

AmeriCorps*VISTA Progress Report

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Project Name: Wisconsin DPI VISTA Project
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Grant Number: 06VSNWI009

Period Covered by this Report:

From: 04/01/2011 to 06/30/2011

Data Updates

# of VISTA Members on board at end of reporting period	56
# of Community Volunteers serving who are Baby Boomers	53
Dollar value of cash resources developed by VISTA Members	9959
# of Service Hours performed by Community Volunteers	3017
Dollar value of non-cash resources developed by VISTA Members	10868
# of VISTA Members supported by cost share	2
# of Community Volunteers serving	387

Member and Sponsor Development

	Americorps *VISTA Members	Supervisors	CNCS Funded	Funded by Other Source	Comments
On-Site Orientation	0	27	N	N	
Community Outreach	56	45	Y	N	
Community Volunteer Generation/Recruitment	22	0	Y	N	
Effective Volunteer Management	10	10	Y	N	
Resource Mapping	0	0	N	N	
Resource Development/Fundraising	22	5	Y	N	
Grant Writing	0	0	N	N	
Organizational Development	15	8	Y	N	
Performance Measures	56	45	Y	N	
Tracking Systems	45	30	Y	N	
Information Technology	22	5	Y	N	
Developing On-Site Orientations and Training Plans	0	30	Y	N	
Other (Please Specify)	40	21	Y	Y	Sustainability, Transition, Meeting Facilitation and Hunger awareness.

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Project Plan

Service Category: Other Education

Performance Milestone

Milestone

All school sites establish Action Teams for Partnerships to facilitate family involvement at the site.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Action Teams for Partnerships are established and members recruited.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

Actual # or % to date

100 %

How Measured

Sign-in sheet

Description of Data Collection

Membership lists will be submitted with bi-weekly and quarterly reports, which must include at least 1 administrator, 2 parents, 2 teachers, and 2 others.

Progress this Reporting Period

All July and August sites have an action team for partnerships or similar group that the VISTA is working with. At continuing sites, new VISTAs will be coming in this summer to continue to work and strengthen these teams.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

All VISTAs map community assets and collect data on their site's climate to connect partnership work among all stakeholders.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

% of VISTAs who submit community asset maps to DPI.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

Actual # or % to date

100 %

How Measured

Community Partner Survey

Description of Data Collection

Community asset mapping will be completed by all VISTAs using tools distributed at Orientation. Results of mapping will be submitted with Quarterly Reports.

Progress this Reporting Period

All VISTAs have completed and submitted community asset maps in October and January.

Performance Milestone

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Milestone

All VISTAs will research, write, and submit grants to sustain programs beyond their service year.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of grants submitted.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

20 #

Actual # or % to date

37 #

How Measured

Sustainability Checklist

Description of Data Collection

Pre/post surveys, bi-weekly and quarterly reports, and community asset map will also be used. Twenty grants will have been written and submitted by VISTAs in our project. This is roughly one grant per VISTA.

Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs wrote an additional 11 grants this quarter. Grants are being used to sustain programs, fund new programs, and procure supplies and materials for events and partnership activities.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

School/district sites will implement family-school-community practices that help families make a connection to their children's learning.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of activities/practices implemented.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

120 #

Actual # or % to date

358 #

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

Action Plans and agendas of activities, as well as project descriptions, will be submitted by the VISTAs in bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Each VISTA will coordinate at least six family-school-community events or initiatives throughout the year.

Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs implemented an additional 99 activities this quarter to help families connect with their children's school and learning. At Cunningham Elementary in Beloit, our VISTA helped to organize an Open House to speak with parents about the district restructuring, how that would impact their kids, and also introduce them to family involvement opportunities including the action team and the 6 types. Our VISTA at the Central Office in Milwaukee organized a Family Empowerment Summit which brought together over 400 low income families to learn about summer learning opportunities in the community as well as engage in fun learning activities as a family.

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Performance Milestone

Milestone

School/district sites will have an identified process for partnerships that includes the Action Team for Partnerships.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

July 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

July 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Percent of Action Teams that have started work on next year action plan.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

Actual # or % to date

100 %

How Measured

NA

Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will ensure that Year-end UPDATE surveys and Action Plans are submitted to DPI.

Progress this Reporting Period

Sites have begun the planning process for 2011-2012 and UPDATE surveys were all submitted to DPI for review. These surveys will help to measure progress for all continuing sites.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

Families and community members will feel welcome in their local school, have an understanding of the importance of being involved in their children's learning, and know how to participate to help improve the educational progress and outcomes of their children.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Positive feedback on evaluations from events, programs and partnership activities. Every VISTA will survey families once each quarter to gauge effectiveness and usefulness of programming. Survey templates will be distributed by DPI.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

Actual # or % to date

75 %

How Measured

Pre/Post test

Description of Data Collection

At least 50% of families surveyed will indicate a positive experience with the site's partnership activity, event, or program.

Progress this Reporting Period

At Mitchell School in Milwaukee, 100% of families who completed an evaluation at the Family Health Night said that they got useful information to help their children at home and that they were confident in their own abilities to apply what they learned in working with their children. At the Family Empowerment Summit in Milwaukee, parents overwhelmingly reported that the information gained was useful and would allow them to help their children at home with homework and other learning activities.

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The community need statement

We know that when families are involved in their children's learning and know how to advocate for their children, students from all backgrounds, but especially low-income students, do better in school. They earn better grades, stay in school longer and go on to post-secondary education (Epstein and Henderson, et. al.). VISTAs in our project focus on schools identified for improvement (SIFI) under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and serve a high percentage of low income children and families. Greater economic opportunity is available to students who perform better in school and successfully graduate from high school. Strong partnerships with families is integral to addressing Wisconsin's achievement gap between students of color and their white peers; identified as the largest achievement gap in the country. Through family partnerships we can improve the educational experiences and outcomes of all students and families. Additionally, in an effort to provide comprehensive support to low income families, Wisconsin libraries are establishing job skills development programs to help individuals get the training they need to re-enter the work force. The unemployment rate in Wisconsin is over 8%. With resources available, individuals can build their own capacity to gain employment.

Goal Statement

The goal of the DPI VISTA Project is to build capacity for family involvement in low-income schools and communities by implementing a research-based, sustainable process for partnerships.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

All school/district VISTAs will coordinate family partnership activities that address the cultural and racial diversity of the site.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Each school/district VISTA will help facilitate at least ONE activity that provides opportunity for cultural exchange among families, students, staff, and community members at the site.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

20 #

Actual # or % to date

20 #

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

Action Plans and agendas of activities, as well as project descriptions, will be submitted by the VISTAs in bi-weekly and quarterly reports.

Progress this Reporting Period

At Amanda Vandehey's Cultural Night in Wausau, families were invited to share their cultural and ethnic differences through food, dance, song, and an interactive map that displayed where families and ancestor's originated. Kristen Donat's Pinata Night in Milwaukee allowed Mexican and Puerto Rican parents the opportunity to talk to each other and school staff about their childhoods and their experiences growing up in other countries. Translators helped all parents and teachers communicate with each other.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

All VISTAs will solicit monetary and in kind donations to enable low income families to attend events and participate in partnership activities.

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Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of donations received.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

40 #

Actual # or % to date

326 #

How Measured

NA

Description of Data Collection

Each VISTA will receive at least two monetary or in kind donations throughout the course of the year. Bi weekly reports will be used to collect this information from each VISTA member.

Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs secured an additional 92 donations this quarter. Most notably, Jon Peters, serving in Racine, secured over 30 donations for a Summer Activities Fair put on in May to help families learn about summer learning activities for their children. Additionally, Jenne Orcutt, serving in Wisconsin Rapids, secured over 10 donations that have been used for the summer school library program as incentives and other prizes.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

VISTAs will help sites in meeting the challenges of developing meaningful, reciprocal family partnerships.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

July 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

At least 75% of our school/district sites will indicate on their yearly UPDATE survey, making at least "good progress" on meeting the partnership challenges at their sites.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

75 %

Actual # or % to date

75 %

How Measured

Survey

Description of Data Collection

Data will be collected from the NNPS UPDATE survey each site must submit by June 30th.

Progress this Reporting Period

Sites have submitted their UPDATE surveys indicating progress made on meeting the challenges of meaningful family involvement. VISTA sites reported that on average, 70% of parents in the school attended a parent- teacher conference while the VISTA was serving, that almost 80% of teachers conducted a one on one parent meeting with each of his/her student's family, and that 60% of VISTA sites solved the challenge of communicating with non english speaking parents.

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Performance Milestone

Milestone

All sites will develop community partnerships to help implement programs, activities and sustain their work.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

Target # (number) or % (percent)

80 #

Actual # or % to date

139 #

How Measured

Survey

Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will report on the number of community partners in bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Each VISTA will develop at least 4 partnerships throughout their service year.

Progress this Reporting Period

An additional 23 partners were developed this quarter. Tracy Steffens, serving a second term in Oshkosh, formed a partnership with WISPIRG and their AmeriCorps program to bring some energy education to her site next year. She also partnered with a local restaurant to raise funds for the after school program. The restaurant has agreed to make the fundraiser an annual tradition to continue to support the school, students, and families.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

Community Volunteers (including individuals 55 and older) will provide the people power and support in order for all sites to implement events, activities, and sustain partnership programs.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

community volunteers recruited

Target # (number) or % (percent)

200 #

Actual # or % to date

1626 #

How Measured

NA

Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will report on the number of volunteers recruited through bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Each VISTA will recruit 10 volunteers over the course of their service year.

Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs continue to recruit volunteers so that they can implement programs and activities at their sites. Angie Domagalski and Bix Firer, serving in Milwaukee, reported a total of 22 volunteers this quarter while Heather Keyes, serving at the Indian Community School in Franklin, recruited 16.

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Performance Milestone

Milestone

Library sites will have an established process for offering employment assistance and skills development to community members.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug. 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

The number of libraries who have employment skills/development programs or centers.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

3 #

Actual # or % to date

3 #

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will report on their progress through bi-weekly and quarterly reports. All libraries will have an established job help program or center.

Progress this Reporting Period

All three library sites have job help programs or centers that are assisting low income and unemployed individuals look for jobs, update their resume, and apply for benefits such as foodshare.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

Community members will benefit personally and professionally from the resources and training opportunities at library sites.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

participants

Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

Actual # or % to date

75 %

How Measured

Survey

Description of Data Collection

Library users will complete a feedback survey to share their stories. At least 50% of users will indicate a positive experience with library job help programs or centers either in terms of gaining employment or learning new and useful skills.

Progress this Reporting Period

Surveys from the Madison and Fond du Lac libraries were completed in previous quarters. This quarter our third library site, Racine, distributed and collected surveys from patrons at the library. Over half of the patrons surveyed indicated that because of the recession and tough job market, they were using the library more than they had before the recession.

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Performance Milestone

Milestone

Staff at school/district sites will support and encourage the work of the VISTA member and the family partnership program each member and supervisor helps to develop and implement.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

participants

Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

Actual # or % to date

50 %

How Measured

Survey

Description of Data Collection

50% of staff at each site who work with families will be trained in the Six Types of Family Involvement, the Action Team for Partnerships model, and the VISTA project.

Progress this Reporting Period

All VISTAs have provided or made available training on the VISTA project and our partnership model to staff at their sites. This was accomplished through webinars, trainings from Parents Plus (the statewide PIRC and one of our project's partners), as well as the Beyond Random Acts of Partnership conference in Milwaukee on March 23.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

District sites will support family partnership programs at individual schools through providing resources, trainings, and technical assistance.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

participants

Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

Actual # or % to date

100 %

How Measured

Survey

Description of Data Collection

All district sites will offer one or more of the following: 1) training on the ATP process, 2) district wide newsletter to disseminate promising partnership practices, 3) surveys to collect feedback and input from families or 4) publications/reports.

Progress this Reporting Period

All of our district sites offer one of the services listed above, the most common being district wide newsletters to promote partnerships and share resources. However, several district sites also distributed surveys to all families and offered training for schools on the partnership model. All district sites are making plans to offer these same services in the next year.

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Performance Milestone

Milestone

Former VISTA sites will be supported and partnerships will be sustained through the creation of a statewide network.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Ongoing

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Percentage of former sites surveyed who report that partnership activities established during the VISTA grant are continuing.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

Actual # or % to date

80 %

How Measured

NA

Description of Data Collection

Phone surveys and in person interviews will be conducted with former sites to determine the lasting impact of the VISTA. Additionally, all former sites will receive a statewide newsletter and continued support and technical assistance from DPI.

Progress this Reporting Period

A survey of former sites was conducted last quarter by VISTA project staff. 80% of sites reported that partnership efforts started by the VISTA were still continuing after their VISTA finished their service. In addition, 100% of sites reported that their partnership programs and efforts improved after hosting a VISTA member. We plan to survey former sites once each year to maintain a connection, learn of their progress, and offer ongoing technical assistance and support.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

30 USDA Summer VISTA Summer Associates will work to raise the awareness of hunger in Wisconsin, provide resources and assistance to families who live in food insecure households, and provide nutrition education to low-income families and children in attendance at summer school and reading programs.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

June-August 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of unduplicated children and youth receiving nutrition education with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity and increase healthy eating habits

Target # (number) or % (percent)

150 #

Actual # or % to date

837 #

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

Reports and activity logs will be collected from all USDA Summer Associates.

Progress this Reporting Period

Final numbers and progress will be reported in the fourth quarter.

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Performance Milestone

Milestone

30 USDA Summer VISTA Summer Associates will work to raise the awareness of hunger in Wisconsin, provide resources and assistance to families who live in food insecure households, and provide nutrition education to low-income families and children in attendance at summer school and reading programs.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

June-August 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of food insecure families made aware of a new food resource (SNAP, Summer Food Service Programs, Farmer's Markets, Community Gardens, Food Banks)

Target # (number) or % (percent)

300 #

Actual # or % to date

1868 #

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

Reports and activity logs will be collected from all USDA Summer Associates.

Progress this Reporting Period

Final numbers and progress will be reported in the fourth quarter.

Performance Milestone

Milestone

20 Summer VISTA Summer Associates will work to improve educational outcomes for low income children through summer reading and literacy programs or college access and preparation programs. Summer Associates will encourage literacy and engage children in library summer reading programs and encourage college access through summer college preparation and readiness programs.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

June-August 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of unduplicated children and youth enrolling in summer reading programs with the purpose of minimizing the summer slide low income children experience.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

250 #

Actual # or % to date

10535 #

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

Reports and activity logs will be collected from 20 Summer Associates.

Progress this Reporting Period

Final numbers and progress will be reported in the fourth quarter.

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Performance Milestone

Milestone

20 Summer VISTA Summer Associates will work to improve educational outcomes for low income children through summer reading and literacy programs or college access and preparation programs. Summer Associates will encourage literacy and engage children in library summer reading programs and encourage college access through summer college preparation and readiness programs.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

June-August 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress:

Number of unduplicated children and youth enrolling in college access and preparation programs with the purpose of increasing the number of low income children successfully matriculating into college.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 #

Actual # or % to date

35 #

How Measured

Activity log

Description of Data Collection

Reports and activity logs will be collected from Summer Associates.

Progress this Reporting Period

Final numbers and progress will be reported in the fourth quarter.

Narratives

Challenges

A big challenge we faced this quarter was retention during the recruitment process. We had several candidates drop out after they had accepted the position and completed the paperwork. Though we had enough candidates to fill any slots left open by dropped candidates, it was a frustrating experience and caused extra work on the part of Project staff.

We attribute a lot of this to the fact that many programs (including many programs in Wisconsin) are often competing for the same select group of candidates. We would be very interested in collaborating more on the recruitment process so that all sponsors can share candidates and determine which program is the best fit for which candidate. If possible, it would be very helpful if the State Office could help facilitate this even if it's just a joint conference call before recruitment season begins so that we could share ideas for working together better and helping each other out if we do have candidates drop.

In addition to greater cross project collaboration, we have also decided to modify the What You Need to Know Before Beginning Service document so that it clearly indicates the impact of dropping out after committing. This might be something the State Office would like to consider as well. We want to communicate clearly to VISTAs that if they are not 100% committed, they should not accept the position and that if they drop out, it is very possible we may not be able to replace them, meaning their site is left without a VISTA. While this message is communicated verbally and through email, it might also help if it were part of the contract the VISTAs sign before officially enrolling.

Recruitment

During this quarter we finalized recruitment for our 2 July slots and 14 August slots (including 1 VISTA Leader). Much work, especially on the part of our two VISTA Leaders, was dedicated to screening, interviewing, and finalizing our VISTAs for next year. We are very pleased with our new VISTA corps- they are bringing different strengths to the project and come from education, social work, non profit and business backgrounds. Our final 2011-2012 VISTA members are:

Sarah Abbey, Janesville
Samantha Aguirre, Racine
Bethany Bridges (second term), Milwaukee
Bix Firer (through November), Milwaukee
Katherine Foster (leader), Madison
Margot Geisthardt, Milwaukee
Mike Hickey, Milwaukee
Brandon Jackson (through November), Milwaukee
Maureen Kelly, Janesville
Heather Keyes (second term), Franklin
Liz Klapheke, Janesville
Maya Mazul, Milwaukee
Jenne Orcutt (through November), Wisconsin Rapids
Stephanie Payne, Milwaukee
Juanita Peck (through November), Altoona
Jon Peters (through November), Racine
Amanda Scherer, Beloit
Melissa Stephenson, Madison
Tim Rogers, Wausau
Kristin Vandenhouten, Madison
Katelyn Zilles, Beloit

In total, we received 10 applications for the leader position, 124 applications for our VISTA positions, and 113 for our summer VISTA positions.

Our final sites for the 2011-2012 school year are as follows:

- * Alexander Mitchell School, Milwaukee (continuing site)
- * Altoona School District (continuing site)
- * Clarke Street School, Milwaukee (continuing site)

Narratives

- * Craig High School, Janesville (new site)
- * Edison Middle School, Janesville (new site)
- * Emerson Elementary School, Madison (new site)
- * Grove Elementary School, Wisconsin Rapids (continuing site)
- * Hopkins Lloyd Community School, Milwaukee (new site)
- * Indian Community School, Franklin (continuing site)
- * Janesville School District (new site)
- * Leopold Elementary School, Madison (new site)
- * Milwaukee PTA (continuing site)
- * Milwaukee Public Schools Central Office (continuing site)
- * Milwaukee Public Schools Metro Region (continuing site)
- * Parker High School, Janesville (new site)
- * Racine Unified School District (continuing site)
- * School District of Beloit (continuing site)
- * Wausau School District (continuing site)

Training/Technical Assistance Needs

We ask VISTAs to indicate any training and technical assistance needs on every bi-weekly and quarterly report. This helps us provide assistance on an ongoing basis or connect VISTAs with resources that would help them solve their challenge. VISTA Leaders and the Project Coordinator meet regularly to discuss what training requests have gone unmet and how we could best serve those VISTAs.

Due to requests from VISTAs and in response to the needs of VISTA sites, we offered a Sustainability and Transition webinar in April to review some important steps VISTAs should take towards sustainability. This webinar was co-led by one of our VISTAs, Amanda Vandehey, in Wausau. We reviewed items like the sustainability binder and what should be included in it, as well as ideas for how to help the next VISTA transition into their position smoothly.

We followed up this webinar with a conference call specifically for sites who were not hosting VISTAs the next year to discuss what was unique to their sustainability efforts. This conference call was facilitated by 2nd year VISTA member Tracy Steffens. VISTAs shared how they were engaging their staff, volunteers and parents to help take over in the next year.

In an effort to improve how the project offers support and technical assistance to VISTAs, we hosted a VISTA Focus Group in July. This brought 5 VISTAs from across the state to talk about their experiences and reflect on the year. We asked each VISTA what they would change about our program for the next year and what they would keep and not change about our program. We had some excellent discussion and have new ideas to support our VISTAs in 2011-2012.

Partnership/Collaboration Development

End of Year Retreat 2011

On June 17, 2011 the DPI VISTA project, in collaboration with WI Campus Compact and the Wisconsin State Office, hosted an End of Year Retreat at Devil's Lake State Park. All VISTAs from across the state were invited and encouraged to attend. The retreat was a fun way to bring together VISTAs who had met at the beginning of the year at the In-Service Training. The retreat included a service project arranged by park rangers which was done in exchange for our free entrance to the park. After the service project, VISTAs gathered for a potluck style lunch. After lunch, two VISTAs facilitated several reflection activities. This was a great opportunity for VISTAs to think about their year of service and how it had impacted them and their communities. Finally, the state office staff and project coordinators presented certificates of recognition to each VISTA. The remainder of the day was spent on the beach swimming, playing Frisbee, and enjoying the company of fellow VISTAs.

In Service Training

The DPI VISTA project is again collaborating with Wisconsin Campus Compact and the State Office to offer a statewide In-Service Training for any VISTA in Wisconsin. This training will be held September 21-23 in Green Lake and will feature trainings on grant writing, community development, social media, partnership development, power and privilege and poverty. We look forward to providing high quality professional development to VISTA members in the DPI Project, the WICC project but also in several other VISTA projects from across the state. We hope that this training will help to create community among VISTAs and we plan to do follow up webinars throughout the year to reinforce what was learned and allow for further collaboration.

Narratives

Finally, the DPI VISTA Project continues to monitor and support the statewide VISTA list serv which is a communication tool for all Wisconsin VISTAs.

In addition to the statewide collaboration our Project does, our VISTAs also place a lot of emphasis on establishing partnerships in their communities. This quarter, VISTAs established a total of 23 new partners, most of these being local community agencies, local businesses, and occasionally, individuals. Because of the work Angela Rumsey, our VISTA with the MPS Central Office, did to implement the Family Empowerment Summit in June, she developed three new partnerships for MPS including the YMCA, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, and UW- Milwaukee. She hopes that these partnerships will continue each year as they work together to make the Family Empowerment Summit an annual event. Juanita Peck, serving the Altoona School District, established some creative partnerships this quarter including with a local radio station and the Marshfield Clinic.

Resource Development

VISTAs continue to generate in kind and monetary donations (in addition to volunteers) to support the work they are doing at their sites. Three examples are provided below that demonstrate the way VISTAs are securing donations and resources for their communities.

Kathy Lewis, Ashland

- \$300 Native Aspirations grant for Youth and Family Open House supplies
- \$30 chocolate bars for tutor gifts
- 12 notebook/pen pen set for tutor gifts
- Little Ceaser discount on 100 pizzas
- Pepsi donated half of the soda for CCC celebration
- (10) BART bus passes

Jenne Orcutt, Wisconsin Rapids

- \$25 Wal-Mart gift card
- \$70 worth of coupons from several local businesses in town including: Subway, Arby's, Burger King, Checkers, Culver's and Taco John's
- \$35 dollars in used books
- \$30 worth of blank DVDs and paper sleeves for our "Welcome to Grove" DVD
- \$20 worth of supplies for Library Night
- \$50 worth of books for our Book BINGO event
- \$15 worth of juice to the Indoor Movie Night
- \$100 cash raised from our DVD fundraiser

Jon Peters, Racine

- \$20, Pre College Basket
- \$200 for prizes
- \$200 Free Week of Lessons & Uniform
- \$15 RADD T-shirt
- \$50 Picnic Basket w/ supplies
- \$50 family fun basket
- \$500 for food
- \$50 Family Fun Pack (4- tickets, train rides and encounters)
- \$40 4 tickets to Music on the March field show Aug 5.
- 1 case of 8 boxes of microwave popcorn. \$120 value
- \$189 Free Birthday Package
- \$100 Mad science fun kit
- \$10 Tote bag with school supplies canvas book bag with a dozen
- brand new children's books valued at \$250.

Narratives

- \$129 DVD Player
- \$10 Games (5)
- \$150 - 3 month membership
- \$24 Family 4-pack for Racine Children's Theatre 2011-2012 Season
- \$290 TWO Kids class Vouchers
- \$37.50 10 boxes of cookies
- \$35 Gift Bag of Gateway branded items
- \$50 GIFT
- \$290, 2 Caron Butler Wizard jerseys, 1 Caron Butler All Star jersey, 1 Caron Butler Action picture/poster
- 2 Donald Driver books: Quickie Makes the Team
- 2 Donald Driver books: Quickie Handles a Loss
- \$112 - 2 tickets to Six Flags Great America
- \$10 Gift Certificate (2)
- \$540.00 Free week of summer camp -Drawing at booth
- \$12 - 25oz. BPA/Lead Free Live United Water Bottle and Live United grocery chico bag
- \$5 STICKER/ COLORING BOOK
- \$20 gift certificate to GreebHeart Fair Trade Shop and CCI t-shirt
- 1 \$25 gift card
- 1 box nylon carry bags (362 pieces) \$100
- 1 \$20 gift card
- \$30 3- 2 for 1 Golf Certificates
- Free Rec registration for the 2011/12 Soccer year Valued appx. -\$100.00
- \$500 in snacks
- \$900 in price reduction at Festival Hall

Sustainability

This quarter we asked all VISTAs to write and submit a Sustainability Letter with their Quarterly Reports to help ease the transition to a new VISTA, staff or volunteer who will be picking up where the current VISTA leaves off. We provide the following prompts in this letter:

1. Looking back, these are some things I wish I knew when I was getting started.....
2. When I first started my service, these resources were invaluable to me. I really relied on these people and these things to get me through.....
3. I learned a lot from my year of service. Here are a few of my lessons learned.....
4. Also, I want to provide you with my best tips for how to do your work effectively.....
5. There were some key individuals at my site that I considered allies and I know they will be willing and eager to work with you too. I wanted to tell you a little about each of them.....
6. During my year of service, I have really started to think of the big picture in terms of sustainability. So far, I think these efforts and initiatives (i.e. volunteer recruitment and fundraising) show the most promise and progress.....
7. After serving at this site for a year, I consider these to be some possible next steps to help sustain the work VISTAs have done.....

This quarter, we wanted to share some of the insights and progress towards sustainability from some of our VISTA members. We pull key advice from everyone's letters to share with all VISTAs and then provide each VISTA at a continuing site with the letter from the previous VISTA.

Exerpts from this year's letters follow.

Emily Caragianis

-Don't get discouraged if things don't happen on your timetable. I started my term with a million ideas and I wanted them to happen all at once! It's important to pace yourself and not force through changes or programs that don't have the full buy-in of your site or the families. Take inventory of the environment and shape your ideas to fit what's around you, not the other way around.

-Make the effort to connect with other VISTAs. Your job is unique and it's difficult for people to understand the challenges that your job and the VISTA experience as a whole can present.

Narratives

-Go to stuff. BMHS football games, Chamber of Commerce events, open houses. You never know who you will meet at these things. And bring business cards! (go to www.vistaprint.com to get some made for free!)

Angie Domagalski and Bix Firer

-This year we've really learned how to take initiative. It is necessary in order to be a successful VISTA that you are able to identify areas where the mission of your work is applicable and apply yourself to those needs. Often the work you do won't be something you are assigned, but a need you identified and received buy-in to fulfill.

-Share your successes and your frustrations. In both cases talking to others will help you think more clearly. Your fellow VISTAs, the Parents Plus team and the Metro Region staff are all resources.

Kristen Donat

-Be patient. Change is a slow process. At the same time, be persistent. Do not feel bad for reminding people or 'bugging' them. Staff, teachers and parents have a lot on their plate. Sometimes people genuinely forget about things that need to get done, or things they have committed to doing (especially if it is not a priority to them) and they are usually glad to be reminded of something they forgot.

-Keep an eye open for opportunities to build relationships. For example, I helped a teacher reorganize her room one day after school. After that day we had a very strong relationship. She did not mind checking translations for me, and would help translate conversations between her classroom parent volunteers and me.

Mike Valente

One major lesson I learned was to get as involved as you can. Beyond the Action Team, I participated in the Learning Team, Positive Behavior and Support (PBIS) Team, as well as the helping out with the PTO/ School Governance Council Meetings and Clarke Street School staff meetings. In this way you can play intermediary and share what one group is working on with another group -- with the goal of having them eventually working together.

Also, I want to provide you with my best tips for how to do your work effectively: Sometimes you just have to say "no". There is a lot of work to be done at Clarke, and sometimes as the VISTA you might feel like you are getting pulled in many directions. That is why sometimes, you need to set boundaries, and make certain things a priority while being ok with putting other things on the "back burner".

Amanda Vandehey

-Networking or talking to people about F.U.N. at any chance you have will be worth it.

-Even if everything doesn't go quite like you had planned, don't worry about it too much because chances are things still went well. For example, if something happens at an event, as long as the participants are having fun and learning it was a success.

-Be patient and check what types of steps you need to take ahead of time.

Multi-Site Performance

To truly show the impact our VISTAs are having on all of our sites, we wanted to share some quotes from the staff, families, and community members at our sites.

Kathy Lewis, Ashland High School

"While you were gone, it really put into perspective how much you do for CCC and how much we appreciate your work." -Joe Corbine

Emily Minerath, Madison Public Library

"The job search is the most difficult thing I have ever had to do... emotional obstacles can be paralyzing-sometimes over just one word. So this helps- big time!"-Job Help Center user

"[The volunteer] was very helpful and went above the call of duty considering our time allotment."-Job Help Center user

Jenne Orcutt, Grove Elementary, Wisconsin Rapids

"It has been my pleasure to work with you this past year as the Grove VISTA Volunteer. You have taken on projects and responsibilities that have had positive effects on Grove. The orientation video turned out to be an adorable "Welcome to Grove." -Principal

Narratives

Jon Peters, Racine Unified School District

"This (the Summer Activities Fair) was so great to see all the summer activities in one place." - Summer Activities Fair attendee

Amanda Shapiro, West Allis-West Milwaukee School District

"I'm really going to miss you. You made such a difference for my daughter." -Parent

Mike Valente, Clarke Street School, Milwaukee

"You really have to leave us?" -School staff

Thank you for all you have done this year to help Clarke become more successful" -Literacy coach

"I really looked forward to the Clarke Connection every month -- I really hope it can continue next year" -2nd Grade teacher

Amanda Vandehey, Wausau School District

"I think this is a vital link between home and school and parent education." -Staff Member on F.U.N. program

"Thank you for developing educational programs for families in the Wausau School District." -Staff Member

Katrina Waldron, Madison School District

"Katrina, thank you for inviting me to the Intercambio program. It is so special for me to learn English" -Parent

"Thanks for all your efforts. It's all coming together wonderfully!" (regarding School Garden Night) -Staff Member

Other Accomplishments

Spring Site Visits

Site visits were conducted by the Project Coordinator and the VISTA Leaders throughout the months of March and April for all VISTA members that began their service in November. Sites visited were Altoona School District, Milwaukee Public Schools Metro Region, Milwaukee PTA, Racine Unified School District and Grove Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids. The purpose of the site visits were to check-in with the VISTA member and the site supervisor on the progress of the VISTA project at their site. The visits were also a way to reconnect with the members and supervisors and to provide feedback and support. At new sites questions related to successes, challenges, support, and preparedness were addressed. At continuing sites questions related to successes, challenges, sustainability, and building on the previous year(s) were addressed.

End of Year Presentations

This term we started a new requirement for VISTAs: End of Year Presentations. The goal of these presentations is to share the successes of their year with staff and families and also to inform others about the work of VISTA in their communities. Each VISTA was required to submit a plan to us in early spring about what their presentation would include. VISTAs were encouraged to be creative with their presentations including videos, presentations, and newsletters. The VISTA project coordinator and leaders were fortunate to attend several of the presentations. Emily Caragianis in Beloit shared her successes with her school community during the grand opening of the school's new DaVinci room (interactive play and science space for kids) and family resource room. Brittany Williams did a presentation about her three years of service with GEAR UP at the program's banquet and recognition event. Bethany Bridges collaborated with Jon Peters and produced a video that describes the VISTA project and includes interviews of the project coordinator, VISTAs, and VISTA supervisors. This video will be aired on the Racine School District television station. The VISTA leaders were able to present to an audience of DPI staff about VISTA project successes as a whole. Similarly, the three library VISTAs presented to DPI staff about the unique library sites and how they worked with economic recovery and job help efforts. This requirement of end of year presentations will continue to be a great way for VISTAs to wrap up their term and leave behind a legacy of service and success.

Governor's Service Recognition Award

Each year Serve Wisconsin presents the Governor's Service Recognition Awards to outstanding national service participants in Wisconsin. Those chosen for the awards demonstrate that they are meeting their community's needs and helping solve serious social issues. We are happy to share that one of our VISTA members, Tracy Steffens at Washington Elementary School in Oshkosh, was chosen to receive the award for AmeriCorps*VISTA Participant of the Year. All of the award winners, including

Narratives

Tracy, and guests gathered at the Monona Terrace in Madison on April 6th for a luncheon and ceremony. The Lieutenant Governor spoke about service and presented the awards to all of the recipients.

Tracy has committed to two years of service to Washington School as a VISTA member. During the past year and a half, Tracy has started an after school program, increased parental involvement, created numerous community partnerships, increased the number of volunteers serving the school, developed a volunteer training program, and facilitated an Action Team for Partnerships to continue the work in the years to come. The impact Tracy has made on the students, staff, and families of the Washington community will last long after her service is completed. Washington School and the entire DPI VISTA project have benefitted greatly from Tracy's service.

Stories

Emily Minerath at the Madison Public Library is excited about the sustainability of her job help program. The partnership she has nurtured with the UW Writing Center, renamed Madison Writing Assistance, is the single biggest step toward sustainability of the job program. Three graduate students, who have all worked with the program, will be running this program as part of their assistantships. The center will be paying English and Rhetoric & Composition graduate students hourly to do the job help sessions. By offering fewer assistantships and freeing up some other funding the center will be able to continue paying the students after the LSTA grant funds (currently funding the job help program) are exhausted.

Kathy Lewis, at Ashland High School, participated in the Bad River Youth and Family Open House, a collaboration of 45 organizations that serve the Ashland and Bad River area youth and families. This public event was attended by 485 people in the area. Kathy hosted a booth that promoted the work of the CCC anti-bullying program at the high school as well as information about AmeriCorps VISTA. She also helped to create craft projects for young children during the day and coordinated prizes for a raffle drawing.

Heather Keyes, at Indian Community School, was successful in recruiting community members for the family craft nights. This first Ribbon Shirt making craft club was a great opportunity for parents to learn how to make traditional ribbon shirts. Families were then able to wear the shirts during special ceremonies. Heather hopes to continue this special part of the new craft club for families throughout the next school year.

Kristen Donat was proud of finishing and piloting the Family Math Program at Mitchell Elementary School. The goal of the program is to teach parents how to support their children in math by encouraging and guiding children to discover their own strategies to solve problems. By the end of the program parents will know what questions they can ask to help their child when they are stuck. The pilot session introduced the problem solving process that students are taught to use in school, problem solving strategies, and techniques parents can use to help their children at home. Parents were given a Problem Solvers Handbook with practice word problems and a Math Activity Book which teaches and supports math skills and concepts. All of the tools were designed to be used by parents even if they do not know how to solve the problem themselves. Next year they plan on continuing this program and as staff buy-in grows so will parent participation.

Jon Peters was very pleased with the success of the Summer Activities Fair in Racine that he organized with the help of the Racine Unified School District and the Community Partners Committee. The event took place at Festival Hall in downtown Racine and welcomed over 825 attendees and 42 community organizations hosting information booths. Families were able to learn about and register for a wide variety of summer opportunities for their children. In addition to the booths there was food, entertainment, crafts, and door prizes. This event was such a success that plans are already in the works for next year.

Mike Valente, at Clarke Street School, has focused on sustainability work to ensure that his efforts will continue with the new VISTA. Especially because the school will be without a parent coordinator next school year, Mike has created an online resource, a Google website, that will host all of the parental involvement materials. This way the new VISTA, as well as other Clarke staff will have access to the flyers, handouts, agendas, etc. that he has worked on.

Katrina Waldron's Garden Night at Midvale Elementary was a fantastic success since it involved community and school faculty collaboration and solid planning among the garden committee members. All of the efforts paid off as they had over 300 guests, including families, students, and neighbors, for dinner. The guests were also able to tour the school and community garden and participate in garden activities. They also raised over \$200 even though it had not been promoted as a fundraiser event! Wonderful compliments about the event kept coming even two weeks after the event.

Narratives

Josh Cowles created two video presentations that give a clear sense of what the DPI VISTA project is about, what VISTA is as a national service organization, and what the impact of VISTA has been on the Fond du Lac Library. The video features interviews with library staff, fellow VISTAs, and DPI VISTA Staff and was shown to DPI staff in July. The video will be shown to Fond du Lac Library staff before Josh finishes his service in August.

Brandon Jackson, with the Milwaukee PTA, was able to present a workshop at the Wisconsin PTA Convention. His presentation, titled "Bringing in parents: creative & effective methods of diversifying parent recruitment" focused on how important it is to attend to the needs of all parents while educating parents on collectively identifying their talents, strong points, and needs of their child. His message was that "No one parent can be left out, it takes us all"! Brandon received very encouraging and positive responses to his workshop.

Juanita Peck has found great ways to network with her local community. She has found the local UW Extension office especially to be a great source of information and other resources across the state. With their help she was able to score the latest editions of several resource guides for the families at the Altoona School District including a Food Resource Guide for Eau Claire County, JOBS ROAD MAP for Eau Claire County and Eau Claire County Resource Directory. She has also been able to book speakers for teacher in-services and speakers for a month-long series of workshops for parents in celebration of the Month of the Young Adolescent (MOYA) in October.

Angela Rumsey's first Milwaukee Public Schools Family Empowerment Summit was a great success. The planning committee included parents and staff from a number of community organizations, so there was a lot of buy in from the community. Families came and enjoyed workshops, games and activities, a resource fair, lunch, and a speech by former Green Bay Packer LeRoy Butler. The evaluations were very positive, and she hopes next year's event can be even more successful.

Tracy Steffens at Washington Elementary had a big success with the Cranky Pat's pizza fundraiser. Cranky Pat's, a pizzeria in Oshkosh, started to designate one Monday a month for an organization to donate 100% of the profits back to that organization. Cranky Pat's did not suspect that Washington would have such a large crowd and even had to call in extra cooks towards the end of the night. The Lighted School House after school program raised over \$1500 in that one night!

Bethany Bridges completed a parent database for Wadewitz Elementary School that will allow teachers and school staff to connect more easily with parents in the future.

Emily Caragianis knows that starting at a new school can be difficult for both students and families. Families that will be new to Cunningham Elementary next year because of the school district's reconfiguration were invited to an open house to tour the school and meet the new principal. Emily helped them feel more welcome by giving a tour of the brand new DaVinci Room and Family Resource Center and providing information about the Six Types and the school Action Team.

Angie Domagalski and Bix Firer organized a fundraiser to raise money for a community garden internship for high school students. A local establishment volunteered to host the event where a silent auction, with works donated by local artists, happened early in the evening. Later, several local musicians performed for the audience. The artists, musicians, and venue agreed that all the profits from the evening would go directly to the garden project. Thanks to a supportive community and a large crowd they raised nearly \$1,300 for the project.

Jenne Orcutt, with the help of school staff and action team members, organized an "Explore the Library Night" event. This event allowed students and their families to have fun while exploring what the library has to offer and learning about parent resources. There were read alouds, fun activities, games, raffle prizes, and a snack. This event was a great way to welcome families into the library and help them become more acquainted and familiar with what is available. Parents also were provided some individual time to learn while the children were entertained with a story.

Amber Richardson worked on the Racine Public Library's "Walk a Book Event" in which local artists created the scenes of a book with their artwork. The original artwork was displayed at the library and then auctioned off with all proceeds going to the library. Amber coordinated the volunteers for this event and managed to recruit enough volunteers that the art was able to be on display the entire week during all open library hours. The auction and after hours event that followed was a huge success and raised over \$2,000 for the library's youth services department.

Amanda Shapiro helped to implement and redesign the logistics of the classes at two sites for the West Allis/West Milwaukee

Narratives

School District Summer Adventure program. This program is targeted for low income students and provides summer classes that are taught by certified, district teachers. Amanda has also been present at the program to guide and interact with parents.

Amanda Vandehey helped to organize "Around the World in Story and Song" event for the Wausau School District Family University Network. Students from two summer school sites attended the event at the public library in which the stories and songs represented a variety of cultures around the world. Parents were invited to attend the storytelling and all enjoyed the stories and presentation of cultures from around the world. Additionally, one of the parents that attended was a School Board Member; which was the first time a Board Member was present at a F.U.N. event.

Attachments and Links

Links:

DPI VISTA YouTube Channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/widpivista>

April Newsletter:

<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr04-11.pdf>

May Newsletter:

<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr05-11.pdf>

June Newsletter:

<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr06-11.pdf>

VISTA Voices:

<https://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/Promising-Practices>

Sustainability section on VISTA Google Site:

<https://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/resources-1/sustainability>

Power and privilege section on VISTA Google Site:

<https://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/resources-1/power-and-privilege-resources>

Attachments:

Family Ancestry Activity from Amanda Vandehey, Wausau

Clarke Street School May Newspaper from Mike Valente, Milwaukee

Picture from Summer Activities Fair from Jon Peters, Racine

Family Night Evaluation form from Kristen Donat, Milwaukee

Final School Newsletter from Heather Keyes, Franklin

School Improvement Plan Night Evaluation from Jenne Orcutt, Wisconsin Rapids

DPI New VISTA Welcome Packet