FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

To Evaluate the Implementation and Effectiveness of National Urban Alliance Strategies in WMEP and It's Member School Districts

Prepared For
WEST METRO EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Background and Study Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation study is to provide meaningful feedback to West Metro Education Program (WMEP) and the National Urban Alliance (NUA) on the success of the NUA Literacy Initiative. The evaluation is both formative and summative, in that it provides information on the "processes" or implementations of the project that are still ongoing, and also on the final outcomes in terms of student achievement gains over the past three years. This information in this report will allow WMEP, it's member schools and NUA to make enlightened decisions for future programming and provide them with a clear understanding of what student achievement effects have been gained from their investment in this program.

Methodology

Summative Evaluation Process

The evaluation design was organized to answer a fundamental question: "Did the program (NUA Literacy Initiative) raise the academic achievement of students?" A corollary to that question is: "Did the program reduce the achievement gap between caucasian students and students of color?" To answer that question, a comparison group of schools in the metro area had to be found so that achievement data from NUA schools could be compared to achievement data from like schools that had not experienced the NUA Literacy Initiative.

Achievement data from NUA schools had to be obtained and defined by teacher, since teachers in NUA schools participated on a voluntary basis. In addition, NUA data had to be defined by cohort, since teachers began their participation in the NUA Literacy Initiative in a particular year and received formal training by NUA for a subsequent two year period. This evaluation study examined student achievement data from teachers involved in the first three cohorts of the Literacy Initiative. Therefore, student achievement data was obtained from schools defined by teacher and by years of involvement in the NUA Literacy Initiative, including the year prior to the teacher's entrance into the Literacy Initiative. Prior year data was used to define a base year from which student achievement data from each <u>teacher</u> could be tracked over time. The primary reason we are not able to track students over time is because we don't know if teachers in successive years were involved in NUA or not. In addition, all the student achievement data was provided with ethnicity and free and reduced lunch data so that the racial gap could be determined and the effects of family income could be considered as a factor in achievement.

The summative part of the evaluation began immediately after the contract was signed. The proposal called for matching NUA teachers by cohort to student test data. This matching is critical since it is necessary to determine the effects of NUA. Therefore, only student achievement scores from NUA trained teachers within an NUA school could be used for this analysis. It was determined early on to use state tests for the outcome measure to determine if NUA had generated effects on student achievement. Other assessments, such as Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test scores, were not used in this analysis for the following reasons: not all NUA schools or school used as control groups in the metro area administer NWEA, state assessment data is provided to

all districts on a CD each year, state assessments include writing at some grade levels, and state assessments are administered in a more uniform and standardized manner. Therefore, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs), the Basic Skills Tests (BSTs) and the MCAIIs were used as outcome measures in reading, math, and writing from the 2002-03 to the 2005-06 school years. Student specific data was gathered from each district by cohort, according to the following scheme.

	YEAR			
GRADE	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06
K				
1				
2				
3	MCA(r,m)	MCA(r,m)	MCA(r,m)	MCA II(r,m)
4				
5	MCA(r,m,w)	MCA(r,m,w)	MCA(r,m,w)	MCA II(r,m)
6				
7	MCA(r,m)	MCA(r,m)	MCA(r,m)	MCA II(r,m)
8	BST (r,m)	BST (r,m)	BST (r,m)	MCA II(r,m)
9				
10	MCA(r)	MCA(r)	MCA(r)	MCA II(r)
	BST(w)	BST(w)	BST(w)	BST(w)
11	MCA(m)	MCA(m)	MCA(m)	MCA II(m)
12				

One of the first actions taken for the summative evaluation was to contact the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to determine the availability of student specific data so that it could readily be obtained from both NUA schools and control group schools. Numerous phone calls were made to the Director of Assessment at MDE for this information. The Universal File Formats obtained from MDE, indicated what data in what data fields are provided to all districts each year on a CD. MDE also provided a list of all schools statewide with the demographic information for each school, which was needed to match NUA schools to comparable non-NUA schools as control groups in the metro area.

The next step was to determine the contact person in each NUA district who was in charge of district data, and then contact that person to describe the evaluation project. In some districts this was the District Assessment Coordinator (DAC), in other districts it was a person in charge of technology, or the person in charge of student records. Before these contacts were made, a district DAC was contacted to determine what problems might exit in the data collection plan. Also, two other districts were visited on site to examine how they would attempt to match teachers to student test data by year. Subsequently, emails were sent to the appropriate "data" person in each NUA district to describe the evaluation project and explain what data was necessary to collect from their NUA schools. A list of NUA teachers by cohort was attached to the email so they knew what student data needed to be matched to which teacher. This email was sent in December, 2006.

Districts were requested to provide scaled scores in reading, math and writing where available from classroom teachers, not specialists who may see students only for a few hours a day. Elementary teachers who teach grades 3 and 5 would provide data in reading, math and writing. Middle school and high school teachers were selected on the basis of the subject matter that the taught. Reading and writing scores were provided only from language arts and reading teachers, and math scores were provided only from math teachers. In addition, each student was assigned an ethnicity code and a free/reduced lunch code.

Test score data was provided from districts between late February to late April, 2007. Calls to districts were made frequently to determine if difficulties were being encountered in collecting the data and what those difficulties, if any, might be. Districts who expressed difficulties in providing the necessary data were visited on-site and given special attention.

Once data started being provided, it was entered into a master file in a statistical software package called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was received from districts in various formats, depending on the district's student accounting systems and software. These formats included SPSS, Excel, and in some cases special access to student data from TSIS Student Information System, a program within TIES, had to be obtained. Minneapolis provided data from a separate file used for another research project that also required matching teacher and student records.

In addition to test score data, race, and free/reduced lunch data was collected. Also, the ratio of NUA teachers to total number of instructional staff was calculated for each NUA school. That ratio, along with total school enrollment, was used as a variable to predict student achievement.

Once data from a school was provided, the demographics of that school was matched to a non-NUA school in the metro area. The first attempt to find a match was with a school district not a part of WMEP, yet in the metro area. If that proved to be impossible, then non-NUA schools within a WMEP district were located for a possible match. The DACs from possible control group schools were contacted. The evaluation project was explained to these DACs; and data from specified schools, grade levels and years was requested. Once approval of the data request was granted and the control group data was received, it was entered into the master SPSS file.

Once most of the NUA data was collected and entered into SPSS, a consultant who is knowledgeable about the nature of Minnesota assessment data, was hired to "cleanse" the data. The consultant used a computer model to look for outliers in the data entered into the master file. Incorrect data was found, and the errors were corrected by either writing special syntax code to transform the data or by using commands in SPSS to recode the data. For example, about a third of the MCA and MCAII data was received with implied decimal points and the rest was received without implied decimal points. Syntax code had to be written to place a two digit decimal point in the data, thus creating a new

variable. Additional syntax had to be written to merge the old variable that contained valid data with the new variable in order to have all MCA and MCAII scores valid for analysis.

Initially, a Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) procedure using initial year test scores as covariates was planned as the statistical procedure to test statistical significance of the independent variables against the dependent variables. After discussing with three statisticians the nature of the evaluation and the nature of the data set that was ultimately provided, it was decided to abandon MANCOVA because of the missing data cells in the data set. Also, it seemed fruitless to examine main effects in a MANCOVA design when the unit of analysis was at the level of cohort, year and grade level. So, a series of One Way ANOVAs (Analysis of Variance) were conducted. Essentially, this involves a test of statistical significance between two independent sample means, or t tests. A series of t tests were conducted to test the significance of the difference between the means of NUA test scores and the means of control group scores. Also, t tests were used to test the significance of the difference between the means of NUA caucacian students and the means of NUA black students by cohort and by year.

The tables below illustrate numbers of schools, teachers, and students involved in the evaluation study. Table I shows the number of schools for each cohort that provided data for this evaluation and the total number of teachers across these schools from which student achievement data was provided.

Table 1
Number of NUA Schools Providing Data and Number of Teachers
From Which Data Was Provided

	Cohort I	Cohort II	Cohort III
Schools	12	18	21
Teachers	29	44	54

Tables 2-6 below indicate the number of students who were included in this study by grade and year for both the NUA schools that provided data and the control group schools that provided data.

Table 2
NUA Cohort I

	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Grade 3	74	77	51	52	254
Grade 5	130	132	163	66	491
Grade 7	128	146	633	337	1244
Grade 8	540	527	572	706	2345
Grade 10		23	133	125	281
Grade 11		168	128	123	419
Total	872	1075	1680	1409	5036

Table 3
NUA Cohort II

	2004	2005	2006	Total
Grade 3	131	97	111	339
Grade 5	283	308	257	848
Grade 7	1200	1412	1352	3964
Grade 8	517	466	279	1262
Grade 10	696	785	600	2081
Grade 11	125	219	253	597
Total	2952	3287	2852	9091

Table 4
NUA Cohort III

	2005	2006	Total
Grade 3	171	119	290
Grade 5	304	229	533
Grade 7	431	423	854
Grade 8	1188	1341	2529
Grade 10	616	1768	2384
Grade 11	66	33	99
Total	2776	3913	6689

Table 5
Control Group

	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Grade 3	82	262	280	693	1317
Grade 5	127	327	358	690	1512
Grade 7		2989	2559	2980	8528
Grade 8	620	1992	1855	2839	7306
Grade 10		1042	1008	998	3052
Grade 11		533	570	513	1616
Total	839	7149	6630	8713	23,331

Table 6
NUA and Control Group Totals

	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
NUA	872	4027	7743	8174	20,816
Control	839	7149	6630	8713	23,331
Total	1711	11,176	14,373	16,887	44,147

Table 7
NUA School Districts

District	3	5	7	8	10	11
Brooklyn Center	x	x	x	x	x	x
Columbia Heights			x	x	x	x
Eden Prairie		x	x	x	x	
Edina	x	x	x	x	x	
Hopkins	x	x	x	x	x	
Minneapolis			x	x		
Richfield	x	x		x	x	x
Robbinsdale				x		
Wayzata	x	x	x	x	x	x
WMEP		x	x	x	x	

(Grade Level)

Table 8
Control Group School Districts

District	3	5	7	8	10	11
Edina	x	x				
EMID		x	x	x	x	
Farmington			x	x		
Minneapolis	x	x	x	x	x	x
St. Paul			x	x		
Wayzata			x	x	x	x
West St. Paul			x	x		

(Grade Level)

Formative Evaluation Process
The formative evaluation process started with contacting Mary Oberg, who is a WMEP consultant and primary contact with NUA. Mary provided Herrick Research with a variety of documents needed to gain a solid understanding of NUA and NUA activities with WMEP. These documents include: annual evaluation reports from Aspen Associates, consultant site visit summaries, Initial Instructional Assessment Reports, a NUA statistical study on the existing achievement gap, agenda from large group meetings, three power point presentations, the 2006-07 WMEP Cultural Collaborative catalog, and assorted documents from the NUA website.

The bulk of the formative evaluation process consisted of personal interviews. In total four in-person interviews, four telephone interviews, and six focus group discussions were conducted. In addition, one on-site visit to a NUA high school was observed for an

entire day, and two Principal's Meetings and two Large Group Meetings for teachers were observed.

The first in-person interview was with Mary Oberg in November, 2006. Subsequent in-person interviews were with LaVerne Flowers, Director of the NUA project at WMEP; Jabari Mahiri, consultant/trainer for NUA, and Barbara DeMaster, Director of Curriculum and Instruction at St. Louis Park School District. Telephone interviews were conducted with Denise Nessel, long time NUA consultant and author the NUA Initial Instructional Assessments; Mia Waldera, staff developer at St. Louis Park Junior High School; Kevin Bennett, principal at FAIR school and Laura Bloomberg, principal at IDDS school. Focus group discussions were held with members of the Program Advisory Group (PAG), with two groups of principals, and with three groups of NUA teachers.

The PAG focus group discussion was held in February, 2007 and lasted about an hour. Participants included PAG members from: Wayzata, Columbia Heights, Eden Prairie, Hopkins, Richfield and WMEP. Mary Oberg also attended. The NUA consultant focus group discussion was held in February, 2007, lasted about an hour and a half, and included eight consultants.

The Principal focus groups were also held in February, 2007, each one lasting about an hour. Principals participating in the focus groups were:
>   Conn McCartten, Eden Prairie High School
>   Connie Hytjan, Forest Hills Elem, Eden Prairie
>   Pat Schmidt, North Middle School, Hopkins
>   Beth Russell, Anwatin Middle School, Minneapolis
>   Ben Perry, Northeast Middle School, Minneapolis
>   Jill Johnson, Richfield High School
>   Sue Manikowski, Plymouth Middle School, Robbinsdale
>   Chris Holden, Robbinsdale Middle School
>   Dennis Grasmick, Oakwood Elem, Wayzata
>   Tom Koch, Birchview Elem, Wayzata
>   Terri Wolfson, West Middle School, Wayzata
>   Steve Root, Wayzata Central Middle School

The teacher focus groups were organized by grade level. Separate focus groups were held for elementary teachers, middle school teachers and high school teachers. Each teacher focus group lasted an hour and 15 minutes, and were held in late February and early March, 2007. Efforts were made to include as even a representation of teachers by cohort as possible. Teachers from the following districts participated in the focus groups:
>   Elementary School
>   Kathy Powers, Edina
>   Janet Thompson, Eden Prairie
>   Kim Christain, Eden Prairie
>   Mitch Hegland, Eden Prairie
>   Stephanie Beach, Eden Prairie

Bridget Bjorklund, Hopkins
Karen McKenzie, Hopkins
Abby Rombrask, IDDS
Katie Wieber, Richfield
Suzanne Graft, Wayzata

Middle School
Angela Bothun, Columbia Heights
Cathy Weller, Edina
Beth Holland, Eden Prairie
Wyndemere Coffy, FAIR
Sue Stahr, Hopkins
Kim Hannon, Minneapolis
Greg Anderson, Richfield
Michele Guettler, Robbinsdale
Grant Boulanger, Robbinsdale
Casey Zylla, Wayzata

High School
Jill Passage, Columbia Heights
Jean Tushie, Eden Prairie
Jeremy Beckman, Richfield
Erin Broviak, Richfield
Fauzia Siddiqui, Wayzata
Adam Tillotson, Wayzata

<u>Findings</u>
The report findings are divided into two sections, a summative and a formative section. The summative findings document the results of the statistical analysis. As stated before, two central questions drove the summative analysis. The first question is: Did students taught by NUA trained teachers outperform students who have not been taught by NUA trained teachers? The second question is: Did NUA have an effect on reducing the achievement gap between white students and students of color?

<u>Summative Evaluation Findings</u>
Tables 9-32 illustrate the differences between NUA students and non-NUA students (control group) by grade level, by content area and by cohort. Generally, the data indicate that very few clear and consistent patterns across or within grade levels, content areas, or cohorts allow generalizations to be made about NUA effectiveness. There are statistically significant results between NUA students and control group students at every grade level, as indicated in Tables 9-32, some showing that NUA students outperform non-NUA students and some showing that non-NUA students outperform NUA students. In most cases, the statistically significant results between the groups are isolated.

The tables that follow, Tables 9-56, are presented in pairs by content area and grade level. Each of the tables graph test results expressed either as MCAs, BSTs, writing rubrics, or

MCAIIs. The first table in a pair shows MCAs, or in the case of 8th grade, shows BSTs by cohort. The second table in a pair show the results expressed in 2006 MCAII scores by cohort. Therefore, the scales for MCAs, BSTs, and MCAIIs are different. For example, the first table below, Table 9, shows MCA reading scores in 3rd grade for all three cohorts. The second table below, Table 10, shows MCAII scores in 2006 for all three cohorts. Comparisons are made between NUA and control groups within each table. The N count for all tables 9-56 are found in the statistical tables in the appendix.

Tables 9-32 show results of NUA students compared to the control group of students. Reading results shows the possibility of trends in grade 3 in cohorts 2 and 3, and in grade 5 and 8 in cohort 1. Tables 9 and 10, showing 3rd grade reading results from 2003 to 2006, does suggest an emerging pattern. In all three cohorts, control students outperformed NUA students in the year prior to NUA training. The year prior to NUA training is considered the base year for comparisons. In cohort 2 and 3 that difference is statistically significant at the .05 level, as indicated by the asterisks next to the year on the table. By 2006, that difference seemed to begin to reverse itself, as indicated in Table 10.

Table 57
Correlations of School Enrollment

	Reading	Math
Grade 3	-.320**	-.250**
Grade 5	.036	.121*
Grade 7	.098*	.186*
Grade 8	.193**	.162*
Grade 10	.386**	
Grade 11		.314**

*significant at .05 level
**significant at .01 level

Using the data set for this evaluation study, the highest correlations of school enrollment to achievement are in the lowest grades and in the highest grades. In grade 3, as enrollments increase, achievement tends to go down. In the high schools, grades 10 and 11, as enrollments go up, achievement goes up.

Table 58
Ratio of NUA Trained Staff to Total Instructional Staff

	Reading	Math
Grade 3	.199**	.186**
Grade 5	.147**	.187**
Grade 7	-.031	-.070*
Grade 8	.069*	.018
Grade 10	-.300**	
Grade 11		-.368**

*significant at .05 level
**significant at .01 level

These correlations suggest that in the elementary grades, achievement tends to go up when there is a greater proportion of NUA trained teachers in the school. In the middle grades, there is little correlation between the proportion of NUA trained teachers in the school and achievement. In grades 10 and 11, achievement actually tends to decline when this proportion goes up.

Table 59
Number of Free and Reduced Lunch

	Reading	Math
Grade 3	-.244*	-.274**
Grade 5	-.249**	-.316**
Grade 7	-.236**	-.367**
Grade 8	-.309**	-.399**
Grade 10	-.244**	
Grade 11		-.228**

*significant at .05 level
**significant at .01 level

Since free and reduced lunch, an index of family income, is a dichotomous variable, where 0 means no free and reduced lunch and 1 means that the student qualifies for free and reduced lunch, a non- parametric correlation was used. In this case, the Kendal tau correlation was used. These correlations are all negative. This means that when the proportion of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch is high, student achievement tends to be lower.

Formative Evaluation Findings
The formative evaluation processes described in the Methodology section consisted of document reviews, in-person interviews and focus group discussions. The document reviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of NUA, particularly as it is being operated with WMEP schools. Those reviews provided the insights needed to ask the in-depth questions for the interviews. The in-person interviews and the focus group discussions provide a context and a possible means of interpretation of the summative data presented in this report. The summary of the formative interviews and discussions are grouped by12 separate topics covered across all the interviews. Those topics include: 1) expected outcomes, 2) major successes experienced, 3) disappointments experienced, 4) the meaning of "cultural competence", 5) changes made in teaching and instruction, 6) keys to reducing the achievement gap, 7) the purpose of the Initial Instructional Assessment, 8) the role of the NUA consultant, 9) the role of the principal, 9) the role of the Program Advisory Group, 11) how to sustain NUA, and 12) the importance of outreach to parents and community.

Expected Outcomes
The ultimate goal of the Literacy Initiative is for students to achieve at higher levels than before and to reduce the existing achievement gap. This is achieved through a better understanding of cultural diversity and how culture affects the thinking process. Some teachers describe NUA as "just good teaching." Teachers were realistic enough to say that "all things NUA advocates are 100% on, but they may not show effects" in student achievement. One teacher said that NUA is "not a magic answer to reducing the achievement gap."

Some principals have expressed the view that the original intention of NUA to reduce the achievement gap has turned into an "effort to improve teaching at all levels by focusing on literacy and cognitive skills of all students." Principals also expressed the expectation that teaching become more "learner centered" with "significantly more student talk." One principal called the NUA model a "job embedded staff development program" because of it's approach of offering off-site training coupled with on-site demonstrations and practice.

It is the expectation of NUA to help teachers, through professional development and extensive follow up site visits, to teach in a "culturally competent" way. NUA consultants described this as a "change of pedagogy in the classroom" based on culture. That means there may be "no textbook, but purposefully planned lessons based on student's culture".

Major Successes and Experiences
NUA grew fast in three years at WMEP. It started with 19 schools three years ago and now has 39 schools. Schools generally respect the work of NUA.

There are reported increases in student engagement and active learning. There is a shift from teacher centered to student centered classrooms, and a shift from teaching concerns to learning concerns. Teachers report to be more "intentional" about teaching and have more tools and strategies to pull from. Teachers are "thinking more about what they are doing." The strategies that NUA promotes are strategies "that make sense" to teachers and are grounded in research. Teachers also report that students have "more self confidence." "Kids may not be able to read, but they can do Thinking Maps". Therefore, kids stay more involved and more on task in a lesson. Teachers are "meeting kids at their level." Teachers said that they are teaching thinking skills, and students are thinking and reflecting more as a result. Teachers are reflecting on "why kids do what they do." Teachers encourage kids to talk about what they have learned.

Collegiality of teachers has increased. Teachers developed a common language around NUA. Teachers are more energized by working together within and across schools. Teachers said that there is evidence of a "professional community" in the increase of study groups and teachers tutoring other teachers.

On-site visits are considered good follow through because it allows teachers to watch a demonstration of a lesson and then practice in the presence of a consultant before they go "live" with kids. It allows teachers to apply and practice. "Teachers love to see other teachers teach."

District involvement is cited by teachers as important to success. As kids advance through the grades, commonality across schools increases. There is also greater commonality within schools as the more teachers in a school become involved with NUA due to greater use of a common language and sharing of ideas.

Principals are supportive of NUA and are now seen more as "instructional leaders". The "buy in" by teachers and principals is viewed as critical to success.

Disappointments and Problems Experienced
A major problem cited by teachers was that NUA does not focus enough on how to help teachers build rapport with kids, to be "culturally competent" in practice, and to blend that cultural sensitivity into the strategies. Teachers also said that there is not sufficient time to collaborate with other teachers in the building on NUA, and not enough emphasis placed on specific content disciplines. There is not enough transfer from what they learned to their own disciplines. Some teachers feel that math doesn't fit as well as literacy in NUA strategies, citing that NUA "doesn't make a strong case for math."

Many teachers don't fully understand the strategies. Sometimes teachers get "bogged down" with the time needed in order for strategies to work for them. It may take "as long a three years to make strategies work" as they should.

Teachers feel that the success or failure of NUA for their school hinges on the consultant they were assigned. There is a perception that some cohorts are "learning differently" than other cohorts because of the assignment of different consultants. Teachers and principals view the "inconsistency" across consultants as "deterring the progress" of NUA. Some consultants fit with a school and some do not. One teacher said that their school "lost a year" because of a poor consultant. Some teachers indicated a need to have a black consultant work with white teachers. White teachers need to learn how to break away from the "power of being white". Some teachers indicated that it is difficult for consultants from out of town to understand the context of their school.

Some teachers expressed frustration when consultants tell them that they can't change a strategy, when the teacher feels that modification is necessary to fit the context of the classroom. According to one teacher, "NUA strategies work best when kids know what teachers mean." Some teachers feel that NUA strategies are not working for low achieving students.

Teachers indicated that some consultants come to a school unprepared by not having an agenda for staff. Also, some consultants simply repeat what was covered in large group sessions when they are on-site. "Site visits are too often more training." Teachers feel that "on-site visits should be more practice on strategies or to incorporate practice into large group staff development sessions". Also, not all that a consultant covers is applicable to a teacher's grade level or content area.

Principals have had problems finding subs when teachers leave for staff development. Budget for subs is a problem.

Meaning of "Cultural Competence"
Teachers have to become "culturally competent" for NUA strategies to fully work. To do this, teachers have to shift their emphasis from looking at students with deficits to finding assets in their behavior and language and use that in instructional strategies. Teachers need to recognize that minority students "live in both worlds" – the world of a privileged school culture and a world of a poor urban environment. For NUA the perception among teachers is that minority means black urban youth.

Cultural competency is an understanding of diverse cultures. It involves "validating" other cultures, "setting a climate for diversity" and "multi-cultural teaching". It defines what is meaningful and relevant in terms of "beliefs, practices and behaviors". Cultural competency assumes that "culture is an important determinant in the world". Teachers and students do not share the same culture, and there is often a "teacher disconnect" between cultures, so teachers need to use the student's culture to teach. Teachers need to be aware of and sensitive to differences in cultures in order to be ready to "use youth culture to make a point" and to teach content. This strategy is key because teachers would "teach what's important to kids" so "students can connect with the learning". Then, students "work for you not against you". Another way to look at cultural competency is that teachers "need a hook" to get to students. That hook is using youth culture, acknowledgment of youth values, and youth identification.

Jabari Mahiri describes cultural competency in an instructional context. To Jabari a teacher with cultural competency has "disciplined knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and cultural knowledge." Cultural knowledge includes teaching techniques that work particularly well for underperforming kids, such as the use of rhythm, recitation, repetition and ritual. These are blended in such strategies as 'act-out adjectives and adverbs', 'good or better', and 'synonym triplets'. Glen Singleton is mentioned as one who describes cultural competency in a socio-cultural context and details the importance of "courageous conversations."

In youth cultures, culturally competent teaching involves the mix of video, music and other medias; understanding the "experience of race", not just the scientific and historical facts regarding race. Teachers said that kids are comfortable talking about race and that allows them to "connect" with someone very different than themselves. Kids share their own personal experiences as black persons or white persons and this sharing builds confidence and an interest in learning. According to teachers, learning "comes down to relationships between teacher and student". This helps make learning relevant to kids in a way that allows an "emotional connection" to the material being taught.

Principals understand cultural competency as "cultural responsiveness", implying that teachers need to learn how to listen to kid's cultural experiences and respond to those experiences via lessons and strategies. They stated that cultural responsiveness is hard to "grasp and sustain".

Changes in Teaching and Instruction

Through NUA, teachers try to show the experiences of minorities to the entire diverse classroom. Teachers learn various strategies in large and small group professional development, prepare lesson plans around those new strategies and implement them in the classroom.

Teachers stated that due to NUA they have a greater awareness of <u>how</u> students learn. Teachers stated that their instruction is more "deliberate" and "purposeful". They tend go "deeper not wider" in their instruction. Teachers teach with more "interactive lessons" than before and focus more on critical thinking . They also are having students collaborate more and write more to express their thoughts. They find that students seem more confident in themselves as a result, and the classroom stress level seems to have decreased.

As a result of NUA, teachers claim that students "want to be in class more" and there is "not as much of a discipline problem" as before. NUA has helped teachers to help students "break down" the thinking process. Some teachers stated that NUA taught them new strategies and ideas, and other teachers stated that NUA "reinforced things that they were already doing."

Principals indicated that through the NUA experience, teachers should have a greater repertoire of strategies to use to engage students in learning, and for teachers to be more responsive to students.

NUA consultants argued that NUA "is not about strategies, but about learning" and that kids are ultimately responsible for their own learning. This implies the need for student involvement and engagement in the learning process for learning to take place. NUA means active not passive learning. The perspective of NUA consultants is that "pedagogy is how teachers teach", but "kids provide the context" for the leaning."

A strategy that works well in promoting learning as demonstrated on standardized tests is, "working with kids to use analytical skills". For example, teachers "teach" the cognitive process through Thinking Maps, which allows students to reason through a question rather than just memorizing content, which can result in performing better on standardized tests. The key to doing well on standardized tests is "learning (critical) thinking and cognitive skills" and "developing a wide vocabulary".

"Standardized tests are part of program evaluation". They can be used as "valid indicators of program success by disaggregating data, looking at underperforming kid's experience over one or more years of experience with NUA trained teachers and looking for similar but perhaps smaller changes with other kids".

Teachers, principals and consultants characterize "high implementation" teachers as those who demonstrate the use of NUA strategies, such as Thinking Maps and Tree Maps, for other

teachers and whose students use the language of NUA. Students of "high implementers" are engaged in instruction. Students show confidence and motivation. Analytical thinking, such as cause and effect, compare and contrast, etc., is going on in the classroom, which allows students time to "reflect and to process". Teachers differentiate instruction in the classroom with ease and students can work on their own. There is "fidelity in the strategies". Students do not need to be prompted to use maps or other strategies. The key for high implementation is to connect the philosophy of NUA (cultural competency) with NUA strategies. Teachers have a sense of "ownership" of the NUA philosophy and process.

"Low implementation" teachers "just do the strategies". In these classrooms there is no student control or involvement in the learning process, and no student reflection on their learning. Students don't know why they are doing what they are doing.

Keys to Reducing the Achievement Gap
NUA consultants said that the key to reducing the achievement gap is simply "good teaching". Good teaching implies teacher exposure to staff development and knowledge and teaching of thinking skills.

The PAG stated that student confidence is the key. "When confidence goes up, the desire to learn goes up, the belief in themselves goes up, and (then) achievement goes up." Teachers, therefore, need opportunities to learn how to increase the confidence in all students. One PAG member said that we "don't need to have minorities to act white".

There has to be bottom up strategies and top down strategies. Bottom up strategies include having high expectations and rigorous instruction for students. Teachers must be advocates for students so that they know that success is possible. It is important to "teach thinking in a culturally competent way" and for teachers to be aware of student learning as opposed to teachers being aware of their own teaching. Top down strategies mean administrative support at the district and building level.

Purpose of the Initial Instructional Assessment
The purpose of the initial assessments is to take a preliminary look at the school. The information is useful to NUA because it allowed NUA to look for patterns in a school similar to other NUA schools. It is also a chance for NUA to establish credibility with the school. It starts a dialog with a school.

When an Initial Instructional Assessment is done, an NUA team goes into a school to observe and complete a checklist, teachers complete a questionnaire, principals are interviewed, and test scores are reviewed. About 8-10 classrooms are visited per day for a two-day period. A narrative report is written.

NUA "looks for similarity across schools" in the initial instructional assessments and focuses on similarities across schools rather than unique differences between schools. They "always see the same thing", which is why the reports are not only formatted exactly the same way but the content is nearly the same.

Role of the NUA Consultant
The role of the NUA consultant is considered by everyone as critical. Most importantly, teachers want consultants to be good "modelers and motivators". Teachers feel that consultants need to understand the needs of the school. Teachers also feel that consultants need to provide their school with a unique plan or "advanced organizer" so the expectations for the year are clearly laid out. In addition, teachers feel consultants need to come to the school for a site visit with an agenda. Too many times a consultant would ask staff what they wanted to work on, rather than come prepared with an agenda for them that zeroed in on their needs. Teachers want consultants to provide clarity in helping them to "match strategies to kids". However, one teacher did say that there is "no visible way to match consultant to school" and that "some schools picked their own consultant". One teacher commented that it is "not clear what teachers are suppose to do to prepare for a site visit".

Teachers described a good consultant as one who listens to teacher needs, comfortable with all levels, and knows what works in a particular context and what doesn't. Both teachers and principals see consultants as key because they link the application in classroom with the ideas learned in large group sessions.

The NUA consultants conduct four large group sessions for teachers per year. They provide a repertoire of strategies for teachers. They also conduct Leadership Sessions for principals. Consultants lead site visits, which may involve classroom demonstrations, coaching, and designing small group seminars at a school. They help teachers work with one another in collaborative skills. While at a site visit, consultants are always in touch with the building principal and/or the building liaison. Consultants stress the importance of building leadership as key to the success of teacher implementation. Consultants try to have principals "think more carefully about professional leadership, what to look for in teacher observations, and use of faculty meetings and study groups."

NUA consultants feel they try to discover and elicit the needs that teachers have and provide them with specific advice that they can implement in a non-threatening manner. Such coaching can take many forms depending on the needs of teachers and teacher readiness. The professional development of NUA is unique because it stresses a "belief system" about high student expectations as well as working to develop cultural competency in teachers.

At site visits, NUA consultants see the principal, if possible, for a pre-session to go over the agenda and review past service. At the end of the site visit, the consultant reviews the activities of the day with the principals, as well as what was learned and what resistance was encountered.

Site visits are to be facilitated by the consultant but planned by the site. The general sequence of events usually followed are: 1) NUA consultant demonstrates lesson at beginning, 2) NUA team teaches with teacher, 3) NUA coaches teacher (usually in 2nd year). However, each site is different and events will change as the needs of the site dictate. Basically, NUA consultants are

looking for good teaching – engagement of kids, high level of thinking, quality products that kids produce, and high expectations.

NUA consultants see themselves as facilitators. Teachers value the consultant, but feel the NUA model suffers when consultants change. Teachers also have definite ideas about what constitutes a good consultant. All agree that a consultant has to "fit" with the staff at a school. Some teachers argued that NUA consultants are all out of town and, therefore, "have no idea of the local context."

Role of the Principal
The role of the principal is considered vital in the success of NUA in the school. The principal is expected to understand and communicate the overall purpose and structure of NUA. Since they are often many competing programs in a school, the principal is looked upon to sort out, prioritize and coordinate these multiple initiatives. Now that the NUA contract is coming to an end, the principal is one who needs to think long term for the school and figure out how to sustain the NUA initiative. One principal commented that it is not realistic for the principal to facilitate NUA once its over, but it is the responsibility of the principal to find staff development leaders and/or teacher leaders to sustain NUA into the future.

The most effective NUA principal is one who supports his or her NUA teachers in learning and implementing the strategies. A strong NUA principal will see visible evidence of change, high student and teacher expectations, and high student motivation to learn. A weak NUA principal will not know what to look for.

In addition to strong school leadership, NUA schools should be places where "teachers function in a community of learners", where teachers share ideas and ask for each other's input routinely.

Principals are expected to change their teacher observation process. Principals need to focus on what students are doing and not so much on what teachers are doing. Principals should expect to hear noise in the classroom. Specifically, principals need to focus on behavior and attendance. They should try to observe less student resistance to instruction, engagement in instruction, working collaboratively and sharing ideas with other students, and taking risks in order to learn. The teacher observation process may then be characterized by the principal posing questions to challenge teachers rather than offering critiques.

In addition, NUA consultants said that principals should continually "weigh in" with teachers by providing them time, supporting them while they attend workshops, and "spread the strategies" to non-NUA teachers. As the instructional leader, principals should attend NUA workshops, and apply and model the NUA strategies themselves whenever possible. It was noted that it is more difficult for high school principals to model NUA strategies since high schools are more content driven, while elementary schools are more pedagogy driven.

Teachers said that principals need to give teachers time to share strategies and experiences with other staff. Teachers want principals to be directive and require the use of thinking maps and similar strategies, to provide training opportunities

for new staff, and provide a vision and plan for the school that includes NUA thinking and strategy.

Role of the Program Advisory Group
The Program Advisory Group (PAG) sees themselves as the "glue between NUA and WMEP." They are the group that brought NUA into WMEP and "created the vision for NUA".

PAG feels it lost the partnership with the adult learning community when they replaced the Adult Learning Committee. PAG is more administrative, whereas the Adult Learning Committee was more participatory and involved.

How to Sustain NUA
Principals stated that sustainability was one of their biggest concerns. "Sustainability is a priority for the building, the district and for WMEP." Principals argued for a district plan that would articulate a means to sustain NUA. They expressed the value in having principals use NUA strategies in staff meetings to reinforce their use in the classrooms.

Both teachers and principals mentioned that Q-Comp can be viewed as a part of NUA by expressing Q-Comp as the goal and NUA processes in the classroom as the means to the goal. Q-Comp requires that teachers are observed more than before. When these observations are done, evidence of NUA strategies and applications can be observed as means to achieve the Q-Comp individual, team and building goals.

Principals stated that part of sustainability is planning on the loss of trained NUA teachers. When "experienced NUA teachers leave, we have to start over". PAG developed a sustainability plan a year ago to provide an awareness of the problem. PAG feels that they should follow through and recommend a more specific plan at this time. They expressed three tiered plan – building, district and region.

The PAG stated that one of the major issues between NUA consultants and principals was the issue of sustainability. Principals need the insights of consultants to help identify teacher leaders for the sustained effort and to help plan the vision for the future in their school.

Teachers believe that sustainability is dependent on the principal. "If a principal believes in NUA, it will happen (sustain), if a principal isn't active in NUA, it will fizzle out." Teachers also feel that the essential components of NUA that must be sustained are its focus of culture and literacy. Teachers stated that the best way to sustain in the future is to identify a mentor teacher in the building to teach NUA strategies to new staff, and to continually model, demo and support trained staff. NUA can be made part of new teacher training, using mentor teachers in a leadership role.

Importance of Outreach to Parents and the Community
NUA does not have any direct workshops for parents. NUA encourages schools to include parents and communicate via newsletters, school board meetings, conferences, etc. NUA wants more parent involvement. Teachers also expressed the view that more should be done to work with parents because currently "we don't have an infrastructure at home to support learning."

The PAG stated that the role and expectations for NUA do not involve parents or the larger community. Their view is that schools are responsible to work with kids regardless of their backgrounds and culture, and that schools need to "adapt to meet the needs of kids". One PAG member stated that schools are "making excuses for our lack of achievement in schools".

Similarly, NUA consultants stated that it is not part of their mission to deal with parents and community. They see their role and "expertise in helping teachers, not parents." Like PAG, consultants said that parents are not their focus because teachers have to deal with all kids regardless of their parents.

Summary and Conclusions
Impact on Student Achievement
The central question behind this evaluation is whether or not NUA has had an impact on student achievement. After conducting a study with rigorous constraints, it appears that only a few trends can be detected that lead one to conclude that after three years NUA has impacted student achievement. There are pockets of significant and noteworthy exceptions to that conclusion, either representing a trend towards academic improvement of NUA students or the beginnings of a trend that may evolve into more conclusive evidence for NUA effectiveness.

One emerging trend is in reading in 3rd, 5th and 8th grades. In 3rd grade, all three cohorts demonstrated a significant shift from lower test scores compared to the control group at the beginning of NUA to either small gains over the control group, or no difference compared to the control group, after NUA involvement. It is encouraging to note that all three cohort experienced this gain. In cohort 3 the gain was during the first year of NUA involvement, in cohort 2 the gain was maintained after two years of NUA involvement, and in cohort 1 the gain was sustained after three years of NUA involvement.

In 5th grade reading, an emerging trend appears in cohort 1. Prior to NUA, there was no difference in reading achievement between NUA and non-NUA schools. After 2 years of NUA training and one year of implementation beyond that, NUA schools significantly outperformed non-NUA schools. Similar trends are yet to appear in cohort 2 and 3. In 8th grade reading, a similar phenomenon has occurred. In cohort 1, non-NUA schools significantly outperformed NUA schools prior to NUA training. However, that shifted so that after NUA training and the beginning of NUA implementation, NUA schools significantly outperformed those same non-NUA schools. Again that pattern is yet to be repeated in cohorts 2 and 3.

Pockets of evidence for NUA effectiveness is exhibited in math as well, all in cohort 2. In 3rd grade math, cohort 2 demonstrated a shift from a statistically significant difference in favor of non-NUA schools prior to NUA training. But after nearly two years of NUA training, there was virtually no difference between NUA and non-NUA schools. A similar pattern was not repeated in cohorts 1 or 3. Cohort 2 in 5th grade math indicated no significant difference in math achievement prior to NUA training. After nearly two years of NUA training, NUA schools significantly outperformed non-NUA schools. Again, this was not repeated in cohorts 1 and 3. Cohort 2 in 11th grade math illustrated no difference in math performance between NUA and non-NUA schools prior to NUA training. After nearly two years of NUA training, NUA schools significantly outperformed non-NUA schools. Again, this was not repeated in cohorts 1 and 3.

Writing performance in 5th grade and 10th grade did not produce statistically significant results that indicated a shift from one group to another over a period of time. It should be noted that a writing test was not administered in 5th grade in 2006 and the writing tests in 10th grade are rubric scores, not scaled scores. Consequently, 10th grade writing is difficult to interpret because the scores are expressed in performance categories rather than in a continuous scale.

It is also important to note that while there are a few significant trends, or at least the beginnings of trends, suggesting positive change in reading and math as a result of NUA, the shift has not occurred in the other direction. In other words, in no case in reading or math at any cohort did the application of NUA training and implementation show a shift towards gains in non-NUA schools.

Reading has made gains over the control group more times than math has. Six separate cohorts across the grades in reading made gains over the control group compared to 3 separate cohorts for math. Also, reading is the only content area in which gains over the control group were realized across all three cohorts at a given grade level. That was in grade 3. It is reasonable to conclude from this, that NUA may have had greater effect on reading than in math or writing; and that that effect is greater in the lower grades.

The implications of the three sets of correlations to test scores provide little insight into NUA effectiveness. However, it is important to note that when a greater proportion of teachers in elementary schools are trained in NUA, the scores in reading and math tend to increase. Conversely, when a greater proportion of teachers in high school are trained in NUA, the scores in reading and math tend to decrease. This high school correlation might be explained by the fact that only reading scores of students from language arts and reading teachers and only math scores of students from math teachers were made part of the data base. Consequently, NUA teacher ratio for high schools is small compared to the ratio in elementary schools. The average NUA trained teacher to total instructional staff ratio in 10th grade is 19%, and the average ratio in 3rd grade 50%.

Impact on Achievement Gap

The second fundamental question behind this evaluation is whether or not NUA had an effect on reducing the racial achievement gap. The gap between minority and non-minority students is well documented in many contexts, including a study conducted by NUA in 2003. Again, this evaluation study documents an overriding achievement gap between causcasian and black students in NUA schools prior to NUA training within the three cohorts. With noted exceptions, the achievement gap continues to persist even after three years of NUA involvement.

The exceptions worth noting are in 5th and 7th grade reading and in 3rd and 11th grade math. In 5th grade reading, a significant shift occurred in cohort 3. Prior to NUA, caucasian students in cohort 3 demonstrated significantly higher reading scores than their black counterparts. After only one year of NUA training, there was no significant difference between the two groups. Likewise in 7th grade, cohort 2 students showed statistically significant differences in favor of caucasian students prior to NUA. Nearly two years after NUA training, there was no difference between the reading performance of black and caucasian students. These patterns were not repeated in the other two cohorts at those grade levels.

In math, cohort 1 caucasian students significantly outperformed black students prior to NUA training, but three years later there was no significant difference between their math performance. Similarly, cohort1 caucasian students significantly outperformed black students during the first year of NUA training in 2004. Two years later in 2006, there was virtually no difference in math performance between the two groups.

In writing, there was no change in the achievement gap from the year prior to NUA and after NUA training and implementation. Caucasian students consistently outperformed black students in writing skills in 5th and 10th grade.

Despite the efforts of NUA to focus attention on black urban culture so that teachers become more "culturally competent", the racial gap in student achievement continues. The isolated cases where the racial gap has been narrowed or eliminated seem to be just that – isolated. It is difficult to find a pattern in the data that suggests a trend by grade level, by content area, or by cohort.

Conclusions from Opinions

The overwhelming opinion of the primary users of NUA, principals and teachers, is that NUA has been a very positive influence in their schools and classrooms, and should be sustained. Generally, teachers feels that NUA has substantially changed their teaching so that it is more deliberate and purposeful, although recognizing that NUA cannot be the sole solution to raising student achievement and reducing the achievement gap. Principals generally feel that NUA needs to be sustained in some way, and that their role as the instructional leader requires that they are primarily responsible for sustaining the NUA initiative in their school.

NUA staff development is highly thought of by both teachers and principals. What sets the NUA approach apart from other forms of staff development is the follow up site visits. These site visits are key to the model because it allows practice to follow theory. While on-site, NUA consultants model and demonstrate how to teach lessons consistent with NUA concept of "cultural competence". Teachers then practice these strategies, while being coached by their consultant. The two year commitment required of NUA allows this intensive training followed by on-site practice to take root and change teaching practices. Teachers feel that the key to making this form of staff development work well is the quality of the consultant and integrating the concept of cultural competence and NUA strategies. Principals think of this as "embedded staff development."

Teachers and consultants alike understand the importance of NUA strategies in building student confidence. As confidence grows, the interest in learning grows, and when interest in learning grows, leaning happens. With increased confidence, students see that success is possible, and they take more control of their own learning. A central part of cultural competency is growing that confidence in students. This is done through the sharing of cultural experiences, which in turn builds relationships between students and between students and teachers. This process from cultural understanding to relationship building provides the stepping stone to student confidence and helps make learning relevant to students. In short, the cultural experiences of kids, once shared with one another, can be used as a wedge for learning. All this implies looking for the positives in all kids, rather than seeing the negatives that might be more immediately obvious.

Both teachers and principals expressed some frustration at the "inconsistency" of consultants. What is meant by that is that schools did not always keep the same consultant form year to year. This inconsistency weakened the model overall because a new consultant had to learn about the school. Therefore, the school lost some ground from where the former consultant left off. Also, the school staff had to adjust to the style of a new consultant. There was also the issue of fit. Some consultants seemed to fit in better with the staff and performed better than other consultants. Teachers felt dependent on the skills of the consultant assigned to them, so they see the consultant as key to the success of the program in their school. Some teachers expected the consultant to be more proactive in laying out a clear agenda for them while on-site. Some teachers did not feel they knew what was expected of them. There appears to be somewhat of a conflict of expectations. Consultants see themselves as facilitators, responding to the needs of teachers. Teachers see consultant as the "experts" who are there to model and coach teachers in the correct way to implement the strategies. In addition, some teachers felt while on-site the consultant spent too much time in continued staff development and not enough time in practice working on strategies. Practice is considered extremely valuable to teachers.

Another concern of teachers was integrating the concept of cultural competence with the strategies. Just carrying out the strategies is not considered good NUA practice by either teachers or consultants. Teachers and consultants both agree that the key to success is linking cultural sensitivity to the strategies. Teachers do not all agree that that linking

was done well enough. Many NUA trained teachers still do not feel they know how to build rapport with kids. Teachers also expressed the concern that not enough emphasis was placed on how to use the strategies learned in NUA in a culturally sensitive way in a variety of content areas. Science teachers want to know how to use NUA strategies in science lessons, history teachers want to know how to do it in history, math teachers want to see math applications, etc. Many teachers also would also prefer to have NUA be more prescriptive in indicting what strategies would work best in what contexts and with what students. There was also concern about level. Teachers suggested that large group sessions would have been better if teachers were split into K-4, 5-8 and 9-12 levels.

Principals are key to the process because their commitment allows NUA to flourish in the school. Commitment means attending NUA staff development sessions, doing all they can to support teachers to attend staff development sessions, and to model the strategies themselves. Principals can change the culture of the school by supporting teachers in this way and by applying NUA thinking and strategies in staff meetings. The language of the school changes. Principals also have been affected by NUA in the way they conduct teacher observations. Principals are more inclined to look at what students are doing rather than what teachers are doing in the classroom. Principals are now looking for evidence of student collaborations and discussions, resulting often in more noise in the classroom. This means that principals focus more on what is different with kids – their behavior in the classroom, their attendance, and their achievement on tests.

Although principals are rightly viewed as instructional leaders and rightly concerned about sustainability, they cannot be a substitute for consultants. Principals are mostly looking in their own buildings for teacher leaders or mentors to sustain the process. These teacher leaders would work with new as well as veteran NUA trained staff to keep the process of cultural sensitivity active in classrooms and integrated into NUA strategies. At this point in time, principals should be using the wisdom and experience of NUA consultants to help them determine how to develop and implement a sustainability plan.

The Initial Instructional Assessments were conducted by NUA when schools were considering joining the program. The information gathered through these assessments was NUA's attempt to get a preliminary look at the school, gain credibility with the school, and start a dialog with them. NUA looked for similarities across schools in the data from these assessments, which consequently led to the reports all looking very similar in format and content. The reports did not point out unique needs of the schools. Therefore, these assessments were of more value to NUA than they were to the schools, since they were used to make a case for NUA. This looks self-serving for NUA because it always demonstrates need for NUA regardless of the school's circumstances. Moreover, no post assessment is conducted after a school has been implementing NUA strategies for a substantial period of time. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the Initial Instructional Assessments are not designed to establish a starting place for a school, create a customized plan of action for that school, and later to evaluate the "growth" of that school relative to such an action plan.

This situation brings up a paradox. NUA on one hand stresses the importance of understanding the culture and backgrounds of students in order to serve them better. On the other hand, little emphasis is made by NUA to examine the culture and needs of the schools that they are beginning to work with. That would change if the Initial Instructional Assessments were used as a needs assessment, attempting to discover the unique characteristics of the school rather than the commonalities across schools. Such a needs assessment could be used as a customized strategic plan for the school from which NUA could implement more tailored rather than common strategies.

Q-Comp also entered into discussions with teachers and principals. Q-Comp is a pay for performance program, designed to reward teachers and schools for meeting academic goals based on tests scores. Teachers see this program as powerfully related to NUA. The ultimate goals of Q-Comp and NUA are the same - raise student achievement. But one is a means and one is the end. NUA approaches to teaching and learning can be conceived as a means by which the end goals of Q-Comp can be achieved.

There is a slight difference in opinion between teachers, NUA consultants and PAG when it comes to the issue of parent and community involvement. Teachers feel much can be gained by understanding the culture of the student's home and community environment, while consultants feel that parents and community are out of their control. The PAG group feels the question is irrelevant since parent and community involvement was not part of the NUA contract. Consultants feel their expertise lies in schools and helping teachers deal with diversity. Teachers acknowledge that, but still feel that parent and community involvement is an important part of the equation in affecting student achievement. Teachers feel that NUA could take the leadership in finding ways to bring parents of all races and backgrounds together to interact with one another and to help their child succeed in school.

Recommendations

1. Sustain the NUA initiative in WMEP member schools. There is support and enthusiasm for NUA amongst teachers and principals and the inertia that has started should continue and improve.

2. Consider the effects of NUA on student achievement documented in this evaluation as an initial read on effectiveness. Continue to evaluate the effects on student achievement.

3. Monitor the effects of NUA on academic achievement more closely now that state assessment data provided by MDE will continue with the same test and a common score scale. Where possible, track students over time who consistently have an NUA teacher and examine growth over the years.

4. Study the particular cohorts where significant trends have started, or appear to have started. For example, examine 3rd grade reading cohorts to determine what teachers in those cohorts did to produce positive shifts from years prior to NUA to years during and after NUA.

5. Continue to work on reducing the achievement gap. Use multiple approaches in the classroom to raise the achievement of minority students, particularly black minority students. Continue to use and implement NUA philosophy and strategies in the classroom to develop relationships with black urban students to build their confidence to succeed.

6. Develop training modules from NUA materials for all content areas at all levels. Expand NUA beyond a literacy initiative and into a broader academic achievement initiative.

7. Develop training modules from NUA materials and other sources that provide stronger links between the concept of cultural competency, methods to gain greater rapport with students, and specific instructional strategies to boost student confidence to learn.

8. Provide a guide for teachers, which helps them identify which strategies work best in which contexts and purposes and which ones do not.

9. Explore classroom assessments as a means to motivate all students to learn. Classroom assessments can boost or destroy student confidence. Add assessment training into the mix of training designed to increase cultural competence and skills in applying NUA strategies.

10. Develop a sustainability plan for each school, each district and the region. Use NUA for assistance in building the plan. Consider strongly the use of teacher leaders in each school to assume the responsibility of sustaining and growing the momentum that has started.

11. Require that teacher leaders train new teachers in cultural competence and NUA strategies, observe and coach trained NUA teachers, and coordinate teachers who can model effective practices for other staff.

12. Conduct a needs assessment for each school, documenting the status of NUA use, the needs in implementing NUA, and needs for new training. Use the results as part of the schools sustainability plan. Conduct an evaluation annually to determine progress towards the goals in the plan.

13. Blend Q-Comp, or similar incentive programs, into the building and district sustainability plan.

14. Consider the use of an Action Research model for training delivery. When teachers are ready to implement, have them systematically collect data and information about what works and what does not work and why. Then have teachers meet within the school and/or among schools to share those experiences.

As a team decide what to modify in their strategies, and try again. Repeat the process on a continuous basis.

15. Build a parent component into the school and district sustainability plan. Find ways to connect with parents and the community for the purpose of helping the community to be a positive support to youth in school and for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of youth culture. Provide workshops for parents, conduct home visits, facilitate community forums and the like to help bridge the cultural divide between school and community.