Partnering for Systemic Change

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Abstract

This model for an urban P–16 Partnership meant to re-shape and improve teacher education is driven by the involvement of major stakeholders in the community. The discussion focuses in particular on the partnering activities of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the public school district to initiate systemic change. By emphasizing quality teaching and learning as an all-university and university/K–12 responsibility, metropolitan institutions of higher education can help transform teacher education and improve urban high-need schools.

> "For the first time, leaders from politics, educational institutions, business, labor, community organizations, faith organizations and others were literally signing on to a plan to work together to change the record of success in schools" (Borsuk, May 14, 2002)

So reported the leading local newspaper in Milwaukee in its article covering the "Call to Action Day" that publicly launched the Milwaukee Partnership Academy (MPA). That the news media had exactly captured the essence of the MPA was gratifying. The MPA is Milwaukee's initiative to address the challenge of urban education reform through simultaneous renewal at both the level of the local school district and the university. The MPA is a collaborative effort dedicated to help transform teacher education and improve urban high-need schools. This urban P–16 Partnership for Quality Teaching and Learning arose out of the conviction that the multi-layered and complex challenge of urban education reform must be addressed through systemic, broad-based change. The success of this Partnership depends on the efforts and cooperation not only of the public school system and the university but also various major stakeholders in the community. My remarks to a local reporter at the public launching of the Academy are worth repeating since they capture the intent and claim of this partnership: "We're creating broad-based ownership for quality teaching and learning, and we're going to hold ourselves accountable as a community…. This is not a quick fix. There is no quick fix for urban education" (Borsuk, May 13, 2002). Milwaukee needs and deserves the broadest effort in its history to collectively address the challenges of low pupil performance, and attrition—of students who do not succeed in school and of the large number of teachers who leave Milwaukee Public Schools early in their careers.

When the MPA started in 1999, it included a wide range of partners representing key constituencies: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association (MTEA), the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), the Private Industry Council (PIC), and the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC). The Milwaukee Board of School Directors later joined the above members as the executive partners of the

MPA. But what is remarkable is how this collaboration has grown to include representatives from local private colleges, the Milwaukee Public Museum, the Milwaukee Public Library, parents, principals, and faith-based and health and human service organizations. It has won the support of the state's governor, lieutenant governor, and superintendent of public instruction, as well as the city's mayor and other elected officials. The MPA, thus, has not only allowed many stakeholders and key constituents to come together to make the changes that will ensure student success in our educational system, but by institutionalizing this collaborative relationship, it has also compelled a consistent commitment and accountability from all these various partners. The breadth and range of this constantly growing partnership indicates the increasing public awareness that reform in education is a collective responsibility and that this change must be systemic. As such, all participating partners have to realize their important role in contributing to school success.

The three primary goals of the MPA also reflect this understanding:
1. increase student achievement at all education levels
2. improve the quality of teaching and learning
3. address systemic issues across educational institutions.

The MPA's actual work may be described as connecting the dots between these ultimately interdependent goals. What allows the MPA to carry out this work is that, as a collaborative, it provides a forum for *collective leadership and responsibility*, an almost *parliamentary* structure of shared governance, work, accountability, and success. A forum like the MPA is uniquely positioned to convene the power of the local leadership, while at the same time dissolving individual vested interests in the service of a larger, broad-based goal. Thus, by sharing the vision, responsibility and authority of educating children, the MPA champions the cause of "Sharing in Student Success" (S3), the name given to the public launch of the MPA agenda.

Perhaps one of the more useful ways of talking about the MPA is to share the story of its building and development. In doing so, while not quite presenting it as a "how-to" manual, this article offers a model for developing urban P–16 councils, which work toward systemic change in education to ensure quality teaching and learning. Thus, the specific purposes of this article are: (1) to describe how the MPA was constructed and how it operates, with an emphasis on its developmental pace as it has unfolded so far; (2) to discuss the role and function of the MPA with regard to higher education; that is, how the MPA works as a vehicle of communication, a bridge between teacher preparation programs and school district's instructional programs; and (3) to offer some observations on opportunities and barriers present within the Partnership and the work still to be done.

The MPA Today and How It Got There

In common with other urban P–16 Councils formed throughout the nation to enhance quality teaching and learning, the creation of the MPA was driven by two ideas that had the force of necessity and inevitability behind them: the need to mobilize

resources through collaboration *and* the need to position ourselves for competitive federal dollars. What sets the MPA apart, however, in both these common motives is that: (1) the MPA includes business and industry groups, in addition to the more usual partners of schools of education and large urban school districts; and (2) this *inter-institutional* partnership allows various institutions to address long-standing and deep-seated problems on a sustained basis, made possible by collectively generated federal resources. A quick overview of the funding history of the MPA will perhaps better demonstrate this point. It all started with a proposal, initiated by UWM, to develop a broad, community based partnership to achieve the overarching goal of developing a comprehensive teacher education prototype to prepare K–8 teachers for high-need schools. The partnership was to have a unique governance structure, wherein all vested stakeholders form a non-profit entity. This proposal was made to the U.S. Department of Education for funds from the Title II grant. This prototype would draw from best practices, enable policies across a national network of urban partnerships, and leverage various program components and high quality teacher education materials back across selected sites in a redesign process. Teacher preparation as necessarily both a partnership and an all-university endeavor would intersect with school and community renewal. The prototype called for major changes in the university's teacher education program, aligning changes in the arts and sciences, professional preparation, and entry into the profession so that the outcome would be a more coherent, protracted, and potent form of teacher preparation.

In the summer of 1999, UWM and proposing partners were awarded an $8.4 million, five-year Title II Partnership Grant for Improving Teacher Quality. It was at this point that, once again at UWM's initiative, the board of partners was convened that eventually became the Milwaukee Partnership Academy. The formation of such a partnership then provided an umbrella under which to unite various other major grants and programs: federal funds awarded to both UWM and MPS under GEAR-UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) totaling $14.5 million over five years; two PT3 federal grants totaling $3.2 million over five years for programs to help UWM and MPS train teachers to more effectively use computer technology; and a Title II state grant for $864,000 over 3 years. In a six-week period in the summer of 1999, the DOE awarded UWM and its partners over $26 million. As mentioned earlier, however, one of the most dynamic aspects of the MPA is that it has room to grow as more and more members of the community decide to become affiliated with it.

The Role and Function of the MPA

The MPA's round-table, even at this early stage, was seating a wide range of participants, all with major stakes and hopes in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Metro Milwaukee, who were now for the first time collectively sharing the responsibility of actualizing these hopes. The initial meetings then, quite naturally, were focused on discussions, in creating a common vocabulary, in recognizing the shared interests as well as the differences among the partners and how to negotiate between the two. For example, although each member at the table agreed that

improving the quality of teaching and learning was in the best interest of all and could grant the value of partnerships, the group still needed to make visible the connections between these shared but as yet isolated and scattered goals. Therefore, the partners needed to acknowledge collectively the guiding propositions that all children can learn and that the level of preparedness of the teacher is crucial to that learning. Moreover, the group needed to agree that teacher quality is related to the organizational structures of both schools and universities and, thus, there has to be a powerful, constructive intersection between teachers, learning, and the way in which teachers are prepared. In these initial meetings a large amount of time and energy was also spent in sorting out issues of governance and structure, of commitments of time and resources from each of the partners and, of course, in the oversight of the grants noted above.

While the major partners have been identified above, it would be helpful to review the Board membership grid to see more clearly how membership is distributed and how the Board does its work:

Membership Structure
(September 2002)

Partner Institution	Executive Committee (*Co-Chair)	Board Members (Voting)	Board Affiliates	State & Local Elected or Appointed Officials	Implementation Team
Milwaukee Public Schools	Superintendent	Superintendent Director of Educational Director of Human Resources Director of Technology Parent Board Member	MPS Parent MPS Parent Principal Principal Principal Curriculum and Child Care Partnership Program		Administrative & Teaching Staff (14 Professionals)

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Partner Institution	Executive Committee (*Co-Chair)	Board Members (Voting)	Board Affiliates	State & Local Elected or Appointed Officials	Implementation Team
Milwaukee Public Schools Board of Directors	President	President			
Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association	Executive Director	President Executive Director			Staff (3 Professionals)
Milwaukee Area Technical College	President	President VP for Academic Affairs Faculty	Assoc. VP for Academic Affairs		Staff (3 Professionals)
University of Wisconsin Milwaukee	Chancellor	Chancellor Dean, Peck School of the Arts Dean, College of Letters & Science Chair, Department of C & I Dean, School of Education	Director, Roberto Hernandez Center Chancellor's Deputy for Milwaukee Idea Staff, School of Education		Staff, Department of C&I Vice Chancellor for Partnerships & Innovation Staff, Department of C & I (4 Professionals)
Mil's Pvt. College/Univs		President Alverno College			
Metro Milwaukee Association of Commerce	President	President	VP, Workforce Development		
Milwaukee Public Library			City Librarian		

Partner Institution	Executive Committee (*Co-Chair)	Board Members (Voting)	Board Affiliates	State & Local Elected or Appointed Officials	Implementation Team
Milwaukee Public Museum			Director		
Private Industry Council	President	President			
Governor's Office (WI)				Lt. Governor	
Dept. Pub. Instr. (WI)				State Superintendent	
Milwaukee Area Foundations			Prog Manager The Richard & Ethel Herzfeld Foundation		
Number	7	20	16	2	23

From the grid, operations proceed as follows:
1. The original formation of the MPA calls for roughly 20 voting members, composed from the representatives of the seven executive partners noted above.
2. These members have voting rights, although issues are typically resolved by consensus.
3. The MPA Board meets monthly and an executive committee, composed of the seven organizations that founded the Board, sets its agenda.
4. The executive committee meets bi-weekly to frame the agenda for the MPA Board meetings and trouble-shoot issues of concern across the Partnership.
5. The MPA Board is chaired in rotation between the Superintendent of MPS, the Executive Director of MTEA and the Chancellor of UWM, because these were the three lead partners that submitted the original proposal for Title II funding.
6. The MPA is staffed by a team of support professionals funded through the Title II grant, and supported by the efforts of staff members across the partner organizations.
7. The Board Affiliates are those community representatives who have a vested interest in supporting the work of the MPA. The affiliates currently include over a dozen representatives, but this number is likely to grow to 40 or more

organizational representatives.

8. In addition to community representatives, two significant elected officials join our conversations monthly, Wisconsin's Lieutenant Governor and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Other elected officials will likely come to the table over time.

9. Critical to the success of the MPA is the *Implementation Team*. For 2001–2002, this implementation team was chiefly composed of members of the professional instructional staff of MPS, and representatives from the MTEA, UWM, and MATC. The team was led by the deputy superintendent of the MPS and staffed by an assistant in the superintendent's office. The implementation team met weekly for approximately one-half day, and logged countless hours in between meetings. It also organized itself into work groups, comprised of co-chairs who led a team. It was the implementation team and its work groups that gave meaning to the breakthrough strategies, drawing from significant visits to other urban districts to learn about best practices, sharing selected practices that were working well at other partnership sites, and scouring the research literature in support of promising practices. In addition, the implementation team provided agenda items to the executive committee, provided reports on ongoing work at the MPA Board meetings, planned summer retreats and courses, and executed the action plans for the balanced literacy framework. The Implementation Team is, perhaps, the most crucial element of the MPA, as it is comprised of instructional leaders from across the partner organizations. Without its efforts, there would be no MPA. Moreover, actualizing the goals of the partnership through the creation of the representative implementation team, with its work groups, has not only made it possible for all the partners to share responsibility for the success of students in MPS and for teacher-candidates in the pipeline, but it has also fostered a new conception of professional development.

Why Grant Supervision Wasn't Enough

Hard facts can usually help people to coalesce around a common cause. Such was the case with the MPA. In the recent past, the Milwaukee Public Schools certainly suffered some extraordinary, "hard headlines" at the pen of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*:

- "Report shows big chasm in graduation" (11-13-01);
- "School crisis: Now what?" (11–16 -01);
- "MPS truancy rate hits 40 percent" (2-5-02);
- "How to keep black kids in school" (2–16 -02);
- "Dissatisfaction with schools unchanged" (3-6-02);
- "Standardized tests experts say we flunk" (4-24-02);
- "But tests still show disparity between whites, minorities" (8-20-02).

While debates continue about what matters most in public education, and further, how to measure what matters most, the MPA membership heard loudly and clearly:

"Houston, we have a problem!" While these headlines were news to none of us, what is new is that the *partnership* was facing the criticism collectively, not MPS alone. True, none of the other partners were in the headlines, only MPS. But, as a partnership, we had now gathered around the table frequently enough to realize two things: MPS could no longer wage this war against illiteracy alone; nor could we, the other partners, contend that this was not in part our problem as well.

Moreover, these are problems typical of urban settings and the state of public education in Milwaukee is overwhelmingly consonant with the challenges recorded in other "frostbelt cities" in the urban Midwest. Among the students served by MPS, more than 80 percent are students of color, with more than 77 percent on free or reduced cost lunches. The current graduation rate for Milwaukee is 43 percent and the district has experienced significant declines in grade level performance as students move to higher level classes *(2000–2001 Accountability Report for the Milwaukee Public Schools)*. Interestingly, and not without significance for the figures above, per pupil support for MPS students is $500 less that the state average, and $1,200 less than neighboring suburban schools (Peterson 2001). This gap in financial support is confirmed in national studies wherein students with the greatest learning deficiencies are typically taught in school districts with the lowest investment in financial support:

> The Education Trust today released a new report documenting large funding gaps between high- and low-poverty and minority districts in many states. The analysis reveals that, in most states, school districts that educate the greatest number of low-income and minority students receive substantially less state and local money per student than districts with the fewest low-income and minority students.

> "In too many states, we see yet again that the very students who need the most, get the least," said Kati Haycock, director of the Education Trust upon releasing the report. "At a time when schools, districts, and states are rightly focusing on closing the achievement gap separating low-income and minority students from other students, states can and must do more to close those funding gaps" (News Release by *The Education Trust*, 2002).

Generalizing from demographic data on metropolitan Milwaukee, over half of our city's residents are people of color, with 96 percent of all persons of color living within city limits. Forty-six percent of the city's residents live in poverty, while 40 percent of these residents of color have not completed high school and 43 percent have no job or work only part time (Bracey 2000; Levine and Callaghan 1998). Salary differentials reveal a typical monthly paycheck for non-high school or high school graduates to be lower by about $450 from those with bachelor's degrees, who earn an average of $1,800 (Dresang 2001). Parents who struggle to maintain an hourly wage that can support their families are also often challenged to provide adequate home support for schooling activities, and sufficient nutrition and overall care to ensure their children a fair start in school. The picture that emerges when the above figures are put together graphically portrays the layered complexity of the problems facing urban

education and points to the multi-layered and *systemic* approach required to address these issues.

When looking closely at MPS students and their parents, it is important to consider as well the professional teaching staff that serves the district. Ninety percent of the teachers are of Anglo descent, and largely female, in contrast to the demographics of the student population they serve. In the teacher pipeline nationally, barely 12 percent of the prospective teacher candidates are trainees of color, and a disproportionate number of teacher candidates come from small town or rural settings. Nor do they specify an interest in teaching in an urban district, or even in an experimental instructional environment. As noted in national studies, the highest misplacement of teachers occurs in urban settings, and particularly in the subjects of science and mathematics, and the attrition rate both nationally and locally continues to be troubling *(What Matters Most 1996)*. In MPS, the attrition rate for beginning teachers is approximately 50 percent after only three years on the job.

It was necessary to spend some time on these statistics and the headlines not only to provide a glimpse into the nature and tenor of our discussions and activities but also to underscore the absolute necessity for our partnership to extend its reach beyond the management of federal grants and contracts, no matter how purposeful that role. In short, these conditions made it impossible not to address the large learning gaps in the district as a *collective responsibility*, especially since a large number of the professionals serving on the educational staff of MPS had either started in a technical school, like MATC, and/or received at least a degree or two and a certificate for continuing education from UWM. Indeed, ours was not a case simply of community responsibility, but more directly, of obligation to improve the ways in which we prepare teachers, provide them to MPS, and assist MPS in their continuing professional development and teacher retention. In short, it was clear to us, by the spring of 2000, that we were at a turning point and that we all needed to share in bringing success to our community's students.

This reality set the MPA on a path to remedy instructional inequalities, and to unite us in an effort to ensure quality teachers for quality learning. After much discussion and planning amongst the partners, we decided on an overall goal of having "every child in MPS on or above grade level in reading, writing and math." While somewhat ahead of the articulation of the "No Child Left Behind" agenda by the Bush administration, our efforts were moving in the same direction as the President's. Today, with the support of the recently hired new superintendent of MPS, we will likely see this goal transfigured yet again into actions making clear that *increased graduation rates* is the culminating "reality statistic" we are really seeking. So, as the partnership grows and conditions change, our goal is adjusted as well.

For the moment, and sticking with the mantra "every child on grade level or above in reading, writing and math," the Partnership also determined that this basic and ambitious goal, in order to be accomplished, must be defined through a set of action steps to ensure that our goal could and would be met. While we started with a

language system of "priorities," we eventually adjusted our language to reflect a set of "breakthrough strategies," signaling to the broader community that we knew what our collective goal was, and that we knew how to get there. These breakthrough strategies were based on the successes we had discovered from other urban districts, and approaches to teaching and learning that had been well documented in the research literature. In fact, these breakthrough strategies were also ones that had been successfully implemented in some MPS buildings. Our goal was nothing less than to take these successes to a larger scale.
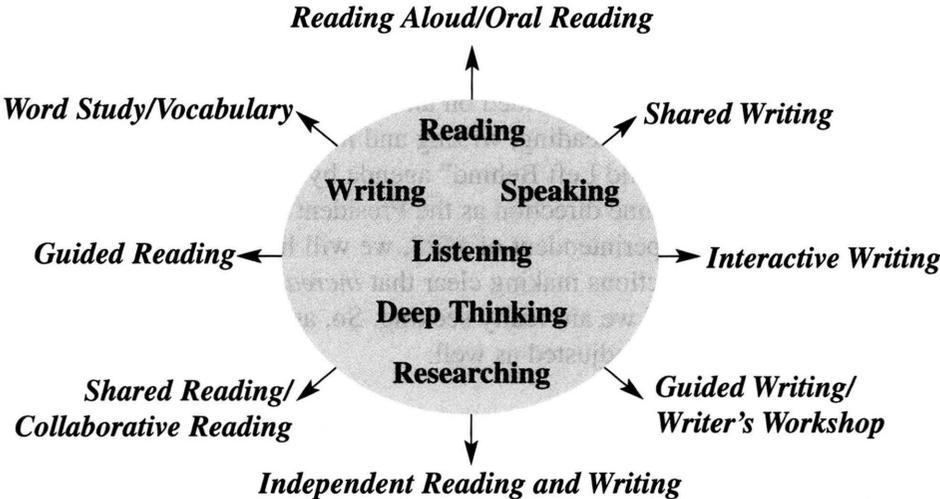
Five Breakthrough Strategies

As one of its first tasks after the goal setting activity, the Partnership identified five breakthrough strategies or priorities to support and forward the MPS's agenda of quality teaching and learning. However, articulating the breakthrough strategies did not come easily. Two factors made it possible. First, the MPA Board had already committed to a Summer Retreat (August 2001). Second, additional representatives from the Partnership—key instructional leaders from MPS, MTEA, UWM, and MATC—helped plan a retreat agenda that led us through a discussion of enabling strategies. We also invited a retreat moderator to keep us on task. These are the strategies that evolved:

Strategy 1: District-Wide Implementation of the Balanced Literary Framework
The Balanced Literacy Framework (BLF), building upon already existing literacy programs in individual schools, will serve as a guide for teaching and learning literacy across all subject areas in all MPS schools.

A comprehensive literacy program, the BLF provides a balance of skill development and literacy-rich activities across all subject areas. Although the graphic below focuses on reading and writing, it usefully demonstrates the interconnected and holistic approach of the BLF.

Reading Aloud/Oral Reading

Word Study/Vocabulary

Shared Writing

Reading

Writing   Speaking

Guided Reading   Listening   Interactive Writing

Deep Thinking

Shared Reading/   Researching   Guided Writing/
Collaborative Reading   Writer's Workshop

Independent Reading and Writing

The MPA's activities, in 2001–2002, in preparing to implement the BLF, included briefing sessions by the executive members to various constituencies of the community; the forming of joint public relations teams amongst the partners; publication and dissemination of brochures and flyers; the creation of a website (http://www.uwm.edu/Org/MPA); and a culminating event in the May 13, 2002 community "Call to Action Day." As a result of these various foundational activities, the initial implementation of the district-wide BLF to ensure that every student in MPS is performing at or above grade level had three main components: (1) instating a literacy coach in each MPS school; (2) holding a "Balanced Literacy Day"; and (3) holding a "Sharing in Student Success Day."

At the beginning of the 2002–2003 school year, MPS had a literacy coach in each of its schools. Under the direction of literacy coaches, teachers share balanced literacy strategies that are currently in place in their individual schools, identify existing gaps, and set goals for improvement. In addition, the teachers learn how the literacy coaches and learning teams may be used as a support system and for ongoing training. Other ways in which literacy coaches advance the goals of the BLF are: observing teachers and providing them with feedback; helping classroom teachers work with students for the purpose of modeling; and building teachers' capacity and showing them how data-driven instruction can be used. Literacy coaches fully introduced the BLF to the staff of individual schools during "Balanced Literacy Day," held simultaneously at each MPS school on September 4, 2002. As part of this introduction, coaches showed the teachers research-based evidence that the balanced literacy approach in schools is effective, provided them with tools to implement this approach, and helped teachers begin developing a year-long plan for the balanced literacy approach. To round off the launching of the BLF, a follow-up exhibition of student work, "Sharing in Student Success Day," will be held during the week of May 13, 2003. The day is intended to celebrate the achievement of students after a school year under the Balanced Literacy approach. The exhibition, to be displayed at businesses and partner organizations, will demonstrate student proficiencies in all curricula areas and highlight the reflected success of teachers in using balanced literacy teaching strategies effectively.

Strategy 2: Learning Teams   The creation and sustained maintenance of learning teams, which will possess the expertise to provide support and training for staff in all schools to teach the Balanced Literacy Framework across all content areas.

The lack of instructional leadership at the school level is usually a key factor leading to low student performance. Resnick and Glennon of the Rand Corporation in their report, *Leadership for Learning: A Theory of Action for Urban Schools*, state the problem this way:

> With most time and attention swallowed by management and political concerns, usually little central focus remains in urban school districts on what Elmore (1996) has persuasively termed the instructional core.... The last 30 years have seen a veritable revolution in our understanding of learning and teaching (Resnick and Hall 1998), yet so-called reform efforts have generally

proceeded without systematic reference to this vast body of research and increasingly refined practice.

Despite calls in virtually every major reform proposal of the last decade for vastly improved professional development services for teachers, most of those services have been narrow, episodic, and frequently tied to external categorical programs... [leading] to inadequate development of professional competencies and cultures (Ball and Cohen 1999; Miles and Guiney 2000, NCTAF 1996). Meanwhile, district administrators, from principals to central office staff, spend relatively little time in classrooms and even less time in analyzing instruction with teachers. They may arrange time for teachers' meetings and professional development, but they rarely provide intellectual leadership growth in teaching skill (Fink and Resnick 2001).

In the light of such criticism of existing structures for instructional leadership in urban schools and our knowledge of the direct correspondence between improved instructional capability and high student performance, the MPA made the formation of learning teams its second priority.

In common with other such collaborative teams—variously referred to, among other terms, as school leadership teams, whole-faculty study groups, action research teams, and impact groups—the leadership teams initiated by the MPA are composed of individuals from the school community who are selected and prepared to collect and interpret data relevant to the school's education or action plan, provide support to teachers, enable professional development embedded at the school site for all personnel in the school, and help create positive conditions in the school context for teachers as well as pupil learning. The ultimate purpose of the learning team, of course, is to promote student learning with an initial emphasis on literacy. The MPA regards the learning teams as key to developing greater instructional capacity at the school level and, thus, to continued school improvement. At the outset of the 2002–2003 school year, the partnership has instituted these learning teams in every one of the 165 Milwaukee Public Schools. The size and composition of a learning team varies from school to school depending on the school type, its personnel, and the assets and problems that exist in the school community. At a minimum, the learning teams are composed of the principal, the literacy coach, and one or more teachers centrally involved in developing and monitoring the school's education or action plan. In some cases, additional members have included other school leaders, individuals with expertise in literacy, and parents or members of the community. The MPA's intent, however, is to encourage the learning team to be relatively small, as it meets on a weekly basis (at least initially) to engage in the tasks identified above and to ensure continuing progress toward having every student on grade level.

Strategy 3: Professional Development   To have all adults in the schools and across the district participate in continuous learning as members of a community of learners that focuses on results, improved student learning, and utilization of the Balanced Literacy Framework across all content areas.

Priority three is focused on providing ongoing, comprehensive professional development for staff to ensure student success, and is a natural progression from the first two priorities, and necessary for their long-term success. The professional development opportunities are being targeted at literacy specialists, literacy coaches, learning teams, building staff, MPS students, and district-level support staff. What follows is a list of activities carried out by the working group for this priority during the summer of 2002, which provides a sense of the real nitty-gritty work undertaken to prepare to implement priority three:

- Researched successful training models in other large urban school districts and conducted site visits.
- Developed a job description for the position of literacy coach to be placed in every MPS School.
- Identified six highly skilled individuals to serve as literary specialists who will be responsible for training and supporting school-based literacy coaches.
- Developed and communicated the selection process for literary coaches at the school level.
- Developed training models for literacy specialists, literacy coaches, and school learning teams.
- Conducted a Principals' Institute as part of the Leadership Academy focusing on on balanced literacy.
- UWM's Summer School offered courses on balanced literacy for MPS teachers and administrators. UWM also provided tuition waivers for these courses.
- Conducted four-day cognitive coaching training for literacy specialists and coaches.
- Conducted training sessions for literacy coaches and learning teams before the start of the 2002–2003 school year.

Based on the work conducted to implement this priority, during the Summer 2002, these are some of the goals/activities underway or poised to start:

- Summer and school year training for literacy coaches, requiring the use of classroom library materials, books for learning teams, books for teacher study groups, and action research;
- Summer/fall training and monthly professional development for learning teams;
- Ongoing training for utilizing online resources for specialists and coaches;
- Ongoing literacy training for literacy specialists and professional development specialists through contracting with national and local experts for consulting services;
- School-based teacher collaboration and classroom observation; and
- Ongoing use of technological tools for classroom instruction and for professional development.

Strategy 4: Assessing, Monitoring, and Developing Strategies to Improve Student Achievement   A plan will be developed to monitor and report progress of students at the student, classroom, and district levels.

The main purpose of developing a plan to collect, assess, monitor, and report student progress was to make results available for use by classroom teachers, schools, and families of MPS in advancing balanced literacy. Underscoring the significant educational benefits of assessment and monitoring—such as determining student progress on learning critical content, basing instructional decisions on judgments about student learning, and comparing results of student assessment based on standardized or state-level assessments with those at the classroom level—is the 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) titled by the Bush Administration: *No Child Left Behind*. Title I of this act focuses on improving academic achievement in high poverty schools. This new law requires, among other things, that *all* students make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and that such progress be reported by race, poverty, English Language Learners (ELL), and disabilities. The working group for priority four, thus, developed a user-friendly report format to be used by classroom teachers, schools, and families. In developing this report, the working group was mindful of the following considerations: to make available to families multiple language versions of the report through individual schools; to ensure that the family report be available directly to the individual family through a print version, but that class and school reports be accessible through the web; and, to align the progress report with other priorities of the MPA. Titled "The MPA Family Report" and addressed to the parent or guardian, it includes sections such as, "Current Performance," "Language Arts," "Reading," and "Math." Each of the content areas is further explicated by sub-headings: "This Test Measures the Following," "Areas Where Your Child Performed Well," "Areas Where Your Child Needs Further Help," and "Overall Trend." The report also lists "Tools & Resources," a "Message from the Principal," and a section addressed to the parent/guardian: "How You Can Help."

The working group charged with implementing priority four also carried out the following activities:
- Contracted with an outside source to build data collection methods;
- Implemented, in 90 percent of elementary and middle schools, a new Student Promotion System to record and report proficiency levels on classroom-based assessments and trained these schools in the new system; and
- Completed district models of classroom assessments at all grade levels in the areas of English language arts, science, mathematics, and social studies.

Strategy 5: Tutoring and Family Literacy   Tutoring and adult/family education programs will focus on improving achievement of MPS students in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Priority five acknowledges the critical role played by family and community in improving student achievement and seeks to train and involve families and the larger community in ensuring that all students are at or above grade level. This priority's plan includes curriculum development, volunteer recruitment and training, and parent literacy activities. Three major strategies were employed to put this plan into action: (1) provide a tutor, from the community, for every student in need of academic support; (2) provide resources for parents/guardians to assist students; and, (3) provide tutors, students, and parents with the technology skills needed to support these efforts.

The implementation of this priority over the 2002–2003 school year took the form of selecting elementary, middle, and high schools in the districts and conducting appropriate activities for each group of schools. For example, activities for middle schools included making available after school access to computerized instructional programs, recruiting student outreach motivators to retain students in after schools tutorial programs, and recruiting and training community volunteers to assist students in computerized instruction programs. Another major aspect of this priority is to engage with tutoring and volunteer programs already in operation in the district, e.g., through faith-based/community-based organizations, and coordinate with them to advance the balanced literacy framework.

How the MPA Fits into UWM's Vision and Mission

More than 40 years ago the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee was founded on the belief that if metropolitan Milwaukee were to be great, it would need a great, urban public university. In the minds of the many business and community leaders who supported it, UWM was to be "Milwaukee's university." The notion that the university is a "powerful partner" and an active participant in the life and livelihood of the community fits well with the history and traditions of the two institutions that joined to form UWM in 1956. Both Wisconsin State College-Milwaukee and the University of Wisconsin Extension Center in Milwaukee had strong academic programs linked to community involvement.

The idea of university service to the community was also firmly embedded in what has come to be called "The Wisconsin Idea." No one knows who first coined the term or its defining phrase—"the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state"—but it shaped the mission of all the campuses of the University of Wisconsin System. From the early years of the twentieth century to today, the Wisconsin Idea has embodied the university's mission of research and outreach, as well as teaching, to provide information, policy, and service to our state and community.

Using that vision as a marker of our institution's ambitions, The Milwaukee Idea evolved from the voices of literally hundreds of campus and community citizens who together worked tirelessly over weeks and months to deliver The Milwaukee Idea (TMI)—a vision of how the boundaries of UWM can more fully become the boundaries of metropolitan Milwaukee. This meant envisioning "a new kind of

university," according to Gordon Gee, Chancellor of Vanderbilt University, "an institution that is intimately connected to its community but also responsive to the many demands made on it nationally and internationally" (Gee 1998).

With this belief working as a governing idea, UWM launched a major visioning process that included a "committee of 100 people, working 100 days," to craft a new twenty-first century, urban manifestation of The Wisconsin Idea for our institution. This process of development involved plenary sessions, affinity group discussions, planning documents, strategic activities, and ultimately the launch of over 15 district "first ideas," representing UWM's commitment to education and the arts, environment and health, and economic development. In short, we planned so that we could use the triadic mission of teaching, research and outreach, as Clark Kerr implores, "in service to society" (Kerr 1991). These first ideas had other common attributes. Each idea had to be partnership based. Rather than ideas flowing from the university in search of a community in which to test the idea, partnership discussion preceded idea planning. Not only was each idea spun from collaborative community discussions, each idea had to serve an obvious condition in the problem-rich environment we know as cities. Ideas had to be cross disciplinary in nature, and measurable in terms of collectively agreed upon outcomes or community impacts. Each idea had to foster our intent to celebrate, use, and learn from our diversities—of race and gender, ethnicity and lifestyle, and difference of opinion. If followed, these criteria would constitute an acceptable and supportable Milwaukee Idea.

Among many of the ideas put forward in our "3E" design (education, environment and economy), several "first ideas" emerged relative to our intent to partner more directly with our urban public school district. This article documents the major idea—The Milwaukee Partnership Academy. But the work of the MPA is enabled by other first ideas and structural innovations at UWM. Looking inwardly at what we would need to do to refine our curriculum and more thoughtfully align our instructional sequence to our urban mission, we tackled aspects of our general education requirements, those courses required of all freshman and sophomores prior to matriculation into a major area of study. Thus, the Milwaukee Idea called for the creation of an alternative general studies curriculum to bridge the foundational disciplines of sociology, psychology, the sciences, literature, and philosophy with the lived experience of being in and of the community. Through service learning and access to team teaching, both from campus and community faculty, diverse student cohorts experience their introductory liberal studies through a community-based lens and through a portfolio of community arts experiences that strive to redefine what it means to study in Milwaukee. We affectionately call this new experience "Cultures and Communities," explored in more depth in the article by Jay, et al., in this issue.

In order to ensure that UWM realized the comprehensive commitment necessary to sustain such an ambitious partnership, as chancellor I appointed a chancellor's deputy to coordinate our cross-campus efforts. This individual also serves as dean of the school of education; however, as chancellor's deputy his role extends across all schools and colleges in their interest and commitment to the education of teachers and school

renewal. Accordingly, the chancellor's deputy is charged to create a plan for sustaining our education partnership, convening other deans of colleges that are involved in our P–16 initiative, convening heads of schools and colleges of education within metropolitan Milwaukee who prepare teachers and work in K–12 settings (of which there are over a dozen), and cultivating the superintendents of the surrounding suburban school districts that rim Milwaukee to engender their support and participation in our collective teacher education and school renewal agenda. We are also served by membership in several important national partnerships, like the Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education and the Holmes Partnership, as well as the Urban Educator Corps of the Great Cities' Universities. The chancellor's deputy attends all meetings of the MPA Board and the MPA implementation team to ensure that university-wide collaboration is on-going. Further, our Title II partnership grants have allowed for the recruitment and development of a cadre of expert teacher leaders from MPS, who we call "teachers in residence." This year UWM also recruited two superintendents in residence and plans to launch with MPA a cohort of principles in residence, and an internal iteration of this concept, which we will be calling "faculty in residence."

Beyond these steps, it must be noted that, as chancellor, I am deeply engaged in this agenda. I am a member of the MPA executive committee, serving on a rotational basis as chair of the MPA board meetings. I work directly with each member of the executive committee, and have assisted in recruiting many members of the larger MPA board, including the directors of the Milwaukee Public Museum and Public Library, the presidents of other postsecondary institutions in our community, and the heads of significant community foundations. I am also a liaison to the offices of both the state superintendent of public instruction and the lieutenant governor. I serve along with the executive committee in a fund raising role as well, monitoring federal grant and contract opportunities, and raising funds among local foundations, corporations, and individuals. All of us on the executive committee give considerable time to the public relations aspect of the MPA, giving print media interviews, television and public conference appearances, speeches, print commentary, and provide general information to our various constituencies. UWM also connected the MPA agenda to its requests for state funding of the Milwaukee Idea, and procured in the last biennium budget substantial funds for expanding the number, quality, and diversity of our teacher education graduates in order to better serve Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin.

Challenges and Opportunities

Three years from the date we first announced our initiative, the partnership is increasingly coming into focus. On May 13, 2002, the MPA was publicly introduced to the community as part of a sweeping "Call to Action," and implementation of its various goals went into effect immediately. The theme for the May 13 launch was "Sharing in Student Success." The presence, at the "Call to Action" day, of various members and leaders of education, business, labor, political, faith-based, civic, and community organizations underscored the significance of this growing partnership of a broad-based set of key community groups that have collectively assumed

responsibility, and hold themselves accountable, for achieving quality teaching and learning in our urban school district.

Talking to the local newspaper about the MPA, Sam Carmen, Executive Director of the MTEA, observed: "Is it soup yet? No, it's not soup. But I would say that it's simmering…." And perhaps the most important sign of the partnership's organic growth is that we have learned to think and work as a team. As partners we have learned to be attentive to the inter-dependence of our work, which has led us to constructively negotiate between commitment to our vested and mutual interests. We've learned to make the time to sit down together frequently, troubleshooting when implementation runs into a snag, bringing along local foundations' interest and commitment, inviting elected officials to the table, working to combine forces with a broad array of community groups with already operational tutoring programs, periodically briefing the local press and, most importantly, spreading the word and taking the long view.

To the extent that these strategies unfold successfully, and ultimately renew teaching and learning, both in the public schools and in how we prepare teachers for fulfilling careers in a *systemic* fashion, several key factors—especially from the perspective of UWM—will have made the difference:

1. An Audacious Goal   The Milwaukee Idea and the Milwaukee Partnership Academy are both driven by "audacious goals" as defined in *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (1994). What authors Jerry Porras and James Collins concluded in their study of 18 successful companies was that these companies were not being guided by charismatic men and women as much as by a strong set of ideas; that these companies were not so much focusing on reengineering as on vision. Moreover, these companies preserve their core values while they simultaneously stimulate forward progress. In short, they live to achieve "BHAGs: Big Hairy Audacious Goals." The Milwaukee Idea is driven by a riveting philosophy, and, frankly, one relatively unique to the archives of most states. The fact that the Wisconsin Idea is well articulated, spoken to in the State's Blue Book of Facts about Wisconsin's governance, typically invoked by the general public, and has been around for over 150 years, bodes well for the Milwaukee Idea. Both share an inspiring and memorable mantra, "the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of—in the case of UWM—the community and beyond." In the same sense, we are hopeful that the ambitious teaching and learning agenda of the MPA will resonate with our various publics as well. Undoubtedly, our commitment to every student being at or above grade level in reading, writing, and math, and our ambitious intent to increase our graduation rates substantially will transfer locally to "No Child left Behind," the epitome of the big, hairy, audacious goal!

2. An All-University Agenda   The continuing success of the MPA will partly depend upon how well UWM is able to make teacher education an all-university concern and commitment. Interestingly, the partnership itself has created precisely the impetus and context the university needed to position teacher preparation as a central and shared

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responsibility. As already mentioned, as Chancellor I took certain steps relative to making teacher education an all-university agenda: appointing a chancellor's deputy for education partnerships; recruiting "teachers-in-residence" (TIRs) who also serve as clinical faculty and boundary spanners between UWM, MPS, and our other partners; and seeking legislative support to increase the number of teacher-candidates in our baccalaureate program.

3. Active Collaboration   Clearly, if change is to be systemic, dynamic and on going, then collaborating and partnering cannot be considered optional. But, collaboration— on campus or with the community—is both critical and difficult. Within institutions, a major challenge to achieving well-rounded quality teaching and learning can be our own institutional separatism. Schools of education often prepare teachers without adequate interaction or engagement with disciplines in the arts and sciences. Furthermore, veteran expert instructors in teacher education are often active only at the school site, not in the design and development of the entire teacher education program.

Institutional cultures can also impede collaborations. K–12 schools, often controlled by conditions outside the classroom, such as getting students to school on time, feeding them on schedule, and moving them from class to class—"the bus, the banana, and the bell"—can find it difficult to plan and act outside these constraints. Universities face their own constraints—we call them "time, term, traffic, and tenure." However, these intricately connected sites—the university and the school district— must be able to collaborate actively to bring about change for reform. Collaboration, then, also means finding ways to work through the barriers that define our daily work and keep us from working together effectively. While it is perhaps too early to declare victory on this aspect of the MPA, at least we have seen the enemy, and know it is we.

4. Going to Scale for Systemic Change   When I arrived at UWM in 1998 and began to pursue school-university relationships, I discovered UWM already had more than 144 existing and active partnership projects with MPS. Activities spanned departments and disciplines and included faculty, staff, and students from a host of schools and colleges, as well as numerous partners from the teaching and professional staff of MPS. Faculty and staff from the School of Nursing, for example, were working with community health centers and local school building staffs. What was not in place, however, was a systemic effort. Consequently, there did not seem to be much scope for going to scale and ushering in systemic change.

Too many school-university partnerships remain boutique in nature, dependent on the enthusiasm and interests of isolated faculty or departments. It is better to mobilize discreet projects for the good of the whole, show returns, and institutionalize efforts. The MPA is not in the business of curtailing boutique efforts; rather, it seeks to create momentum for broad change and to mobilize individual collaborations in ways that will have long-term payoff for both the university and the schools.

5. Focusing on Outcomes   If one end of the continuum of the process of transformational change is "vision," then the other end is "outcomes;" we need to keep

our eyes on both, and preferably at the same time. The MPA has to make sure that its vision of quality teaching and learning, with the initial priority to have every student at or above grade level, translates into actual gains in the growth of literacy rates for students and retention figures for teachers. Since such an outcome is neither easy nor quick, we need to keep reminding ourselves of the network of needs and services that inextricably binds the partners together. In the case of UWM's membership in the MPA, we have to keep our sight on the fact 65 percent of the teachers and other professional staff in the MPS holds one or more degrees or certificates from UWM. We are, to a great measure, responsible for the quality of teaching that, in turn, impacts student learning.

Conclusion

The Wisconsin Idea grew out of a very powerful thought: to rethink boundaries so that the different constituencies of the state are not isolated from each other, but rather work as extensions of each other. Inherent in this idea is the equally compelling assumption that a merging of boundaries brings with it a sharing of results and responsibilities. The Milwaukee Partnership Academy builds on this tradition, creating a forum that invites all citizens to work toward an education system without walls and boundaries for all. Are there still many questions that need to be addressed, problems that need to be resolved, snags to be overcome, and a lot of work to be done? Yes, and yes. But our best bet is that what we already have underway is a collective partnership that grows into its goals and evolves with them. Since the MPA is larger than any one entity or person, it is best equipped to face the many challenges of teacher education reform and school renewal.

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