Appendix C
Case Study of University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

Overview

The University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM), located in the state’s largest city, is the only urban campus within the University of Wisconsin system. UWM has approximately 24,500 students, with 149 degree programs in 11 schools and colleges. In addition, the School of Continuing Education serves more than 47,000 people per year.

The School of Education has five departments: Administrative Leadership, Educational Policy and Community Studies, Educational Psychology, Exceptional Education, and Curriculum and Instruction. The last two departments are primarily responsible for the teacher preparation program. In the fall of 2002, the School of Education had 79 full time faculty and 1,998 undergraduates, 499 master’s candidates, and 111 doctoral candidates. UWM is the only institution in the state that offers a Ph.D. in urban education.

Each year, approximately one half the approximately 1,250 students enrolled in the teacher education program are participating in the student teaching programs, which average 30 hours per week for 20 weeks, supervised by 48 full-time or part-time faculty. The School of Education’s 2003 entering class, numbering 305, was the largest entering class in 30 years.

In July 2003, the UWM School of Education was selected as one of seven new recipients of a five-year, $5-million grant from the Carnegie Corporation to improve teacher education. The grant is part of the Teachers for a New Era initiative, designed to research and demonstrate the most effective, evidence-based methods of preparing teachers for today’s classrooms.

UWM’s proposal for the grant highlighted collaborative teacher preparation efforts within both the university and the community. The School of Education partners with the College of Letters and Science and the Peck School of the Arts at UWM to improve teachers’ academic preparation in content areas. In announcing the grant, Dr. Alfonzo Thurman, dean of the School of Education, said, “Improving teacher education is a university-wide effort.” Richard Meadows, Dean of UWM’s College of Letters and Science supported this statement, noting “We’ve been a partner with the School of Education for more than 20 years. This grant will give us additional resources to continue those efforts. We’re very happy to be an active part of this project.”

Leadership and Partnerships With the Urban Community

Community-university partnerships are at the core of UWM’s urban mission. Leadership for these partnerships starts at the highest level. Dr. Nancy Zimpher, former chancellor, was instrumental in creating The Milwaukee Idea, the university’s initiative to forge vital and long-lasting community-university partnerships that enhance the quality of life for all. …Since its inception in 1999, The Milwaukee Idea has brought together hundreds of people from the community and the university in partnerships that address
challenges in education, the environment, health and economic development. (UWM School of Education, 2003c)

Named UWM chancellor in the summer of 1998, Dr. Zimpher helped to develop a similar community partnership in The Ohio State’s Columbus neighborhoods as dean of the College of Education and executive dean of the professional colleges there. When she came to UWM, in her first campus speech, Dr. Zimpher offered her vision of the power of community-campus partnerships; “It’s not just us serving the city. It’s not just the city serving us. It is the notion of together building a city and university that are the heart of metropolitan Milwaukee. This is the essence of [what we will call] The Milwaukee Idea.” In a speech to the faculty in September 2003, Dr. Robert Greenstreet, interim chancellor, stated that he intends to continue supporting The Milwaukee Idea and that the institution will move “full-speed ahead” with its initiatives, including its community partnership initiatives.

One example of The Milwaukee Idea in action is the Milwaukee Partnership Academy (MPA), the university’s partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). Supported initially in 1999 by an $8-million U.S. Department of Education Title II Teacher Quality grant, the MPA was created as “an urban P–16 council for quality teaching and learning.” Addressing systematic issues across educational institutions, this citywide organization is dedicated to the enhancement of teaching and learning in MPS. The specific goal is to assure that every child is performing at or above grade level in reading, writing, and mathematics. Priorities include, among others, implementing a comprehensive literacy agenda, creating school-based learning teams to foster data-based reform at the school level, aligned professional development for teachers and administrators, citywide tutoring, and data-based decision making.

The MPA is a system-to-system collaborative reform model rather than a partnership between the university and just a few selected urban MPS schools. As a communitywide effort to revitalize urban schools across Milwaukee, seven institutional leaders make up the MPA’s original Executive Committee: the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, MPS, the Milwaukee Area Technical College, the Private Industry Council, UWM, the Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association, and the Milwaukee Board of School Directors. An additional business partner, the Greater Milwaukee Committee, was added to the Executive Committee in August 2003.

The MPA is an active, hands-on organization governed by a unique multipart structure. The Executive Committee is made up of the chief leaders of the eight major partner organizations. Meetings are led alternately by the superintendent of MPS, William Andrekopoulos; the executive director of the Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association, Sam Carmen; and the interim chancellor of UWM, Robert Greenstreet. It is important to note that the culture of the partnership is such that the leaders of the primary partners do not send substitutes or representatives to the meetings of the Executive Committee or the monthly board meetings; they attend themselves. The MPA also includes a board of directors, made up of broad representation from the metropolitan community; representation from other local (private) institutions of higher education; the deans of the School of Education, College of Letters and Sciences, and the Peck School of the Arts at UWM; board affiliates, who represent a wide range of community organizations; and the Implementation Team, which is the action arm of the MPA. The

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Executive Committee meets biweekly; the entire MPA membership meets monthly; and the Implementation Team meets weekly to do the hard work of translating the MPA goals into a sustained plan of action to improve education for the children of Milwaukee. The Implementation Team manages a network of work groups that also meet weekly to carry out the various priorities. Reflecting how important the organization is considered by the state, the lieutenant governor or another representative of the governor attended most meetings until a change of administration, and the state superintendent of public instruction attends all meetings herself, only rarely sending a representative from her office.

According to the MPA Web site,

As this structure becomes institutionalized in the Milwaukee community, the goal is to ensure responsiveness to various community stakeholders, create an annual focus for partnership activities, and provide a stable financial basis for increased teacher and other needs in the Milwaukee Public Schools. (Milwaukee Partnership Academy, 2002a)

Through the MPA, UWM takes a holistic view of education by helping the K–12 school system prepare the students who will attend UWM in the future, thus raising the quality of students in the university. The community also benefits economically from a well-educated population. As all MPS schools begin to improve from the partnership, UWM can draw on a larger pool of K–12 partner schools in which to prepare all of its student teachers. Equally important, the MPA, and especially its Implementation Team, provides a shared forum for discussing and decision making about all aspects of how resources are deployed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, technology, which, like other issues, formerly was discussed in isolation in the district, is now discussed in the context of the priorities of the MPA and in relation to achieving its goals, with representatives of all of the lead partners at the table, simultaneously providing input and learning more about each aspect of the issues at hand. As a more public forum for discussion of and action on how education is carried out, the MPA is creating a new organizational culture around education in Milwaukee.

In addition to the Title II grant, several other grants were awarded to UWM and MPS in 1999 as the MPA was getting started, including a Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers to Use Technology (PT3) implementation grant and a PT3 catalyst grant, a Title II recruitment grant and two GEAR-UP grants, totaling $26 million inclusive of the Title II grant. While these initial grants provided the catalyst for the partners to initiate the MPA, today the MPA is becoming an institutionalized way of “doing business” in education in Milwaukee. It has focused the priorities of the community with regard to education and has begun the hard work of aligning human and fiscal resources to meet these priorities. Finally, grant writing is aligned with these priorities as well.

In addition to the nearly $26 million in grants that initiated the partnership, in the past year the MPA has garnered an additional $36 million, including the Carnegie Teachers for a New Era grant, a $20-million Mathematics Partnership Grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), and a Small High School grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The NSF grant will support improving mathematics teaching and learning across the PK–16 continuum and represents a communitywide partnership designed to improve
mathematics teaching and learning, and to reduce the number of students who require remedial mathematics at the postsecondary level.

The partnership continues its work in system-to-system reform despite the change in the MPS superintendent in August of 2002 and the change in the chancellor at UWM in the fall of 2003. The MPA recently received a state award from the Wisconsin PK–16 Leadership Council as an exemplary practice partnership in the state. UWM is a full partner in all MPA initiatives and activities. One area of special note is the Teacher-in-Residence Program, aimed at creating stronger links between the teacher preparation program and classroom practice and developing teacher leadership skills in and retention of veteran urban teachers. Cohorts of MPS teachers spend two years on special assignment to UWM, working in every phase of the teacher preparation program, including the College of Letters and Science and the two-year urban pre-teacher education program at the local community college. In the first cohort, there were 19 teachers in residence, and 13 MPS teachers are in the current cohort. They have helped align the teacher education curriculum with content standards in the MPS schools, worked with student teachers in clinical practice experiences, assisted with school-based learning teams throughout the city, participated directly on the MPA Implementation Team, and provided input into the Professional Support Portal, the district’s electronic mentoring initiative. Moreover, they have used the opportunities available at the university to gain important skills in technology in their development as teacher leaders, including video-editing capabilities.

At the inception of the MPA, the following vision of teacher education reform was offered on the MPA Web site in conjunction with the Title II grant:

The overarching goal of the Title II Grant is to develop a comprehensive teacher education prototype preparing K–12 teachers for high need schools. This prototype will draw from best practices and enabling 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 will intersect with school and community renewal. The prototype calls for major, aligned changes in the letters and sciences, professional preparation, and entry into the profession so that the outcome is a more coherent, protracted and potent form of teacher preparation. (Milwaukee Partnership Academy, 2002b)

The Urban Mission of the School of Education

UWM has another urban visionary to provide leadership for this partnership in the person of Dr. Alfonzo Thurman, dean of the School of Education since 2001 and the chancellor’s deputy for education partnerships. He has led his faculty in what he calls a shared commitment to meeting the needs of today’s multicultural society and students from diverse backgrounds. He believes the college should work with the entire district. In an e-mail, he states, “We are looking systemically at changing, first of all, the way the district teaches literacy. Our work in schools is to implement the comprehensive literacy initiative, and much of our focus is in the professional development of teachers, guiding the work of the literacy coaches and the leadership teams and
working to sustain that work through the Milwaukee Partnership Academy” (A Thurman, personal communication, n.d.)

The School of Education’s mission statement confirms the centrality of its urban focus:

The mission of the UWM School of Education is to contribute to the improvement of learning environments in a multicultural, urban society through the preparation of professionals for school and community settings, the production of high quality research, and service to educational and community organizations.

Our teaching, research, and service are responsive to the needs of the community and reflect a visible commitment to diversity, equity and excellence. (UWM School of Education, 2003a)

Students of color make up approximately 77 percent of the 106,000 students served in the MPS’s 160 schools. In contrast, approximately 70 percent of the teaching force is white (Hains, Maxwell, Tiezzi, Simpson, Ford, & Pugach, 1997). To bring a more diverse teaching force into the local schools, the UWM School of Education has sought to expand its number of students of color, growing from 9 percent in the early ’90s to 18 percent in 2003. Several specialized grant programs have also addressed the teacher diversity challenge. The Milwaukee Pathways to Teaching Careers Program, supported by the DeWitt Wallace-Readers Digest Fund, has supported bringing paraprofessionals and emergency licensed teachers through the teacher education program at UWM. An earlier federally funded program, EXCEL, supported the recruitment of underrepresented populations interested in working in early-childhood education.

UWM has had a long history of commitment to preparing its students for urban schools. To enhance the education of teachers who are well prepared to teach in an urban setting, the School of Education created the Collaborative Teacher Education Program for Urban Communities. Starting in the early ’90s and continuing over a number of years, faculty worked to renew this commitment and create a framework for reforming early childhood, primary/middle, and special education programs, with a renewed focus on urban teaching and learning, and a substantial integration of special and general education. At that point, special education became a postbaccalaureate-only option; primary/middle regular education has both an undergraduate and postbaccalaureate option. The first cohort of students in the special education program entered in 1996, and the first cohort in the regular primary/middle program entered in 1997. Annually, approximately 250 students complete their degrees and certification. Each year, UWM students make up more than 40 percent of all new teachers in MPS. Retention data are available only for paraprofessionals from underrepresented groups who were part of the Collaborative Teacher Education Program for Urban Communities; these data indicate that more than 90 percent of graduates who are paraprofessionals have retained their positions in MPS for five years. This is a commendable record of retention when compared to national data showing that 46 percent of all teachers leave teaching by their fifth year of teaching (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003). Documentation of retention of UWM graduates in MPS will be part of the Carnegie Teachers for a New Era initiative.
Undergraduate students or students who enter special education preservice programs from the undergraduate program at UWM have had a pre-education experience. Students enter the program as members of a cohort of 20–25 students and proceed through their preparation with the same set of students. For undergraduates, the urban focus begins before students are formally accepted to the education program. Students who declare a major in education enroll in the required School and Urban Community block, a combined course and introductory field experience taken in the freshman or sophomore year. The course, Introduction to Urban Teaching, with its emphasis on urban teaching and social justice, provides students with an early familiarization with education in an urban environment. Through the course, potential education students are judged whether or not they are ready to commit to working in the urban education program, and these judgments form part of the admissions requirements to the School of Education. Each year, a small number of students decide not to pursue teaching in an urban school as a result of their introductory experience.

The UWM graduates and student teachers interviewed in this case visit report that the School of Education’s seven core values, which have a strong commitment to equity and social justice, form an excellent foundation for teaching urban students. They learn to examine the varied cultures, beliefs, and perspectives that students bring to the classroom, and strive to create lessons that address equitably the needs of all students. Students quickly learn to recognize the challenges. As one student noted, “We need social work experience. How far do we go with this particular child, what can we do to help family, what resources could I draw on in the community, etc.?“

In addition to their professional preparation, undergraduate students in the primary/middle program enroll in two 18-credit academic minors (called focus areas) in the College of Letters and Science: one in mathematics or science and one in humanities or social studies. During the professional program in the junior and senior years, students participate in a teaching experience in an MPS school each semester selected to match the goals of their academic block. Each semester students participate in a reflective seminar that revisits the program’s core values, and in which they reflect on their learning experiences and upon the roles they will undertake as urban educators.

The College of Education at UWM has chosen to partner with the entire MPS district rather than a selected number of schools; therefore, students have field experiences throughout the city. It is, according to Thurman, a two-way partnership, with the university learning from the school and community at the same time it works to address the needs of that community.

**State Regulations and Impact**

Teacher certification in Wisconsin, like that in many states, has been impacted by recent teacher quality legislation. The new law states that a content test will be required for those license applicants who complete programs after August 31, 2004. Secondary teachers must pass a test in their content area and primary/middle education majors must pass a single test covering language arts, math, science, and social studies.
The law also requires that in order to be certified, prospective teachers provide a portfolio as evidence of their impact on student learning. The portfolios are assessed at least three times during the teacher education program. Showcase portfolios have been used for several years in the primary/middle teacher education program. With the new state legislation, portfolios have expanded to become developmental records of progress as students move through the teacher education program. Beginning in the introductory Schooling and Urban Community block as part of the UWM teacher education admission process, portfolios will include developing understandings of the program’s core values with appropriate artifacts and personal goal setting and reflection. Portfolios will be reviewed at several points during a student’s program to ensure that appropriate progress is being made. With the new certification requirements, portfolios take on added importance.

Due to the nature of the partnership, discussions of electronic portfolios—and how they relate to new state requirements for individual professional development plans as a means of advancing through the newly developed career ladder within new state regulations—take place in the MPA Implementation Team. This means that a natural feedback loop exists to connect the schools and the university as they both work to meet new state expectations. Because the Implementation Team meets weekly, communication is enhanced significantly regarding all aspects of the work, technology among them.

**Focus on Technology**

Both former Chancellor Zimpher and Dean Thurman have been supportive of technology initiatives and have been active in seeking grants to build the human and technological infrastructure necessary to ensure that those who learn to teach at UWM bring to the classrooms they enter an understanding of technology’s power to improve the learning opportunities of all children. Thurman, in fact, might be described as a technology enthusiast. He is concerned about the challenge of upgrading technology in the School of Education at a time of declining budgets, and stays abreast of the latest technological tools and their implications for his program. For example, at the time of the case study visit, Dean Thurman and a group of faculty were exploring the potential of handheld organizers with keyboard attachments for professional use, considering how tools like this might provide flexible, low-cost professional and instructional technology options for faculty.

UWM’s urban teaching focus is reflected in, and supported by, the College of Education’s use of technology. In 1999 the UWM’s Technology and Urban Teacher Project was funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s PT3 program, with a three-year, $1.3-million implementation grant. The grant has been an important catalyst for a focus on instructional technology in the School of Education, in its work with the College of Letters and Science, and in the work with the MPS. With a final no-cost phase extending the project over the 2002–03 academic year, the challenge, according to Marleen Pugach, co-principle investigator of the grant, has been “to institutionalize the grant with hard money.” In addition, UWM was awarded a $25,000 grant for the 2002–03 year as part of a statewide, UW System PT3 catalyst grant to pilot the use of electronic portfolios. Prior to these grants, instructional technology was virtually nonexistent in the teacher education program.
The PT3 implementation grant made it possible to hire the School of Education’s first instructional technology coordinator, D.J. Himes, who previously worked in K–12 schools as a teacher who modeled technology use, and also as a school network administrator. Originally funded by PT3, the college has continued to support this position with institutional funds since the PT3 grant ended, which is a significant indicator of technology support in a time in which faculty and staff hiring has been frozen due to budget cuts.

The UWM teacher education program requires student teachers to create instructional technology projects that enhance the curriculum they are teaching. Although some recent graduates interviewed for this case study described this as an “add-on” requirement, others felt differently. For example, at an orientation session for student teachers, a returning student teacher on the panel told incoming students, “If you do nothing else, do the technology project; every one of the principals I interviewed with asked me about that and, I was so glad I had that project in my portfolio!”

Learning about technology occurs in two required one-credit technology courses in a lab environment, in groups of 20–25. The technology courses themselves, taught by Himes, cover application software (e.g., HyperStudio, KidPix, Inspiration, spreadsheets, and databases), tools (digital cameras), and Web site explorations. These courses are carefully coordinated with the methods courses and field experiences in which students are enrolled during any given semester, and applications of technology are required within them. Student teachers and recent graduates interviewed for this case study had mixed reactions to the required courses. These included a second-grade teacher in her first year of teaching, a student currently completing her student teaching in the fourth grade, a recently certified graduate in his first semester of teaching fifth grade, a student in the special education primary program who will begin teaching in the fall and who completed the regular primary/middle program, a second-grade student teacher at Dover Elementary School, a student teacher in the fourth grade at Hartford University School, and a UWM graduate who began as a paraprofessional and is now fully certified as an elementary teacher.

Most felt the stand-alone, one-credit courses were too limited, too much of an overview, and not enough to give them a firm grounding in using technology in the classroom. Several, who appeared to be the more technologically sophisticated new teachers, wanted more depth, while the others agreed that it would be beneficial to add more technology training but “in small steps” in preparation for teaching, with more hands-on, targeted applications. Paraprofessionals interviewed during the case study school visits also felt the technology training went too fast for them. Without access to technology at home, and little support in the schools where they were already teaching, they often felt overwhelmed.

Students and graduates generally expressed a desire for information on how to use technology in a range of settings (e.g., to a whole group in a lab setting versus in a “technologically rich” classroom) and how to master the classroom-management skills needed for using technology in a variety of activities.

As found in the other case study sites, student teaching assignments are not necessarily made with technology-savvy teachers. Compounding the problem is the fact that decisions about
purchasing technology are completely decentralized in MPS and have been for several years, leaving principals basically on their own to make decisions to purchase hardware or to support human resources to manage networks and provide professional development. Therefore, the variability across schools is great, with no effort to raise the bar uniformly across schools or ensure that each school has technology-savvy teachers, teacher leaders, or principals. Further, until last year, several district barriers existed to the use of e-mail on the part of MPS teachers. Also, and paralleling what was found in other cases, supervising teachers are typically retired teachers who, by and large, are not trained with technology. The UWM graduates interviewed for the case study noted that once they were out of the university and teaching in the schools, they were on their own to solve their technology problems unless they had a personal relationship with the technology coordinator at UWM or another faculty member at the School of Education, or were in a school that was technology rich.

A pilot electronic portfolio project had been in effect for one semester at the time of the site visit, with a small number of students volunteering to participate. The project was designed in part to develop the content for teaching all students how to prepare electronic portfolios. Therefore, only a small number of students had developed electronic portfolios at the time of the visit. This pilot project provided initial experience and perspective on schoolwide adoption of portfolio software and its most important functions. Led by Dean Thurman, an effort is now underway to make decisions about the direction the entire school will take vis-a-vis electronic portfolios, in conjunction with the new state teacher education program regulations.

The Professional Support Portal Project, under development by MPS, is one effort to provide support for new teachers. The portal project is seen as a door-to-district resource. It was originally intended to be an extra source of support to supplement the face-to-face mentoring program, but budget cuts to the face-to-face mentoring programs mean the portal project is—at least temporarily—the only form of new teacher support. While this is unfortunate in terms of losing the important resource provided in personal, face-to-face mentoring, the online support system may offer, through technology, a link in terms of connecting new UWM graduates with their cohort peers and the School of Education faculty after graduation.

UWM faculty serve on the advisory committee for the portal and have provided significant input to the district regarding how the portal communicates what it means to teach in an urban context and what resources need to be available on the portal to address what it means to be a strong urban teacher. The portal was in a pilot phase during the 2002–03 year with limited availability and limited scope. Nevertheless, as a result of UWM’s involvement in the portal’s advisory committee, all UWM graduates new to the district were invited to participate in the pilot phase, which during 2002–03 included the use of a laptop. There was little discussion during the case visit of the portal project and its implications for supporting student teachers and recent graduates, but as the portal develops, UWM faculty have been asked to host chat rooms specifically on teaching in the urban context. Further, the portal has been addressed within the MPA Implementation Team as a means of opening up the dialogue concerning how it is framed and its potential use. And, through the Carnegie project, UWM will be developing electronic forums for the portal on the various academic content areas as a means for direct involvement of faculty in the College of Letters and Science and the Peck School of the Arts.
Modeling technology integration in methods courses and the arts and sciences—the “holy grail” for understanding the use of technology to support learning across the disciplines—is a goal yet to be fully achieved. Interviews with students reveal a wide variation among courses and professors. Some faculty use technology in their courses; others use very little. The use of technology for course materials and shared discussions is the most common application in university classes. Progress integrating technology projects in classes themselves has been greater in mathematics methods courses, and very good inroads are being made in literacy methods courses. Himes notes that it has been hard to impact faculty use of technology when there is a variety of part-time faculty and adjuncts teaching in the program. Newly hired faculty have been very responsive to integrating technology, and in the past year technology integration has increased substantially in literacy methods courses, as well as in the Introduction to Urban Teaching course. Unlike other institutions in these case studies, UWM’s School of Education has not made formal attempts to use the work of faculty “tech superstars” and model their work for others; rather, this is done informally, working with small groups of faculty. Another way to view this is that the instructional technology staff is scaffolding the technology development of new and interested faculty on an ongoing basis.

Several technology projects are described on the UWM School of Education (2003b) Web site for the 2001–02 academic year involving 17 faculty members in addition to those involved in PT3 projects. These range from a research project on the design and development of American Sign Language video-based objects and their impact on student learning to an investigation of the use of streamed video of best teaching practices in teaching secondary science for students with behavior and learning problems. Technology use among faculty for these projects is diffused across several program and projects, but they represent potential for increased modeling of technology use.

**Technology and Urban Partnerships**

Due to the unevenness of technology resources across MPS schools, students often find they will be working in schools with limited technology resources. As an initial part of student teaching, students conduct a technology inventory of the schools in which they practice, meet technology leaders in the school, and make plans for how to augment what is available if necessary. The PT3 grant has tried to address this concern. Using a no-cost extension to the PT3 grant, the School of Education purchased five student teaching technology kits that may be checked out and brought into schools where students are student teaching, in order to provide technology-delivered projects. The kits contain an iBook® with an external floppy drive and internal wireless network card, a digital camera and digital video camera, and appropriate instructional software. These kits are additional to several digital cameras, video cameras, and other hardware and software resources already purchased by the grant for UWM student and faculty use. In schools that are technology poor, it is often UWM student teachers who are modeling the use of technology to enhance instruction and who are locating technology resources that formerly went unused in the building.

A large percentage of the original PT3 grant funds went directly to the three MPS partner schools in the project (Hartford University School for Urban Exploration, Frances Starms Discovery Learning Center, and Congress Extended Year-Round School). Each of these schools is a
fieldwork and student teaching site for UWM teacher preparation students, and they all received technology support and inservice training from School of Education staff. They also got grants of $32,000 each year to support a half-time school-based technology consultant. This funding was leveraged by the partner schools in a number of ways, with each principal electing to use school funds to supplement the grant funding in order to make the position full time. With the conclusion of the PT3 grant, one of the three schools has kept the positions fully funded through their school budgeting. Others have arranged for part-time funding. UWM’s partnership with these schools also led to their securing additional technology-related grants that were written by one of the co-principle investigators of the UWM PT3 grant for a UW System competition.

**Three Schools, Three Different Kinds of Technology Partnerships**

The technology use observed in the partnership schools visited for this case study ranged from substantial to limited. These variations were confirmed in interviews with recent graduates and student teachers, who reported that each school’s culture determines how often computers and other technologies are used, and the ways in which technology use is valued. Overall, the students interviewed report that word processing remains the most common use of technology across all schools.

*Hartford Avenue University School for Urban Explorations.* This school illustrates how technology can support a comprehensive reform agenda. Although located just across the street from the UWM campus, Hartford previously had a reputation for low academic performance and difficult management issues. Dr. Cynthia Ellwood, the current principal, has headed a comprehensive reform effort to change the nature of the school and the performance of its students.

A K–8 school, Hartford has 630 students, of whom 66 percent receive free or reduced-priced lunch. The racial composition is 72 percent African American, 15 percent Caucasian, with the remaining students representing a variety of nationalities, as well as some international students, children of university faculty. When Dr. Ellwood came to Hartford five years ago, she was the fourth principal in three years. There had been substantial turnover among students and faculty, and the school was targeted for central office takeover. Dr. Ellwood focused on enhancing university connections and forging bonds between staff and the parent community. Today, the UWM staff describes Hartford as one of the best schools in the city, attracting children from the community around the university as well as typical students from around the city who can select it on a space-available basis.

Dr. Ellwood ascribed much of the turnaround at Hartford to the partnership with UWM. “Life-changing for us” is the way she described the impact of the UWM technology partnership. She recalled that five years ago “the school was in the dark ages, with little consciousness of technology and how it could be used. Now we are at the other end of the continuum, very much on the forefront.” With the PT3 grant funds, she was able to pay half the salary of a technology coordinator and paid the other half through school funds. She noted that the technology coordinator originally hired by the grant...
was a visionary in the way technology could be used to support learning. He wrote to teachers before he came and asked about what they want to do in their teaching—their goals and how he could help them. Before, teachers were not staying in computer room when they brought kids in; it was seen as an add-on. But he shared my conviction that technology should be a tool for academic learning. The staff identified their biggest staff-development need being technology training. He told them they’d get access to technology in their classrooms if they participated in his training. He got us Internet-compatible mobile laptops, and we saw immediate results: Kids were tripling the amount of research they were doing, teachers were assigning new kinds of activities, and we got a grant for a new iMac lab. (C. Ellwood, personal communication, n.d.)

The technology coordinator also worked with the science education department at UWM in securing a grant from the McDonald Foundation to put in wet labs, microscopes, and computers in the science room at Hartford. Although the original technology coordinator was there only a year (“hired away by a fancy private school,” according to Dr. Ellwood), technology enthusiasm remains high at Hartford. Through the additional grant with the university, Hartford received funds to purchase iBooks and high-level literacy software for students in Grades K–2. The school used this grant and school funds to purchase another four mobile carts, with 32 units on each floor. The grant provided some of the time for UWM’s technology staff to support their teachers informally, as well as formal staff-development programs for teachers in the summer and several afternoons during the school year.

In another university-Harford technology connection, the fourth-grade class is working with graduate-level film students from UWM on a regular basis. The Hartford students researched the early days of the civil rights movement and discovered that there was actually a young woman who preceded Rosa Parks in integrating public facilities in the South. Her story is a powerful one the children told in their film, which won an award in a statewide film festival. Now a middle-aged woman, this “unsung pioneer” has visited Hartford regularly and become a part of the school community.

Most of the teachers at Hartford who are ethnically diverse are UWM graduates. The student teachers interviewed for this case study were enthusiastic about the dynamic uses of technology across the curriculum they found in their field experiences at Hartford. In turn, the principal values the UWM student teachers because they bring a clear social-justice perspective with them when they come to Hartford and have skills that go beyond their technology expertise. “Technology is important, but philosophy is more important,” Dr. Ellwood states.

*Francis Starms Discovery Learning Center.* The second PT3 partnership school visited as a part of the case study visit, Starms is one of 10 year-round schools in the district. The school has nine weeks of classes, then three weeks off, throughout the calendar year. At the time of the case study visit, classes were not in session, so the observation was limited to an interview with Principal Martha Wheeler-Fair. The year-round schedule creates a logistical challenge for the university partnerships and student teaching, since it does not match the university’s schedule, but the School of Education believes the unique features of Starms make it a good partner school.
Family involvement is the hallmark of the Starms program, although only half the students come from the neighborhood, with the other half bussed in from throughout the city. Rather than grade-level classes, Starms has “family teams” (with full special education inclusion) made up of 30 to 32 students in each multiage family team, staffed by two teachers and an education assistant. At the intermediate grades, there are 40 to 45 students in each family team with special education teachers and interns supplementing the work of the two teachers.

Title I staff-development funds and the PT3 grant have supported university connections with inservice training in technology use. Starms has four to six computers in each family-team setting. There is also a computer lab for each age group (Grades 1–4 and 5–6), and a video link enables teleconferences with the MPS Spanish Immersion School. Students use a writing program as part of the work with the full-time literacy coach; the position of literacy coach was instituted as a goal of the MPA’s work. Starms moved from using technology as a “special,” where teachers would drop off students in a lab, to using technology to support required project presentations at the end of units of study. The grant provided staff development and, in particular, funded the continued services of a part-time instructor who was formerly funded by an early-childhood technology grant, as well as a network support teacher. A technology club for students was launched as part of the PT3 activities, and students took an active role in teaching others about technology use. Technology projects were presented at regular family meetings of the entire school. However, with budget reductions, upgrading equipment to stay up to date is a current challenge.

The principal, Martha Wheeler-Fair, is responsible for two other schools in addition to Starms. She has a number of paraprofessionals on staff, education assistants from the community who are in the process of getting their certification. She has found that her greatest challenge has been keeping staff at Starms, which experiences a 20-percent to 25-percent annual turnover rate. Wheeler-Fair attributes the high turnover to the challenge of finding staff able to work effectively with teaming and multiage inclusion classes. Despite these challenges, last year when Starms was placed on the list of schools in need of improvement, and letters were sent home to parents informing them of this status, no one pulled their children out. According to Wheeler-Fair, parents offered to help however they could and said, “We’re not moving our kids.”

Dover Elementary School. A different picture of technology use was seen at a third school visited for the case study. Although not a PT3 partnership school, Dover is another school regularly used for field placements of UWM students.

Dover faces a different set of challenges. Once a school of 500 students, Dover’s enrollment in 2003 had decreased to 380 students. According to Principal Jaclyn Laber, this neighborhood school is losing students to several parochial schools located within a few blocks of Dover. With MPS public school funding now supporting students who choose to attend private schools, Dover has lost almost one fourth of its neighborhood children. The resulting $200,000 funding lost by students attending other schools means that Dover can no longer support a science teacher, music teacher, physical education teacher, or a librarian. Dover has no technology specialist. Older computers, most of which were purchased up to nine years ago, are located in a top-floor media center/computer lab that receives little use. New computers for the lab had been ordered and
were slated to arrive shortly after the visit. While there is one computer per classroom, most have no Internet connection.

Dover is a direct-instruction school. This form of scripted instruction impacts technology use: Teachers do not seek out inquiry learning projects, and the principal believes there is little use for Internet research with young children. Because of the direct-instruction philosophy, teachers believe that there are limits to the ways that technology can be used to support their teaching, beyond some work in writing and skill drills. The use of technology in schools like Dover means that teacher preparation students there have a very different technology experience than they would in a technology-intensive, constructivist setting like Hartford. Student teachers at Dover often model what technology use can look like and stretch the use of local technology resources beyond what is normally done at the school.

Dover, and other direct-instruction schools, provide a special challenge for the School of Education. Direct instruction is becoming more popular in many urban school systems, MPS among them, and approximately 60 of the 120 elementary schools in the district are direct-instruction schools, with more coming on board each year due to pressure from the No Child Left Behind Act. This scripted approach to teaching reading fits well with the current testing and basic skills emphasis. Thus, despite the fact that the School of Education’s comprehensive literacy teaching philosophy is in direct contrast to the didactic, direct-instruction teaching model, the School of Education does not ignore the fact that some of its graduates are likely to accept positions in direct-instruction schools if it is serious about meeting its commitment to serving the teaching needs of the local community. When it comes time for hiring new teachers or taking on student teachers, principals like Jaclyn Laber look for teacher candidates with some experience with direct instruction.

This is another conundrum the School of Education must face.

Concluding Comments

UWM has maintained a long history of partnerships with MPS, despite changes in leadership and difficult financial times. The Milwaukee Partnership Academy, in particular, is an important resource for continuing the close connection between UWM and the MPS and for creating a communitywide responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in Milwaukee’s urban community. The partnership has now sustained a change in superintendents and in the chancellor at UWM. A review of the literature suggests that partnerships tend to maintain a major thrust for about a decade and then begin to drift apart naturally because of a number of factors, including leadership changes; different reform agendas; lack of resources to pay the high costs; faculty turnover or burnout; and fatigue from just keeping the thing going with meetings, meetings, and more meetings. It appears promising that the UWM-MPS partnership has the right ingredients to make the partnership continue to work and that the partners themselves are cognizant of the importance of institutionalizing this way of conducting the business of improving education. It is through the partnership that the role of technology will continue to be forged, with a reciprocal understanding of its role for both preservice and practicing teachers. The new Carnegie grant, in particular, may be the important glue that keeps the spotlight on partnerships and moves them forward.
References


