



Our Mission

The purpose of the Milwaukee Partnership Academy (MPA) is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). The broad initiative of the MPA is to ensure that every child in the Milwaukee Public Schools is performing at or above grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics through shared responsibility for student success. The framework for the initiative is balanced literacy and mathematics: a comprehensive literacy program that provides skill development across all curricular areas and focuses on reading, writing, listening, speaking, deep thinking, and research skills; a comprehensive mathematics program that provides students an understanding of mathematical concepts, an ability to accurately and appropriately compute, an ability to solve mathematical problems by applying concepts, an ability to provide reasoning to solutions to problems, and an ability to see mathematics as useful and doable.

MPA Implementation Team Meeting Minutes from December 8, 2008

Christine Anderson, NEA Grant
Erik Conner, MPS
Joe Kmoch, MTEC
Linda Post, UWM
Louise Small-Hamilton, MATC

Phyllis Anderson, MPS
Arleen Dansby-White, MPS
Mike Langyel, MTEA
Lee Ann Pruske, MPS

Bama Brown-Grice, MPS
Reginald Ivy, MPS
Dennis Oulahan, MTEA
Ruth Short, UWM

Announcements and Updates

- **MPA Interim Executive Director Position** – The Executive Partners approved negotiation of contracts with two individuals to serve as Co-Executive Directors to start in mid-January.
- **Literacy Coach Initiative** – Review of the Literacy Coach role/initiative will be postponed until the literacy audit report is available.

Report Out and Discussion on Learning Teams Initiative

For Day 1 of the MPA Retreat on Learning Teams participants reviewed the description of what a Learning Team is, formative assessment, focus group notes and video on Learning Teams; looked at challenges; and discussed important questions concerning Learning Teams including the characteristics of a high performing urban Learning Team, membership beyond the core members, the role of those members, and more. Initial feedback indicated that the conversation was very good.

Feedback from Implementation Team Members:

- One of best retreats ever attended—all necessary partners were there, everyone had a voice, facilitators ran it smoothly, and a lot was accomplished
- Mixed groups at tables worked well for good discussion
- Adequate time was given for discussion
- Structure was excellent
- Great information was shared about what Learning Teams should look like
- Review of the video on Learning Teams was a good idea
- People involved early on are still actively involved
- New leadership seems to be missing

At Day 2 of the retreat on December 15th, the Superintendent will briefly share about the importance of this work and where it is heading. Participants will discuss the characteristics of a high performing urban Learning Team and the summary of data from Day 1 as well as professional development and rollout of materials to be developed as a result of this work.

Suggestion was made that copies of the video on Learning Teams be available for retreat participants. Linda Post will bring copies on the next retreat day.

Everyone was asked to submit names of any people or groups they feel should be involved in review and feedback.

Report Out on NEA Focus Schools

Cris Anderson reported that the NEA Foundation Executive Board met in Milwaukee in November and made several school site visits. They loved our schools and the work the teachers and administrators are doing within the grant. They approved the fourth year funding and added a sixth year.

Due to a lack of consistency with implementation, focus groups will be held in January at NEA Focus Schools for the purpose of identifying the impediments with the grant. The end goal is to remove the impediments as quickly as possible. A report on focus group results will be shared with the Implementation Team.

Reported findings about NEA Focus Schools:

- Climate survey data is much higher than in the average MPS school
- 66% are High Value-Added in reading and 44% are High Value-Added in math for either this year or last year
- Stability of staff—it has stabilized

The external evaluator for the grant is doing case studies in NEA Focus Schools to see what conversations are different.

Sometime next October the NEA Foundation will hold their cross-sectional site visit in Milwaukee. All NEA Foundation grant sites (Seattle, Chattanooga, Connecticut and two sites to be funded this year) will send teams totaling approximately 60 people to Milwaukee for a four-day retreat to include school visits. Cris Anderson asked the Implementation Team to assist in planning this site visit and to share ideas for showcasing our work within the work of the grant, not limited to strengths alone.

Currently Desired Involvement:

- Parent participation
- Skunkworks/student participation
- Math Teacher Leaders and Math Teaching Specialists meet with their common cohort for part of a day and the same for literacy, sharing information with each other and allowing us opportunity to learn from them as well
- Higher education—emphasize how it is involved
- Implementation Team participation
- People to host small groups at various ethnic restaurants for meals and discussion

Implementation Team Ideas:

- MATC may be able to host a reception
- Hold an event at Discovery World that includes parents and community members
- A “Taste of Milwaukee” type event for one meal where food from various ethnic restaurants is offered
- Highlight talent of children from MPS

Cris asked everyone to think about their areas and institutions and how they can be involved in a meaningful way in this four-day retreat to highlight the work of Milwaukee.

Planning for December Partners Meeting

The Executive Partners have reaffirmed the need for the MPA to continue. Policy and legislative issues are a large part of what they feel is their role and they will be meeting in January concerning a legislative agenda.

Discussion was held about the advantages of rescheduling the December 12th meeting to sometime in mid-January and it was decided to reschedule. Tentative plans would be to have media and press releases announcing new Co-Executive Directors and have them share, have Executive Partners share information about their legislative agenda, and to report out on the Retreat on Learning Teams. In addition, it was suggested that the names of new Co-Executive Directors and a little bit about them be announced to MPA members as soon as it is official.

Some discussion was held about membership and attendance at Partners Meetings. Suggestion was made that review of the Partners' role be done as we revamp with new Co-Executive Directors.

Discussion on Teacher Leadership

Various teacher leadership initiatives have been developed including the Teachers-in-Residence Program, Action Research Fellows, Math Specialists, Math Teacher Leaders, Literacy Specialists, Literacy Coaches and Mentors. However, we have not clearly articulated teacher leadership in the district. As a result, some of these teacher leaders are not able to use their newly acquired skills in a structured way to bring benefit to the district. It is being suggested that the MPA begin conversations with all the partners about what we mean by teacher leadership, ways that we as partners can develop opportunities for teacher leadership, professional development around teacher leadership, how we can utilize people in the school setting who have held positions of teacher leadership and how to institutionalize ways to develop teacher leadership. Bigger discussion is needed than just in the Teacher & Principal Quality Work Group. We need to think about how to promote it, support it and create a path for it. Otherwise, good people will continue to be lost to other districts.

Who might we need to involve or where should we go with this?

- Need union involvement—there would be contractual issues
- Look also at people involved in long-term action projects/informal teacher leaders/change agents at teacher levels
- This plays into the conversation about the Teacher Center that was started long ago
- Perhaps there should be some sort of formal statement or philosophy for the district and for the partners about teacher leadership, its importance and our support for it
- When have conversations, need to be mindful of how large bureaucratic structures/institutions work
- Current workload is unsustainable

To move this conversation forward, it was suggested that we put something out that frames a discussion on teacher leadership including how to foster it and look at aspects of large institutions that work against it and then have the Implementation Team discuss it. This will be placed on the agenda for the January 12th Implementation Team meeting.

Work Group Updates

Comprehensive Literacy Work Group

The work group has been discussing ideas for change to the Literacy Coach Model for improvement and better alignment with the Math Model. Some of the potential changes

that have been discussed are the position title and qualifications. The work group hopes to have something in writing that is doable and would have the support of principals following its January 12th meeting.

Some discussion was held by the Implementation Team concerning credentials, literacy expertise, some of what makes the Math Model work and some of the problems with the Literacy Coach Model.

Linda Post will contact Catherine Thome about getting data from the literacy audit to inform further discussion and work soon to begin on fixing the Literacy Coach Model and institutionalizing it.

Comprehensive Mathematics Work Group

K7 Math Teacher Leader meetings will be held on December 9th and 11th. Implementation Team members were invited to attend.

Family Literacy & Tutoring Work Group

- More than 30 youth from MPS and several non-public schools attended tutor training conducted at Our Next Generation on December 2nd.
- There were 43 in attendance at the community-wide tutor training session conducted on December 4th at the North Division Multiplex including existing tutors and new tutors from Community Learning Centers, churches participating in the MPS Cooperative Tutoring Program, SES providers, and potential new tutors from the Latino Community Center. Participants were given an overview of the MPA and the Family Literacy & Tutoring Work Group and WKCE data in reading and math. Four reading help strategies, including after reading exit cards and think-pair-share, were introduced and modeled. Interactive small group discussions and role playing were also a part of this session. Suggestions from participants were received for training in other languages—specifically Spanish, training for the Latino mentoring group that is being formed, training for congregation members not yet involved in tutoring, similar training in math, and an end-of-year discussion on how the strategies worked.
- The work plan was distributed.
- A handout of MPS Title I Parent Involvement Training Offerings for 2008-09 was distributed.

Skunkworks Work Group

- The work group is in the process of trying to:
 - Engage different student groups around the area and pose the question of what is it the MPA is doing and how are all of the initiatives being understood
 - Engage the MPA work groups and the MPA as a whole and ask if they are thinking about young people and if people are affected by the work of the MPA

- Develop a structure that will have everyone think about how to explain things to students and engage them in dialogue and discussion before doing anything and think about what it means to them
- The work group met today with a group of students from Speak Out, which is a focused and serious social network mainly for students to interact on the internet with intent to show the School Board and others they care about the quality of their schools/education. Speak Out topics include such things as why are small schools being put into high schools, dropout rate, why students don't come to school every day, student motivation to attend school and learn, school violence, teen pregnancy and how school budgets are spent. Over 400 students are currently involved in this group. The link to this social network site is as follows:

<http://milwaukeeestudentsspeakout.ning.com/>

Other

- **Benchmark Assessments** – Some discussion was held on the purpose of Benchmark Assessments and the appropriate use of them. Benchmark Assessments are designed to be a snapshot in time of a skill set to inform instruction, letting classroom teachers know what skill sets students have not learned well so that those areas can be addressed. Some schools have been incorrectly utilizing them to measure student growth. Benchmarks were created to scaffold the learning so that students are better prepared to take the WKCE. They are summative assessments, not formative assessments. CABS are formative assessments.

Next Meeting – Monday, **January 12, 2009** at the REACH Center, 2342 North 27th Street, Room 116, **from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.** (lunch at 11:30).

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.