



February 25, 2016

Dear New Skills for Youth Initiative Program Officers and Review Committee Members,

I am writing to express my ardent support for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's (DPI's) application for a New Skills for Youth Initiative Grant. The Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) shares DPI's steadfast commitment to ensuring that all students have access to a comprehensive educational system and school experience that prepares them for careers.

MMSD's vision is that every school will be a thriving school that prepares every student for college, career, and community. Throughout 2014, MMSD completed a visioning and planning process with students, parents, school staff, community members, and representatives from business, higher education, and community-based organizations. Together, we explored what an MMSD diploma should signify, the skills and knowledge all students should gain throughout their high school experiences, and how students would be best engaged in learning those skills and knowledge.

Completing that exploration process confirmed our beliefs that all students should chart their personalized pathways to college, career and community success. Academic and career planning (ACP) will be foundational to the implementation of the personalized pathways system. ACP is a process and product by which students in grades 6-12—in collaboration with key school staff, families, and community members—chart, assess and refine their pathway to postsecondary success by exploring who they are, what they want to do with their lives, and how they will make progress toward their short-and long-term goals. ACP will drive students' participation in a sequence of rigorous inter-connected courses and experiences within and outside of the school setting. Every student's personalized pathway will lead to graduation with a post-secondary plan that could lead to an industry recognized certificate and/or licensure, an associate degree, baccalaureate degree, or beyond. MMSD is happy to share information, lessons learned, and future plans in any way that will support and advance the work of the New Skills for Youth Initiative cross-sector state leadership team. In turn, we look forward to the opportunity to learn from the work of the New Skills for Youth Initiative cross-sector team as they assess the needs of and plan for the future of Wisconsin.

DPI has long recognized the need for career readiness among Wisconsin students. DPI is a participating member of the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Career Readiness Initiative and has already drafted a plan to address CCSSO task force recommendations surrounding increasing employer engagement, expanding dual credit opportunities, creating model practices and professional development to support employer engagement, increasing opportunities for high school students to participate in work-based learning activities, and creating a more robust accountability system



incorporating college and career pathways indicators. This grant opportunity will allow DPI to further engage MMSD and other Wisconsin schools, businesses, technical college and university systems, and various State departments in assessing Wisconsin's needs and developing an action plan. MMSD's Chief of Secondary Schools, Alex Fralin, spearheads MMSD's personalized pathways work and will participate on the cross-sector state leadership team.

I fully support the DPI's New Skills for Youth Initiative Grant. I encourage reviewers to give their strongest consideration to this proposal. Please feel free to contact Alex Fralin or me if additional information is desired.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cheatham, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools