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**Madison School District and UW–Madison Establish**

**Research-Practice Partnership to Improve Local Education**

A new partnership between the [Madison Metropolitan School District](https://www.madison.k12.wi.us/) (MMSD) and the [University of Wisconsin–Madison](http://www.wisc.edu/) seeks to combine the expertise of district educators and university researchers to improve education.

MMSD and the [Wisconsin Center for Education Research](http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/) (WCER), part of the university’s [School of Education](https://www.education.wisc.edu/), have worked together for many years on specific problems and focused research projects. Now the organizations are joining together in a more permanent structure to support ongoing research collaboration. The [Madison Education Partnership](http://mep.wceruw.org/) (MEP) brings together the expertise of the university’s education researchers with the insights of local pre-K-12 educators to address current challenges facing local schools, and to produce relevant and cutting-edge education policy research.

MEP work is led by three directors–two from WCER and one from MMSD–and overseen by a steering committee of three UW–Madison faculty and three MMSD staff. The partnership also is guided by an advisory group that draws from MMSD and the larger Madison community. Each year MEP will revisit its research priorities to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of the district and interests of university researchers. The partnership receives support from WCER and MMSD.

“MEP seeks to increase academic success across the Madison school district by co-creating research agendas that tie directly to the needs of the district, streamlining researchers’ access to schools, and creating ways to share new research knowledge in Madison and beyond,” said MEP Co-Director Eric Grodsky, UW–Madison professor of sociology and educational policy studies.

MMSD schools serve about 27,000 children in grades 4K-12 from a rich diversity of family backgrounds. Approximately 18 percent of the district’s students are African American, 21 percent are Hispanic or Latino, and 43 percent are White. Twenty-eight percent of its students are English-language learners and 50 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

“MMSD is committed to excellence with equity, which means holding high expectations for every student and staff member, while providing them the unique support they need to meet and exceed those expectations,” said MEP Co-Director Beth Vaade, of the MMSD Research & Program Evaluation Office. “The learning that comes from MEP activities will help make this possible, further pushing us to reflect on our practices and adjust when necessary, and will ultimately lead to our students graduating with the skills necessary for college, career and community.”

In its first year, the MEP research agenda will focus on MMSD’s four-year-old kindergarten program (4K). This program began in 2011-12 and has served around 10,000 students since that time. MEP researchers will help the district learn more about trends in enrollment, and academic and social-emotional outcomes for students; while other UW–Madison researchers, supported by MEP, will investigate questions around family engagement, assessment and support for homeless students. This diverse portfolio of research will enhance the district’s decision-making around the 4K Program.

“We hope the results from this initial research will create opportunities for further collaboration between university researchers and MMSD, and lead to further engagement in work involving MMSD’s 4K program,” said MEP Co-Director Eric Camburn, UW–Madison professor of educational leadership and policy analysis. “We also hope that the knowledge we produce will help teachers and policymakers within MMSD and other diverse, mid-sized school districts around the country.”

**About WCER**

The Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s No. 1 ranked public School of Education is one of the first and most productive education research centers in the world. It has assisted scholars and educators to develop, submit, conduct and share grant-funded education research for more than 50 years.

WCER’s mission is to improve educational outcomes for diverse student populations, impact education practice positively and foster collaborations among academic disciplines and practitioners.

**About MMSD**

The Madison Metropolitan School District is the second largest school district in Wisconsin and serves over 27,000 students in 49 schools. The district covers approximately 65 square miles including all or part of the cities of Madison and Fitchburg, the villages of Maple Bluff and Shorewood Hills, and the towns of Blooming Grove, Burke and Madison.

The MMSD is committed to ensuring that every school is a thriving school that prepares every student to graduate high school well-equipped for college, careers and their community.

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