



Milwaukee Partnership Academy An Urban PK-16 Council for Quality Teaching and Learning

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.

Minutes from the Milwaukee Partnership Academy's Partners Meeting Friday, December 14, 2007 REACH Center

IN ATTENDANCE:

Executive Partners: William Andrekopoulos, Gerard Randall and Don Sykes

Partners: Dan Burrell, Scott Emmons, Deborah Ford, Beth Giles, Henry Kranendonk, Kevin McLeod, Sr. Joel Read, Betty Smith, Alfonzo Thurman, Vanessa Torti and Corliss Wood

Implementation Team: DeAnn Huinker, Dennis Oulahan, Linda Post and Marleen Pugach

Government Officials: Myra Edwards

Support Staff: Janice Hagen

Guests/Visitors: Carl Hanssen, Hanssen Consulting; Cindy Walker, UWM

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

G. Randall called the meeting to order at 7:50 a.m. and welcomed everyone. Special welcome was given to new member Vanessa Torti, Manager of Education Programs for the Milwaukee Public Museum. Everyone introduced themselves.

II. MINUTES:

There were no additions or corrections to the minutes of the last meeting.

III. REPORTS:

Executive Partners' Report: Gerard Randall

- The Executive Partners will be meeting with the candidate finalist for the executive director position on December 21st. A decision will be made following that meeting.

Superintendent's Report: William Andrekopoulos, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)

- The vision, commitment and the work together with teachers and administrators on analyzing data has improved tremendously. The work with the ThinkLink Benchmark Assessments has been extremely positive. The district is now far more directive and focused on the things that need to be done.
- The work with DPI on the DIFI plan has created a greater sense of urgency. The number of hours of instruction in reading and math will be increased, reading intervention strategies have been reviewed and RD180 will be utilized to improve the quality of instruction in reading.
- The Strategic Plan Implementation Team will now will be interfaced with the Accountability Group. Development has begun on a set of functional plans to support the Strategic Plan and they are now being reviewed by the Strategic Plan Implementation Team. A community voice will come through feedback.
- Budget amendments were made during the budget process. The School Board has cut new funding potential by cutting the budget \$17.5 million and taking away \$6 million in aid. \$8 million was saved in healthcare costs and was redirected to add more support to high schools. Forty-four Reading Resource Teachers have been added to SIFI schools.
- The Governor has money in the budget for math in the 2009-10 school year and the district is putting forth \$5 million in the second semester this year to continue the good work that has been done in math.
- The most important place is the district is the classroom. Teachers and principals have a valuable role in improving instruction. More classroom observations are taking place in order to assess the quality of instruction/district professional development. Work is being done to help principals become more focused on being instructional leaders rather than managers. In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning it is necessary to talk about data, refine practices, reflect on what is being done in the classroom and make improvements. What is done needs to be based on research.
- The School Board has asked for next year's budget to be built on just a one-quarter percent increase in the amount of money spent last year, which is only about \$2 million more. Money must be spent as efficiently as possible. Therefore, the Strategic Plan directs school closings and other things as a means of generating revenue back to the classroom.
- The district is taking steps to try and address School Choice funding and the flaws in the formula as well as the concern over the high number of special needs children in the district not seen in all of the other public funded choices and options in the community.

Leadership Team/Implementation Team Report: Linda Post, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM)

- Representatives of the Leadership Team met with Executive Partners and discussed several issues including staffing.
- Work groups are moving forward with major initiatives.
- The updated website is being finalized. Steve Percy from the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at UWM was thanked for his help in funding the technical work on the website.
- MPS and partner folks are being brought together around STEM. An initial brainstorming meeting is being scheduled with internal folks to think about who needs to be involved and

where we need to go. The role of the MPA with MPS and in teacher preparation programs needs to be determined.

- A meeting is scheduled on December 21st for a number of MPA representatives to meet the MPS Director of District & School Improvement, Catherine Thome, and discuss professional development, the DIFI Plan and its alignment with Strategic Plan initiatives. The MPA will continue to align the initiatives of the work groups in appropriate support.

IV. YEAR 4 MMP EVALUATION RESULTS: Cindy Walker, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) and Carl Hanssen, Hanssen Consulting

Dr. Carl Hanssen, the external evaluator for the Milwaukee Mathematics Partnership (MMP) and Dr. Cindy Walker, the internal evaluator, gave a short presentation on the results of the Year 4 evaluation of the MMP covering the areas of district trends, student achievement, Learning Teams and distributed leadership.

Evaluation Goals:

- To help the MMP better serve its constituents and improve its effectiveness
- To serve the broader mathematics education community across the country through documentation and dissemination of MMP activities

Cindy Walker looked primarily at the impact of the mathematics partnership at the district level. One of the data sources used was an online survey, which has been administered for the past three years, designed to get at things which should be impacted by MMP work.

District Trends:

Increases/improvements have been made from last year to this year in the following:

- Quantity of professional development
- Consistency in math instruction
- Engagement in activities to align curriculum to learning targets
- Engagement in activities using CABS and student work samples
- Engagement in activities to gauge student progress
- Talk about teaching and learning of mathematics with others

Schools where teachers report a more consistent curriculum, teachers working together and professional development perceived as valuable are predicted to have a strong math focus.

Learning Teams are a large component of what is going on in the district in terms of the math partnership. Learning Teams are predicted to be more supportive when they have a Math Teacher Leader (MTL) perceived as supportive, curriculum aligned to targets, the Learning Team focused on mathematics, teachers working together and professional development perceived as valuable.

Math Teacher Leaders are predicted to be more supportive when they have Math Teaching Specialists that are perceived as supportive, teachers working together, Learning Teams focused on math and professional development perceived as valuable.

It was also found in this evaluation that schools with supportive Math Teacher Leaders reported being less engaged in activities designed to align curriculum to targets. However, it is believed this is because by this time schools should already have their curriculum aligned.

Conclusions on District Trends:

- Across the district, schools are reporting higher levels of involvement with the MMP and more frequently engaging in activities that the MMP encourages and promotes

- There seems to be an increase in the number of school staff who are responsible for helping the school focus on improving mathematics teaching and learning

Student Achievement:

Are student achievement gains greater in schools that have more fully embraced MMP principles? An analytical approach called HLM was used to try to explain variability in student achievement scores in 2006 using student achievement data from 2005 and the MMP online survey results from 2006. Dr. Walker explained sources of variability in student achievement scores and showed examples.

Conclusions on Student Achievement:

- Schools that report having greater alignment between math curriculum and learning targets are more likely to attain higher student achievement gains in mathematics
- Learning Team influence, in terms of increasing student achievement in mathematics, seems to be greatest in the lower grades

It was noted that it takes time to make the impact on student achievement.

Dr. Hanssen went on to discuss the analysis done of a diverse set of schools across the district. The analysis included observation of teachers in the classroom, observation of Learning Teams, a social network analysis to look at distributed leadership and an assessment of teachers' mathematical knowledge for teaching. This information was leveraged against the district-wide data.

Learning Teams:

Two Learning Team models have emerged:

1. Participatory (active discussion, consensus building, planning)
2. Authoritarian (directive leader, little discussion reporting out)

Key Observation: to what degree are Learning Team meetings about "learning" versus school administration?

Characteristics of High & Low Rated Learning Teams – Team Functioning:

High:

- Focus on learning
- Distributed leadership
- Positional authority is less important
- Multiple views are represented and heard
- Multiple segments of the school are represented
- Written agenda, note taker, facilitator
- Explicit action items
- Participants have high knowledge and skill levels

Low:

- Focus on administration
- Principal does all the talking
- A few individuals dominate the discussion
- No agenda or team is easily distracted from the agenda
- Little follow-through on assignments
- No clear action items

Characteristics of High & Low Rated Learning Teams – MMP Issues:

High:

- Consistent curriculum
- Math is addressed alongside and in combination with other subjects
- Coherent within grades and across grades
- Math Teacher Leader (MTL) clearly in charge with respect to math
- Attention to CABS; reference to MMP course; reviewing student work

Low:

- Variation in curriculum
- Math not addressed at the meeting
- No clear math leader
- Confusion about the MMP and Comprehensive Mathematics Framework

Conclusions on Learning Teams:

- Schools focused on “learning” during Learning Team meetings are better positioned to demonstrate strong results.
- While the participatory approach may be preferred, some schools may need directive leadership as they work to improve.

Distributed Leadership:

Sample results of schools with high and low functioning distributed leadership drawn from the Social Network Analysis were shown.

High:

- Tight network
- MTL central
- Many links to MTL
- Math Teaching Specialist (MTS) inside
- Many links to MTS

Low:

- Loose network
- MTL not central
- Few links to MTL
- MTS outside
- Few links to MTS

Over time as distributed leadership takes hold in schools, it is expected to see schools move from a fragmented network to a more cohesive, focused group of teachers and professional leaders.

Conclusions on Distributed Leadership:

- The MTL and MTS network positions are good indicators of MMP impact within school-based networks
- Distributed leadership really begins to take hold when teacher communication networks are tightly webbed

Strong evidence that schools where distributed leadership is taking hold are producing better results is starting to be seen.

Overall Conclusions:

- There is support for the argument that schools that have more fully adopted MMP principles are demonstrating stronger outcomes—though there is still a lot of work to do
- No single factor—e.g., alignment, distributed leadership or Learning Team performance—is sufficient for success, but all may be necessary
- Schools that are performing well do many of the things MMP promotes well, and realize synergy between many of these activities and principles
- MMP impact, though, is not being felt in all schools—there is tremendous variability in MMP adoption and progress across the district

Important Considerations for Sustaining MMP Work:

- Creating Distributed Leadership in a school takes time—and communication is critical
- The MTL role may be shifting from focal point to facilitator—we see growth in the number of staff primarily responsible for helping the school focus on improving mathematics teaching and learning
- The MTS role may be more important than ever—schools using the MTS appear further down the path

Following the presentation there was some discussion and comments, including the following:

- How adults are organized has a direct correlation to how students learn.
- It is very important for the principal to be a strong instructional leader.
- Strategies developed through the MPA, such as Learning Teams and Math Teacher Leaders, have been effective. This evaluation and other reports should be utilized to look at where we need to go next with some of these things.
- Without the MPA, the NSF grant would never have been received. Participation in MTL meetings has continued to grow, now with approximately 200 participants each month. Schools are concerned that they will not have an MTL in the future. The importance of the MTLs and MTSs was stressed. Whatever anyone can do to help this work continue would be a great investment and greatly appreciated.
- Resources need to be pursued to improve the teaching and learning of STEM.

V. UPDATE ON INDUCTION EFFORTS: *Marleen Pugach, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM)*

- Retention of new teachers is critical and is an important initiative of the Teacher & Principal Quality Work Group. Work is being done on alignment of mentor sources so that all new teachers get the benefits of a mentor. A clear distinction needs to be made between district and school-based mentors. A set of rules and responsibilities are being drawn up that clearly shows both what district leaders and schools need to do. Attention needs to be paid to alignment of resources coming into the district for mentoring.
- Work is being done on PI34—what new teachers need to do for license renewal. Materials are being created for new teacher use.
- GIS mapping of student teacher placements is being done. A presentation will be made at the January 14th Teacher & Principal Quality Work Group meeting.

VI. DEMONSTRATION ON HOW TO USE THE TUTORING DATABASE: Betty Smith, MPA Family Literacy & Tutoring Coordinator

The Family Literacy & Tutoring Work Group was charged with getting tutoring opportunities for every student and increasing volunteerism in the city. An electronic database, now called the Tutoring and Family Services Directory, was developed and is located on the MPA website.

B. Smith demonstrated how that from the website a person can volunteer to become a tutor and how a family can find services and showed some of the information that is available regarding services. Service providers in the database include CLCs, churches, schools and other community agencies. Services are available for both students and adults. Providers that want to be listed submit a paper application and can update their data online once established.

Work needs to be done on increasing the number of after-school programs.

The challenge during the next year will be to institutionalize the database. Attempt is being made to work with places that have public computers to make this database known and available to everyone. Help is needed in marketing this to the public. Resources for assistance in this area were requested, including links to the database from partner websites.

G. Randall suggested giving this information to 2-1-1 to share with people who call them looking for support.

W. Andrekopoulos suggested contacting the Communications Director at MPS and putting a notice into a Principals' Bulletin.

VII. PREVIEW OF NEW MPA WEBSITE:

Due to lack of time, the new website was not previewed. It will be going live very soon.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:

Gerard Randall was recognized and thanked for all his work, vision, leadership, energy, support and strong advocacy for the MPA over the years. Although this was his last Partners meeting as Chairman of the Executive Partners, hope was expressed that a connection to the MPA would continue.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m. The next quarterly meeting of the MPA Partners will be held on **Friday, March 14th**, from **7:30-9:30 a.m.** at the REACH Center, 2342 N. 27th Street, Milwaukee.