The Region VIII Equity Assistance Center at Metropolitan Statue University of Denver is guided by its vision to provide, upon request, technical assistance, training, and staff development for school boards, school districts, tribal education agencies, charter schools, and other responsible government agencies. We strive to promote equitable education opportunities and access for all students. We seek to improve equity, access, and participation and high quality, research-based opportunities for all students. We work to reduce disparities between and among groups where they may arise.

Tyler: Hello, welcome to the Equity assistance Center Region VIII Podcast. I’m Tyler, I’m here with the Region Director Kathy Rigsby, and we’re going to talk to you just very briefly about what we do here. So, Kathy, in very basic terms, what does the EAC do, and who has access to it?

Kathy: Well, the Equity Assistance Centers provide, in the formal words, technical assistance, training, and staff development to any requesting school district, state department of education, charter school, magnet school, tribal education agency within our six-state region. Our six states are Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

T: OK.

K: It really doesn’t take a whole lot to get a hold of us. Call us, each of us are listed on our website. The other is to put in a Request for Assistance on our website. And, as soon as those come in, they are forwarded to me, my staff or forwarded to the appropriate individual, and somebody should be back to you within, I hope, three to four working days. This is an example of, this week, everybody has been gone on travel. I happen to be in today but won’t be next week. That’s why we ask for a little bit of patience when we try and get back to you, because of the amount of travel that we do.

T: So, what’s a hypothetical, or not-hypothetical situation where somebody would call us?

K: People call us for a variety of reasons. Usually there is some situation of that they have become cognizant of in their schools. It may be, how do I address bullying or how do I prevent bullying? We want more parent engagement. There are some schools that have a growing number of English Language Learners, and teachers are always are looking for staff development, help, or ideas, the best ways to bring these students along for their success.
T: Awesome, so you said many ways to contact us, telephone, email, the request form online?

K: Correct.

T: All this information will come at the end of today’s episode, so don’t hesitate to call or write. So, who do we predominantly hear from? Is it mostly teachers, parents, both?

K: All of the above. We hear from superintendents, state department people, most of our requests come directly from a school building, and it may be a teacher or a principal within the building, but it’s all of the above. Occassionally we are contacted by another agency who is aware of our services and needs us to cooperate with them. Often we’ll get a call from the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, who are aware of a situation, or a school that needs additional help, and our services are offered because they come without charge!

T: Yeah, that’s a really huge point that I think cannot be emphasized enough.

K: Well, let me put a caveat to that. It’s usually a cup of coffee.

T: Maybe a scone.

K: Maybe a scone. And if we do any, most of our staff development, we usually do one- and two-day trainings, and we do ask that the participants please feed them. We find that like students, teachers and adults usually do a whole lot better with some sustenance.

T: Ah yes. Ok, so besides basic human needs, we are completely free.

K: We are completely free. And we do good work!

T: Yes! Lots of good work. Are there any particular things underway now that would be worth sharing?

K: We have received several, both in the state and in other states, increasing parental engagement, particularly with American Indian students and their families. Bully prevention, sexual harassment prevention, are always ongoing projects for us. We have training scheduled for a school here in the Denver metropolitan area at the beginning of next month. I just returned from Fargo, North Dakota, where, two days of training on investigation of civil rights violations, as well as looking at bullying and how to address bullying in schools.

T: So you go in, and you give the staff training materials?
K: Staff materials, yes, and we really try to make the trainings as hands-on as possible. There's nothing worse than just sitting for 2 hours or all day just looking at a powerpoint. That just drives everybody wild.

T: Yeah, I know that's what ruins big lectures for me.

K: We try to make it as interactive as possible, and work very hard ahead of time to make sure that the needs of the requestor. As we talk with those that make requests for services, we find out more in depth about exactly what it is they're looking for and try to pinpoint as much as possible and spend as much time as possible to be as productive as possible.

T: Right, you don't just give, a catch-all-solution.

K: No. We have never given a canned performance.

T: K.

K: And I don't think I've ever given the same workshop twice.

T: Awesome.

K: Subject, yes. Workshop, no.

T: Perfect! And, once we've gone and presented the material, is there, do they follow up with us? Do we follow up with them?

K: We do both. We're certainly available by phone or by email anytime during business hours. And, because we're all sitting here with iPhones, we see our emails off-hours. But, definitely we follow up as needed, and what we will do periodically is to go back and ask for feedback in the form of an evaluation, or are there additional services needed, or, was what we presented useful to them, are they using it? So, it's feedback for us to make the next time better.

T: Totally. Alright then, switching gears slightly in terms of this podcast, what kind of goals or things are you hoping to get out there through this avenue?

K: We're hoping to get pieces of information to individuals that otherwise they might not have. And what I'd also like to have come our way, let us know what you need to hear! Let us know what information you'd like to have, what snippets. Podcasts are rarely very long, we'll probably be doing more longer things with power point and audio, on our website, on more in depth subjects, but if there are particular pieces of information that people need, let us know, we'll do our best to put them forward.
T: Yeah, again the contact information will be presented momentarily, but we have twitter, facebook, email, telephone, these are all legitimate ways to get a hold of us and to connect with us, which is what we are trying to do!

K: And we have to thanks Tyler and Jake, both students here at the Metropolitan State University of Denver, who are more into the electronic communications than some of their elders on staff.

T: (Laughs) We try to stay on, I don’t know about the cutting edge, but one of the edges near the front, I can’t afford the cutting edge. Alright, cool, well, you heard it hear first. Call the EAC if you have any issues of equity, if you are a teacher, principal, parent, a concerned citizen, we want to talk about it.

K: Absolutely.

T: And so, hopefully there will be a new podcast each week, and next week we’ll be talking with the staff and doing introductions, and then from there we’ll be meeting more individually with staff members and getting just a little bit more in depth interviews with the luminaries of the equity world.

K: Perfect. Thank you Tyler!

T: Thank you Kathy! If you would like to contact the Region VIII Equity Assistance Center, you may do so at our website, metrostate-eac.org, phone 303-556-6065, or via email, at eac@msudenver.edu. Listeners are also invited to join the conversation by following us on twitter @EACRegion8, or on facebook. Special thanks to the band Northbound for the use of their song Forward in this podcast. Thank you.