



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I congratulate the learning teams that were successful in NEA Foundation grants this school year. We highlight them in our Fall issue. Reg Weaver, the NEA President, was in Milwaukee in September for the NEA grant kick-off. Milwaukee is one of two U.S. cities to receive the NEA Foundation grant to close achievement gaps. Grants were awarded to schools for induction, professional development and best practices.

Connections will be published four times a year. It highlights the work of literacy coaches, math teacher leaders and all educators who make a difference in their students' lives. It is available in hard copy and is on the Web at www.milwaukeepartnershipacademy.org. If you have a story to share, a colleague to congratulate or want to highlight the work of your learning team, call Christine Anderson at (414) 270-1701. *Connections* will only make our work more consistent, profound and lasting.

—Christine Anderson, Ph.D.
Executive Director, MPA

Our Primary Goals:

1. Improve teacher and principal quality.
2. Increase student achievement at all educational levels.
3. Address systematic issues across educational institutions.

We address these goals through our Implementation Team, which has six work groups: Comprehensive Math and Literacy; Tutoring and Family Literacy; Teacher and Principal Quality; Research and Evaluation; Skunkworks; and Community Partners.

In the money

Nine MPS schools will receive learning team grant funding for a third year in 2005-06 from the **Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation**. These schools are **Edison, Happy Hill, Hi-Mount, Kilbourn, LaFollette, Pierce, Sarah Scott, 68th Street and 21st Street**. Each school will receive \$10,000 for improving student outcomes by building and strengthening its learning team.



To become a principal

Milwaukee educators can begin a principal preparation program this fall through collaboration with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Department of Administrative Leadership and Milwaukee Public Schools. The program prepares educators to become principals within two years. For more information, contact the UWM Department of Administrative Leadership at (414) 229-4740.

Learning teams as a strategy for closing the achievement gaps

MPS initiated learning teams during the 2002-03 school year as part of a reform strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These building-based teams were conceptualized as the primary means by which schools would develop capacity for improvement through the analysis of local school data and embedded professional development.

These teams are not committees, but rather, strategic action teams. They are based on the notion that capacity for school improvement lies in a leadership model that draws on the joint expertise of principals and teachers. To this end, each team has as its core members the principal, the literacy coach, and the mathematics teacher leader. The literacy coach and mathematics teacher leader are essential to the comprehensive literacy and mathematics framework adopted by the district. Other individuals identified at the school site complete the team.

The key to making learning teams function effectively is that they *meet regularly* around a focused agenda: 1) embedded professional development; 2) curriculum alignment; 3) data collection; and 4) helping to make changes in school culture and organization so that schools can better function as a learning community.

Panel on Collaborative Learning

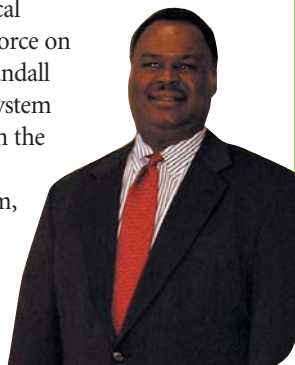
The National Council of Teachers of English Convention (NCTE) in Pittsburgh on November 17-20 will include a panel presentation about a collaborative reading project involving the Cultures and Communities Certificate Program. **Dr. Joan Prince**, UWM Chancellor—Partnerships and Innovations, Milwaukee Public School teacher **Regina Manns** (Frances Starns School of Discovery), Marquette University Associate Dean, Dental School (ret.) **Dr. Prem Sharma**, and Milwaukee Area Academic Alliance in English Director, **Mariann Maris**, an active member of the MPA, will attend. Students at **Frances Starns School of Discovery**, staff, families, and teachers read and discuss Dr. Sharma's historical novel, *Mandalay's Child*, and in the process of reading and discussing this novel increase their awareness of the history of World War II. This collaborative reading project provides just one example of the success of the Milwaukee Partnership Academy and its mission to foster collaboration.

Thanks to Assurant Health Foundation and Senior Vice President, Debbie Kramer, for sponsoring the MPA Implementation Team Retreat.

This publication was sponsored by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Area Deans of Higher Education (MMADE) – Dean Tia Bojar and Dean Alfonso Thurman, co-chairs.

MPA Executive Partners Elect Chair

Gerard Randall, Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer of the Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County, was elected chair of the Executive Partners of the MPA. He is a graduate of Marquette University and a former schoolteacher in the Milwaukee Public Schools, where he served on the Task Force on School-to-Work Initiatives, the Council on Vocational and Technical Education, and the Task Force on Facilities Planning. Mr. Randall serves on the University System Board of Regents and is on the Board of Directors for the Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, and Rosalie Manor.



Newsmakers

State Superintendent **Elizabeth Burmaster**, an active partner in MPA, released a list of the members of the State Superintendent's High School Task Force. MPS is represented by **Amy Blazkovec-Johnson**, MPA Implementation Team member and teacher at **Bay View High School**; **Nancy Conner**, Principal, **Marshall High School**; **Gloria Erkins**, Principal, **Vincent High School**; **Willie Jude**, recently retired Principal of **Custer High School** and **Andrew Meuler**, Principal, **Rufus King International Baccalaureate High School**.

Jackie Patterson, an original MPA member and now retired principal, has been selected by DPI to lead the work of the **Wallace Grant** to support MPS principals in their professional growth and advance urban school leadership in the state. **MPS, MPA, Cardinal Stritch** and **UWM** are helping to create an assessment of master-level principals. Due to the leadership of State Superintendent **Elizabeth Burmaster**, the **Wallace Foundation** has selected the Wisconsin Urban Leadership Project to develop a cohort of highly effective, master level urban principals whose leadership results in improved student achievement, evident in closing the achievement gaps. First Lady Jessica Doyle hosted a reception for the Wallace Fellows. The Milwaukee Fellows are **Eugene Humphrey, Rogers Onick, Dawn Rice, Kristi Cole, Yvette Martel, Martha Wheeler-Fair, Lourdes Castillo-Urbe, Lorraine Applewhite, Chris Kadow, Josephine Mosley, Tim Kavanagh, Bridget Hartney** and **Cynthia Ellwood**.

HOLD THE DATE: On June 28-30, 2006 there will be a national conference in Milwaukee, "Embrace the Challenge: Closing the Achievement Gaps through Partnership and Leadership Development."

NEA Grants

Congratulations to the following schools! Their learning teams were selected for NEA Foundation grant participation to close the achievement gaps by accelerating academic progress for economically disadvantaged and minority children, while increasing achievement gains for all. They will share their work at the national MPA conference in June: "Embrace the Challenge: Closing the Achievement Gaps through Partnership and Leadership Development." Grant summaries are listed below.

SUMMARY OF SELECTED NEA GRANT APPLICATIONS

Best Practices — \$2,000 to each school

- **21st Street** — K-5 teachers, including special education teachers, will research and explore best practices for teaching comprehension of informational text by having four study groups reading different books that represent strategies for understanding expository text. Strategies will be implemented and results will be shared with the staff.
- **Emerson** — Provide Six Traits Writing training for entire staff with an emphasis on special education students in full inclusion.
- **Auer Avenue** — Fourth and fifth grade teachers will implement a Guided Reading model of instruction to differentiate instruction for intermediate students.
- **Wisconsin Conservatory of Lifelong Learning** — Implement Painter and Valentine's Instructional Practices Inventory and utilize instructional strategies that promote student engagement. A school-wide walk-through program will assist staff in evaluating current instructional practices.
- **Garland** — Form curriculum committees around discussion groups to read *Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*. Strategies will be implanted in classrooms and presented and modeled at staff meetings.

Induction — \$10,000 to each school

- **Hamilton** — Provide an induction program to allow educators to feel respected, supported, nurtured and appreciated, thus creating competent and confident teachers who become successful and effective.
- **Milwaukee French Immersion** — Provide structured and consistent common planning time and professional development related to successful teaching practices, particularly targeting closing the achievement gap, and innovative opportunities to network with other immersion school teachers.
- **Grant** — Partner with another school and a higher education institution to establish a PDP for PI34. The instructional practices inventory will be used to guide and promote reflection and growth of instructional practices.
- **Lloyd Street** — Establish monthly induction meetings and a mentoring program to connect new teachers with experienced teachers in the school as mentors, including common planning activities with the goal of improving the gap between school and state scores.

Professional Development — \$10,000 to each school

- **Pierce** — Implement a yearlong program of professional development to support teachers in closing the achievement gap in writing through classroom instruction, collection of data to improve attendance, and reduction in discipline referrals.
- **Ronald Wilson Reagan College Preparatory High School** — Provide professional development for improved reading and language arts in all content areas by using Direct Instruction Corrective Reading at minimal or basic levels, and develop CABS to assess progress in reading.
- **21st Street** — Teachers will review the role of assessment in the classroom and learn how to use classroom-based assessment to inform their teaching and verify learning. Grade level teachers, using common planning time, will learn how to align instruction and assessment to Learning Targets and to give regular feedback to students.
- **Morse Middle School** — Design a workshop for all staff to focus on writing genres and how to incorporate various writing activities into the content areas.
- **Hartford** — Teachers will identify students who scored below proficient and analyze the work of each relative to the achievement gap between white and African American students in mathematics, specifically in solving complex problems and communication of reasoning.
- **Manitoba** — Provide a series of one-hour monthly meetings for teachers focused on mathematics and writing instructional strategies and understanding the culture of poverty using *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby Payne.
- **Milwaukee School of Languages** — Banking time days and professional development will be organized around five inquiry questions, including: "What are the characteristics of rigor in the classroom and what would it look like at MSL?" and "What instructional strategies promote rigor?"
- **Fratney** — Provide Six Traits Writing training for staff, a writing workshop seminar, and grade level meetings.