **Evaluation Projects:** Kristin Sayeski and Bethany Hamilton-Jones at the University of Georgia launched the IRIS Impact Survey in January 2019 at the CEC conference. They collected data from 973 respondents during Quarter 1. A summary of their findings, completed during Quarter 2, can be found at the end of this report. Some highlights from the data include:

- ❖ Whereas 83% of faculty respondents indicated using IRIS Modules, nearly 90% reported using IRIS Case Study Units and IRIS Activities. This provides a very useful picture of resource use than that previously gauged from GoogleAnalytics data, primarily because a case study or activity PDF file can be downloaded and used indefinitely by a faculty member, though its use only shows up once on GoogleAnalytics.
- ❖ Faculty found resources related to accommodations, behavior and classroom management, RTI/MTSS, assessment, and transition most useful.
- ❖ More PD providers use IRIS resources when planning for PD (43%) than use the resources during PD (27%).
- ❖ Most (89%) of the survey respondents who had participated in PD that included IRIS resources recommended that IRIS resources be used for future PD.

⇒ **Technology Survey:** In collaboration with Angelica Fulchini, IRIS Center staff developed a technology survey, the purpose of which was to collect information from IRIS users about the types of technology they have access to, are knowledgeable about, and for which they would like to receive support. During this quarter, we launched this survey and collected data from 361 respondents. Below are some of the highlights:

- ❖ Most respondents (95%) reported being comfortable working with technology.
- ❖ The types of technology respondents reported having access to were computer tablets (63%), interactive white boards (52%), and digital textbooks (44%).
- ❖ 75% of respondents indicated they wished they had *at least some* additional training on using interactive white boards.
- ❖ 68% of respondents indicated they wished they had *at least some* additional training on using digital textbooks.
- ❖ 51% of respondents indicated they wished they had *at least some* additional training on using tablets.
- ❖ Most teachers find out about helpful teaching apps from other teachers, Internet searches, and word of mouth.

⇒ **Field-testing:** The IRIS Center's most recent module, *IEPs: Developing High-Quality Individualized Education Programs*, was field-tested in a university course about writing IEPs. One faculty member and 18 students responded to our field test surveys. The faculty member rated the module as "very high" (5 on a 5-point scale) on quality, relevance, and usefulness. She also wrote in the comments: *Overall, the module is highly effective and extremely useful.*

The students did not report having any problems with navigating the module or understanding its key points. The students gave the module average ratings of 4.0 for quality, 4.4 for relevance, and 4.4 for usefulness. The students further agreed that their awareness and knowledge of evidence-based practices related to the development of IEPs had increased (ratings of 4.2 for both).

⇒ **Oklahoma PD “Bootcamps”:** Michele Rovins, the IRIS Evaluation Workgroup lead, has received information from educators in Oklahoma about their use of IRIS resources for professional development “bootcamps” for the state’s teachers. The information gathered will be used to develop a case study about IRIS use. Highlights include:

❖ **Why was IRIS selected?**

“I have found IRIS to offer a wealth of online resources. The foundation of the resources are evidence-based and they provide training opportunities that are engaging and rigorous for those who are fortunate enough to use them.”

❖ **What percentage of staff are using the modules?**

“100% of the students who enroll in OSDE’s Special Education Boot Camp throughout the state of Oklahoma use the IRIS modules as part of the required coursework needed to obtain their Oklahoma special education certification.”

⇒ **Module Feedback:** The IRIS Module Feedback Form, an online survey, asks respondents to self-identify their current positions and to rate our modules’ quality, relevance, and usefulness on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest rating). This quarter there were 654 respondents to this survey.

Table 1. Current Positions

Respondents	Number
College Student	198
Graduate Student	176
Experienced Teacher	135
New Teacher	88
Other (e.g., parent)	26
School Leader	16
College Faculty	8
PD Provider	6
Data Missing	1
Total	654

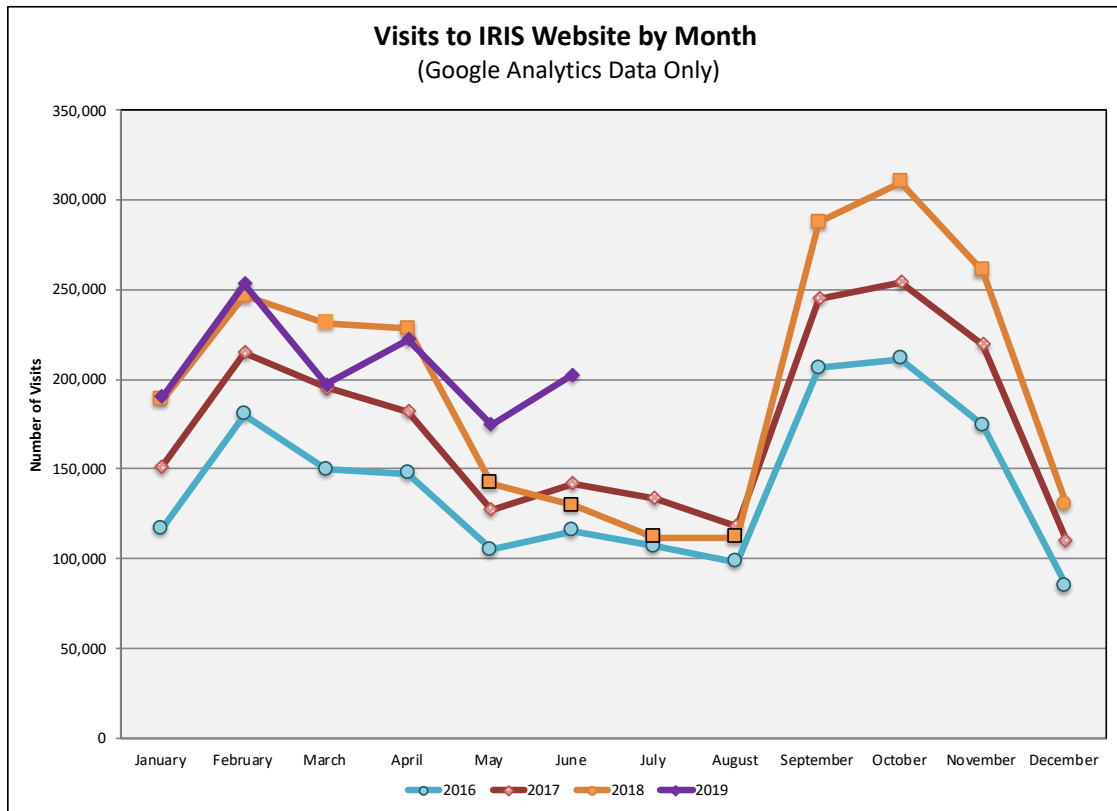
Table 2. Education Area

Response	Number
Special education	228
General education	190
Early childhood education	98
Other	85
Early childhood special education	37
Early intervention services	10
Data missing	6
Total	654

Table 3. Module Ratings

	Mean Rating
Quality	4.5
Relevance	4.5
Usefulness	4.5

Website Visit Data: The IRIS Center keeps careful track of our Website visitor data. Having resolved a number of Website and GoogleAnalytics tracking issues, we saw the number of IRIS users rebound in a big way. Overall, the number of users increased an eye-opening 20% from the second quarter of 2018.



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

⇒ **NCII:** The National Center on Intensive Intervention builds the capacity of state and local education agencies, universities, practitioners, and others to support implementation of intensive intervention in literacy, mathematics, and behavior for students with severe and persistent learning or behavioral needs. IRIS continues to collaborate with NCII on a number of fronts, information about which can be found below.

❖ **IEP Webinar:** As was mentioned above, the National Center on Intensive Intervention hosted a Webinar that included information on recent resources about developing and implementing high-quality IEPs. IRIS provided some information and handouts on our IEP module and attended the event, ready to answer questions from participants.

- ❖ **IRIS Glossary:** Once IRIS has finished revising our online glossary of disability related terms, NCII will host that resource on their own sight, rather than develop their own, thus reducing a possible redundancy of effort between our two centers.

- ⇒ **Understood:** Traditionally serving primarily as a resource for the parents and families of struggling learners, Understood is in the process of expanding its resource offerings to reach a broader constituency, including educators. To that end, Understood (rather than create all new resources from scratch) has contacted IRIS, among others, requesting permission to share our and their resources. In response, IRIS sent Understood a list of our most used resources, including our top ten most popular modules and fundamental skill sheets. More on these developments will appear in future reports.

- ⇒ **HLP Videos:** IRIS continues to collaborate with CEEDAR, CEC, CCSO, and Great Teachers and Leaders to review and disseminate a growing number of high-leverage practices videos designed to highlight essential special education techniques that all K–12 special education teachers should master for use across a variety of classroom contexts.

PERSONNEL: *See this space for notes and information on new or outgoing IRIS personnel.*

- ⇒ **Content Developers:** IRIS welcomes a pair of new content developers. Bianca Jefferson and Sally Bresnahan will begin work with us on July 1. Bianca brings with her experience as a special educator and, more recently, as a school administrator. Sally was a special education teacher for 12 years before joining IRIS. We are truly excited to add them to our IRIS team.

- ⇒ **Student Workers:** Taylor Grant and Haley Blankenship joined the center as our new student workers. We said goodbye to our most recent student worker, Naomi Forbes, who has graduated.

- ⇒ **Spanish Translator:** IRIS also welcomed Alejandro Botía, our new Spanish translator. He replaces David Vila Diéguez, who accepted a faculty position at the University of Texas, El Paso.