



## **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, September 26, 2008 REACH Center**

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

**Executive Partners:** Tom Morgan, Helen Sobehart and Don Sykes

**Partners:** Dan Burrell, Scott Emmons, Deborah Ford, Kevin McLeod, Art Montgomery, Anita Pietrykowski, Lee Ann Pruske, Sr. Joel Read, Betty Smith, and Alfonzo Thurman

**Implementation Team:** Bama Brown-Grice, Victoria Frazier, Bernadette Halloran, Kathy Munson, Dennis Oulahan and Linda Post

#### **Government Officials:**

**Support Staff:** Janice Hagen

**Guests/Visitors:** Abbie Fishman, Riverside University High School; Carl Hanssen, Hanssen Consulting; Jayne Jaskolski, 21<sup>st</sup> Street Elementary School; Karen Kelley, UWM; Donna Pasternak, UWM; Linda Tiezzi Waldera, UWM; Bianca Williams-Griffin, Morse Middle School

### **I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:**

Alfonzo Thurman welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m. Everyone introduced themselves.

## II. MINUTES:

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

## III. REPORTS:

### **Executive Partners' Report:** Alfonzo Thurman, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- Discussion has been held on the role of the Executive Partners and how to participate in the action items of the MPA. The Executive Partners want to discuss some of the larger issues that affect education in public schools and post-secondary education.
- The search is in progress for the MPA Interim Executive Director. The Leadership Team developed a list of nominees, and conversations will take place with these individuals around their interest and the leadership they can provide.

### **Superintendent's Report:** Anita Pietrykowski, Milwaukee Public Schools

- In response to the State Superintendent's request for MPS to have greater alignment of the accountability and support systems for the schools, the district began reorganization of the kinds of support and accountability provided to the schools.
  - The district was organized into eight geographic regions, each consisting of elementary, K-8, middle and high schools working together. There is also a 9<sup>th</sup> region consisting of diversified and partnership schools.
  - Individuals who provide support and accountability were designated for each region—the SOS (System of Support) Team—and includes Administrative Specialists/Program Officers, Special Education Leadership Liaisons (SELL), DIFI Supervisors, Literacy Specialists, Math Teaching Specialists, Principal Coaches, Budget/Accounting Specialists, Parent Information Specialists, Title I Support and Problem-Solving Facilitators.
  - MPS departments have also been asked to align individuals in their departments to the structure.
  - This alignment will help improve the support to schools—communications are streamlined and much more effective, schools have unified SOS Teams aligning work around the Strategic Plan.
  - There are nine DIFI Supervisors, provided to the district by the State, working in the schools to help improve instruction and ensure that the necessary strategies in terms of the DIFI and educational plans are being utilized, working with Learning Teams, observing and participating in educational plan reviews.

It was suggested that this information be shared with the public.

SOS charts identifying the schools and individuals in each region were available and will be sent out to all MPA members.

- The district is undergoing an external review for reading. Bernadette Halloran from MPS stated that in preparation for this audit, a Literacy Self-Study Group identified what is currently being done in reading and what areas could be improved. An assessment subcommittee was formed. Dr. Robert Tierney has come in and interviewed various stakeholders around literacy. Linda Post added that the MPA is involved; several MPA representatives were interviewed.
- The Superintendent would like to have the role of the Literacy Coach examined and redefined and is looking to the MPA for some support in this regard. Things he would like looked at are the role of the new Math Lead Teacher compared to that of the Literacy Coach and how the role of the Literacy Coach can be more focused and aligned to the kinds of

responsibilities that the Math Lead Teacher has. The Superintendent hopes for this to be done by mid-November.

- The district is looking at Learning Teams. The Superintendent would like an MPA work group to help look at and redefine the work of Learning Teams and have that report roll out in December.

**Leadership Team/Implementation Team Report:** Linda Post, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

- The Leadership Team and Implementation Team planned the MPA Retreat held in August. Feedback indicates it was very successful. In addition to work group planning for 2008-09, there was some clarity brought to all the plans and planning processes in the district, a panel presentation on M7 and STEM, and group discussion about what the MPA's role in a STEM initiative should be and who should be involved in it. Aligned efforts are needed in tackling STEM with teaching and learning.
- The Leadership Team met several times over the summer, assisted with the revision of the position description for the MPA Interim Executive Director and brainstormed potential candidates. The Team is in the process of contacting individuals to fill this position for a two-year period.
- Work groups began meeting again in September.
- Leadership Team members brainstormed a broadly based group of individuals to plan a two-day retreat on Learning Teams, most likely to take place within the next 1-1/2 months. Ideas of what should be addressed at this retreat include what the Learning Team role should be, characteristics of an effective Learning Team, stages of development of Learning Teams and the professional development needed at various stages and perhaps beginning discussion on development of self-reflective tools for Learning Teams. Retreat participants should include principals, teachers and Learning Team members of both high and low functioning Learning Teams and other individuals. It is desired to develop something comparable to the Characteristics of a High Performing Urban Classroom.

**IV. NEA FOUNDATION GRANT ACTION RESEARCH:** Jayne Jaskolski, 21<sup>st</sup> Street Elementary School (MPS) and Linda Tiezzi Waldera, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Linda Tiezzi Waldera has been facilitating the action research work through the NEA Foundation Grant to Close the Achievement Gaps over the past two years. She distributed a handout and shared information about this work.

Goals:

To support ten MPS teachers/NEA Foundation Action Research Fellows as they

- Investigate a research based teaching/learning strategy that they believe will impact closing the achievement gaps
- Learn about how policy is made and how they might actively participate in and inform the policy making efforts that impact them and their students
- Use what they've learned to become teacher leaders at various levels within MPS, state and/or national level

To accomplish the goals, the program has aligned with the Teachers' Network Leadership Institute (TNLI), a consortium of teacher research affiliates across the US and Europe. Many publications, videos, lesson plans, research information and more are available on its website at [www.teachersnetwork.org](http://www.teachersnetwork.org).

Action Research Fellows meet monthly to share their new findings, offer feedback, hear from policymakers, receive instruction on action research techniques and work on research.

A handout of the 2007-2008 NEA Foundation Action Research Fellows Project Summaries was distributed. Jayne Jaskolski, Speech Pathologist at 21<sup>st</sup> Street Elementary School and Action Research Fellow for the past two years, shared about what action research is and what she and others have gained from participation.

Action research is becoming a reflective practitioner about what you are doing to close the achievement gaps—look at challenges and more. It is a marvelous experience of reflective teaching. Action research begins by creating a question about what can be done to look at teaching practice with students. Then, research is found and reviewed, interventions are defined and implemented, data is recorded and analyzed, and reports are written and posted on the TNLI website where collaboration can take place with others across the country.

The Action Research Fellows program has:

- Been a fantastic professional development opportunity
- Refined research methods and what is done in the classroom as a reflective practitioner
- Enabled differentiated instruction to meet students' individual needs
- Enabled prevention of future student academic challenges through response intervention
- Provided help in closing the achievement gaps
- Provided opportunity to influence policy
- Provided opportunity for collaboration with teachers across the country
- Developed teacher leaders out of the participants through:
  - Involvement with School Governance Councils —building relationships and partnerships within the school and with families and the community, an important piece in looking at how to improve student learning
  - Membership on Learning Teams
  - Sharing the action research work with staff
  - Leading district-wide collaborative meetings
  - Presenting at numerous conferences and events all the way up to the national level
  - Involvement in conversations on grant writing and securing various grants
  - Mentoring

New Action Research Fellows are starting this year. Outgoing Fellows have agreed to stay on as mentors.

Sr. Joel Read recommended looking into what is going on in Kentucky with parent leadership and will send the network connections to Linda Tiezzi Waldera.

- V. **UW-MILWAUKEE WRITING PROJECT:** Karen Kelley and Donna Pasternak, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; Abbie Fishman, Riverside University High School; and Bianca Williams-Griffin, Morse Middle School

Karen Kelley and Donna Pasternak, Co-Directors of the UWM Writing Project, presented information about this project and the National Writing Project.

The National Writing Project:

- A professional development network that serves teachers of writing at all grade levels, primary through university, and in all subjects
- Based on the premise that in order to improve instruction in the classroom, there needs to be focus on teacher quality
- Mission to improve student achievement by improving the teaching of writing and improving learning in the nation's schools
- Comprised of nearly 200 university-based National Writing Project sites

- A nation-wide network of teachers interested in improving writing
- Documented gains in writing achievement of students whose teachers participated in National Writing Project professional development

The Local Writing Project at UWM:

UWM has become a new National Writing Project site and began its work with a five-week institute this summer and will be looking at how it can grow and form partnerships in the community to improve writing instruction.

Seventeen teachers from across the southeastern Wisconsin region participated in the summer institute, a five-week writing workshop for PK-16 teachers as they prepare to assume leadership roles that promote effective writing in their own schools and districts. Participants became immersed in their teaching practice and their own writing. Two participants who are now teacher leaders in the project, Bianca Williams-Griffin and Abbie Fishman, shared about their experience this summer. Comments included:

- It was phenomenal; I came out a changed teacher.
- I experienced what the students go through concerning writing and it taught me how to help them through issues such as feeling comfortable and competent.
- Reconnection with my own writing was very helpful.
- Doing research gave me valuable information to help my students.
- I improved my own writing skills.
- I learned strategies and dialogued with other teachers who incorporate writing in their own instruction across disciplines and discussed how to help students buy into being good writers, find the importance of being good writers and find their own voice.
- Discussion with teachers compassionate about writing was rewarding.
- The strategies used to praise and critique our writing can be used in the classroom.
- I learned how to adapt principles to all disciplines.

A flyer about the next summer institute to be held June 22 – July 24, 2009 was distributed. More information can be found at [www.writingproject.uwm.edu](http://www.writingproject.uwm.edu).

Bama Brown-Grice suggested allowing paraprofessionals to participate in the future.

The UWM Writing Project will include:

- Leadership Council
- UWMWP renewal for current teacher consultants
- Professional reading groups
- Professional presentations at local, state, and national conferences
- Inservice
- UWMWP Advisory Board

Future Initiatives:

- Urban Sites Network
- Teacher Inquiry Communities
- Professional Writing Group
- Technology Liaison
- Young Writers' Camp

**VI. TEACHER & PRINCIPAL QUALITY WORK GROUP UPDATE:** Victoria Frazier and Deborah Ford, Milwaukee Public Schools

**Mentoring White Paper**

A subcommittee of the Teacher & Principal Quality Work Group last year addressed mentoring and induction. A comprehensive approach to mentoring was needed. The work group looked at the roles of the various mentors and how to align them to work together and prepared a white paper (distributed earlier via E-mail). Professional development is provided by the New Teacher Center of Santa Cruz. School-based mentors connect with all new teachers in their buildings and provide orientation; introduce them to the Learning Team, Math Teacher Leader and Literacy Coach and other resources; help them adjust to the culture of the building; and be a go-to person. An administrator is also charged with connecting with new teachers and ensuring follow-through on initiatives. Funding for school-based mentors to meet after school with initial educators has been secured; funding is being sought for meeting with other teachers. Representatives from universities, alternative certification and MPS continue to meet to address challenges and make sure efforts are consistent across the board and continue to benefit new teachers in terms of retention long-term.

**Induction Handbook, Revised Edition**

The need for alignment of mentoring confirmed the need to revise the Induction Handbook. Copies of the revised edition were distributed and a brief overview was given.

Also in relation to induction, it was reported that the district sponsored a week-long orientation this year for all new teachers conducted across all disciplines and introduced them to significant initiatives in the district.

**Student Teaching Mapping Project**

The data on student teaching distribution has been gathered and put together. The work group will address how to make a seamless connection between student teaching and becoming a new teacher in the district. The data will be analyzed and reported on at a later date.

**VII. MATH REPORT:** Kevin McLeod, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

A report was given on the Milwaukee Mathematics Partnership (MMP) activities. The initial 5-year NSF grant funding ended this year, but other funding has been identified.

**New This Year:**

- Retirement of Henry Kranendonk, MPS Math Curriculum Specialist—a national search is being conducted for his replacement. A temporary leadership structure is in place which includes part-time consulting by Henry Kranendonk and the help of a number of other individuals.
- An additional four Math Teaching Specialists have been hired at MPS through additional funding.
- A Released Time Model is being used with MTLs this year, which has teachers released from the classroom part of the time to model teaching, provide professional development, work on the school action plan and more.
- Funding has been received from the State, the District and the Phase 2 MMP grant for three years for research and evaluation in specific areas, including the effect of the new Released Time Math Teacher Leader (MTL) Model, the transition to successful college mathematics, and MKT (Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching)—what teachers really need to know about mathematics and how to use the knowledge more effectively in the classroom—looking at teacher preparation and professional development related to this. The State funds come with much accountability. Part of Henry’s work and that of a Monitoring and Compliance position is concerned with monitoring and accountability related to the State funds and the Action Plan. Most of the funding is for release time of MTLs.

- Professional development is being offered on the newly adopted 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade math textbooks—courses were run over the summer and more will be run this fall. All 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade MPS math teachers will be using the same textbooks.

**Ongoing Work:**

- The Learning Team Continuum of Work for Mathematics School Self-Assessment Guide will continue to be used to help teachers/schools see where they are at with mathematics, where they need to go and the type of work/tools that can help them move forward along the continuum. A copy was distributed.
- MTL monthly meetings which include professional development around content, leadership and assessment
- 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> grade MTL summits
- Algebra and Geometry Labs – three of each every semester, focused on the new textbooks and including modeling assessment and instruction
- UWM courses, including the successful “Geometric Knowledge for Teaching” which blends geometry content and assessment practices
- Math Fellowships for middle grade teachers – a three-year program where elementary teachers can earn a math minor, the PRAXIS II test will be paid for and teachers can become certified as highly qualified to teach math under NCLB.

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:**

None.

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The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m. The next quarterly meeting of the MPA Partners will be held on **Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>**, from **7:30-9:30 a.m.**, location TBD.