

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: 01/01/2011 to 03/31/2011

Data Updates

# of VISTA Members on board at end of reporting period	24
# of Community Volunteers serving who are Baby Boomers	99
Dollar value of cash resources developed by VISTA Members	10834
# of Service Hours performed by Community Volunteers	4194
Dollar value of non-cash resources developed by VISTA Members	10139
# of VISTA Members supported by cost share	2
# of Community Volunteers serving	476

Member and Sponsor Development

	Americorps *VISTA Members	Supervisors	CNCS Funded	Funded by Other Source	Comments
On-Site Orientation	0	0	N	N	
Community Outreach	24	6	Y	N	
Community Volunteer Generation/Recruitment	10	4	Y	Y	
Effective Volunteer Management	10	4	Y	Y	
Resource Mapping	0	0	N	N	
Resource Development/Fundraising	6	0	Y	N	
Grant Writing	3	0	N	Y	
Organizational Development	24	13	Y	N	
Performance Measures	24	25	Y	N	
Tracking Systems	24	25	Y	N	
Information Technology	24	5	Y	N	
Developing On-Site Orientations and Training Plans	0	0	N	N	
Other (Please Specify)	24	8	Y	Y	Partnerships, Power and Privilege, Social Media, Using Data, Life after VISTA

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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

83 %

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

The majority of our schools have established Action Teams with two new additional teams this past quarter. These teams will be working on their one year action plan in Quarter 3 to help sustain partnership activities for the 2011-2012 school year. All of our school sites who will not be receiving VISTA members next year have ATPs developed. Additionally, Bethany Bridges, serving at Wadewitz Elementary School got her action team up and running this quarter with the help of her supervisor, the P5 Coordinator. This team will be a primary focus for the next VISTA.

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

December 2010

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 submitted asset maps with their fourth or first quarter reports.

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Performance Milestone

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

26 #

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

As of this quarter we have exceeded our goal of 20 grants to be written and submitted by VISTA members. Several of our VISTAs have written more than one grant to help fund programs, events, or parent involvement efforts at their sites. Angie Domagalski wrote a Do Something and Big Idea grant this quarter to support partnership activities at the 9 high schools within the Metro Region in MPS. Kathy Lewis, serving in Ashland, wrote an All State Foundation grant to support anti bullying efforts at Ashland High School. Tracy Steffens, serving at Washington Elementary School in Oshkosh, helped to write a Fund for Teachers grant with staff at her school to provide curriculum training for teachers in Ireland.

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

259 #

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 have implemented an additional 124 activities this quarter in collaboration with staff at their sites and their

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action teams. Amanda Vandehey, serving with the Wausau School District, hosted a World Day of Snowman event at the district's school forest to engage families in fun winter activities and science learning activities. Emily Minerath, at the Madison Public Library, helped to organize a comprehensive Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program that was free to the community. This was a partnership between the library, the Department of Revenue, and Edgewood College and throughout the program (which lasted several months), volunteers helped over 500 individuals with their tax returns, all low and moderate income.

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

0 %

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

UPDATE surveys and Action Plans will be collected in Quarter 3.

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

50 %

How Measured

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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

VISTAs continue to survey parents and families to gauge the effectiveness of programming. Feedback has been positive and families report satisfaction with the opportunities they receive to get involved in their children's education. At a recent Cultural Carnival at Cunningham Elementary School, 100% of attendees responded favorably on the evaluation with the majority of them reporting that personal contact from the school and the encouragement of their children were the biggest factors in getting them to attend. At parent focus groups held at Alexander Mitchell School in Milwaukee, parents commented on what they would like to see at the school to help them connect with their children's learning and education. All participants indicated that what they enjoyed most were the Family Nights offered. They also contributed suggestions for future services including computer classes and more structured time for parents to meet with teachers.

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

12 #

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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

We had five additional events this quarter that allowed for cultural exchange among families and staff at VISTA sites. We expect that the rest of our VISTAs will address this performance measure in the third quarter. In particular, Kristen Donat at Mitchell Elementary School organized a Memory Map activity during her parent focus groups that allowed parents and staff to share their stories- where they grew up and what their childhood experiences had been. They had a very diverse group of parents for this discussion as some of the parents were raised in Mexico or Puerto Rico while others were raised in the community around Mitchell. Additionally, Mike Valente, at Clarke Street School in Milwaukee organized a Black History program and potluck to bring families together to listen to presentations by students and staff.

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.

Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

Actual Period of Accomplishment

October 2010

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of donations received.

Target # (number) or % (percent)

40 #

Actual # or % to date

235 #

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 received 96 donations this quarter for their events, programs, and family partnership efforts. Ellen Carpenter, serving in Madison received 16 donations for a total of over \$1500; Katrina Waldron, also serving in Madison, received 11 donations for a total of over \$500; and Jenne Orcutt, serving in Wisconsin Rapids, received 4 donations for over \$1,000. VISTAs are finding effective ways to partner with businesses to provide services and resources despite budget cuts.

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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

July 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

0 %

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

UPDATE survey data will be available in Quarter 3.

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

March 2011

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

Target # (number) or % (percent)

80 #

Actual # or % to date

116 #

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

All VISTAs have established at least 4 partnerships this year, with a total of 56 for this quarter. These partnerships are creating sustainability at their sites. Emily Caragianis, serving with Cunningham Elementary School in Beloit, partnered with Kiwanis, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Beloit College Dancers, and Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation Business/Education Partnership Committee. This is a group of community members from local business and education who meet once a month to discuss ways to improve schools in order to improve the community as a whole. All of these partners will be providing services to families at the school and contributing to their efforts to maintain a family partnership program.

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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

October 2010

Indicator/Evidence of Progress

community volunteers recruited

Target # (number) or % (percent)

200 #

Actual # or % to date

1239 #

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 recruited 475 volunteers this quarter to help run events, work with students and assist with family nights and programs. Volunteers are a critical piece to sustainability and VISTAs are not only recruiting volunteers but training them, supporting them, and developing databases so that the site can continue to draw on their talents after the VISTA has finished his/her term of service.

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

March 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 VISTA sites have established programs for employment skills/development. These centers offer one on one assistance as well as workshops and classes for individuals looking to find new employment or re-enter the workforce. All three library VISTAs are working hard to sustain these programs since no VISTAs will be placed in

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libraries in 2011-2012. Sustainability will be accomplished through volunteer networks, staff support, and community partners.

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

50 %

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 were collected, analyzed and reported on in the previous quarter for two of our library sites. We expect that our third library site will report data and survey results from users and patrons in this coming quarter.

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.

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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. For example, Juanita Peck, serving with the Altoona School District, partnered with local college students to design and distribute a survey. The students designed the survey as part of a class and will also do the analyses for the district so they can begin to improve the way they work with families.

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

Ongoing

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 %

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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 this 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.

Narratives

Challenges

This quarter presented challenges on the state and national levels for our project. With threats of serious budget cuts to DPI and to the Corporation for National and Community Service (and consequently, VISTA) there has been concern among staff and our VISTAs about the future of our programs, our jobs, and our work. Additionally, due to the protests surrounding the Budget Repair Bill, the climate at many VISTA schools has been tense. However, we were able to provide support to our VISTAs through regular updates on the national service budget, information from our State Office, and an open forum webinar where VISTAs could discuss current climates and share strategies for maintaining appropriate VISTA roles, despite personal beliefs.

Additionally, this quarter we learned that we are projected to be in a budget deficit at the end of our grant year due to being over our MSYs. We have worked with State Office staff to come up with a plan to reduce our slots for July and August in order to get back down to our goal of 19 members plus 1 Leader for the 2011-2012 year. Our high MSYs were due to over-recruitment, the lack of any early terminations, an unprecedented number of moving allowances, and an unusually high number of urban vs. rural living allowances.

A final challenge this quarter has been the summer VISTA program. Initially we were excited to learn about the additional slots made available through the USDA and private funding, and due to urging from the state office, worked quickly to select and approve our slots. We had a great deal of interest from non profit and community organizations who are already working on anti-hunger and nutrition programming. However, because the implementation details have changed so regularly it has become challenging to know where we stand or how we should proceed. We also struggled with what to tell our sites when information is not consistent. At this point we are concerned that if slots are reduced we will have to cut sites that have already been recruiting for a VISTA member. We are hoping for the best and moving forward.

Our Program Officer has been very helpful in moving us through this process and answering questions to the best of her ability and we appreciate that additional support.

Recruitment

During this quarter much effort has been devoted to recruitment as we work to fill 3 slots in July and 13 in August. Our recruitment process offers a number of opportunities for applicants to get important information about the project and ensure that VISTA is a good fit for them. After an application and resume have been submitted, applicants receive a number of documents and websites to learn more about the DPI project from our VISTA Leaders. The Leaders then conduct a screening call with each applicant to answer questions, review the logistics of the recruitment process and get an initial impression of each candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Based on the screening call and the applicant's interest, applications and resumes are forwarded to sites who then conduct interviews and select candidates.

Our Leaders have also put a great deal of effort into promoting these positions throughout the state as well as nationally. We have posted our openings on several websites including Craigslist, Idealist, WI Jobs for WI grads, Facebook, and, of course, the My AmeriCorps portal. We have also promoted the positions through statewide and national list serves that go to current members, supervisors, and others working in the nonprofit and service sector. Finally, we have attended several career fairs across the state including: UW Parkside, UW Platteville, UW Madison, Madison College, UW Green Bay, and Marquette. We have plans to attend a Career Fair at UW-Milwaukee in early May to continue to promote our full year and summer positions. Our leaders staffed these career fairs with the help of current VISTA members.

Despite uncertainties with the budget, we've moved forward and to date (April 27) have received 78 applications for the year-long VISTA positions, 37 applications for summer positions, and 10 applications for the leader position. We plan to fill our Leader position in early May, our summer positions in late May, and our year long positions in early June.

After receiving and reviewing host site applications for 2011-2012 in late March, we have selected our final sites. Our 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)
- * Emerson Elementary School, Madison (new site)

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- * Grove Elementary School, Wisconsin Rapids (continuing site)
- * Hopkins Street 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)
- * Racine Unified School District (continuing site)
- * School District of Beloit (continuing site)
- * Wadewitz Elementary School, Racine (continuing site)
- * Wausau School District (continuing site)

Training/Technical Assistance Needs

VISTAs are given the opportunity to request additional trainings or technical assistance in every bi-weekly report. We track these requests and the Project Coordinator and VISTA Leaders address them. This quarter we had requests for the following topics:

- * Dealing with feelings of isolation
- * Activities for kids
- * Grant writing and researching local grants
- * New educational reforms
- * Survey design/using data
- * Handling the political climate at your site
- * Social media

These were all addressed through personal coaching from project staff, webinars, or organized VISTA trainings. If a topic is something that can be addressed with additional resources or reading material, project staff provide these to the members.

Project staff hosted four webinar trainings this reporting period to help address requests for trainings we received. In January two webinars, Social Media/Web 2.0 Tools and Using Data to Inform What We Do, were offered to not only DPI VISTAs but all VISTAs in the state as well as DPI AmeriCorps members. An Outreach Librarian in Appleton offered to provide this training which included an overview of popular web 2.0 tools and as well as advice for using them as VISTAs. Our second January webinar, Using Data to Inform What We Do was presented by a member of DPI's Office of Educational Accountability. This webinar focused on why data was important for VISTAs, how to collect and use it, and suggestions for analyzing and interpreting it. We anticipate offering a follow up webinar that focuses specifically on survey design in the early Fall when VISTAs first begin their service.

In February project staff presented a webinar to our VISTAs entitled National Service in Wisconsin to give members a better understanding of other programs in our state and in the country. This webinar reviewed the branches of the Corporation for National and Community Service, gave examples of member projects in each branch, and offered suggestions for cross stream collaboration. Finally, in March Project staff presented a Life After VISTA webinar to help guide VISTAs through the transition of ending service. Five DPI VISTA alumni joined the call to share their experiences as VISTAs and their paths after VISTA. Current members were able to ask questions and gain insight into strategies for job searching, interviewing and utilizing the skills they learned as VISTAs. As a follow up to this webinar we developed a comprehensive Life after VISTA section on our Google Site to provide more information, answer questions about the education award, and connect members with resources from the VISTA Campus on transition and preparing for the next step.

Finally, in order to allow VISTAs the opportunity to have an open forum to discuss issues at their site we have offered one of what we hope will be a series of troubleshooting webinars. Two VISTAs were asked to facilitate conversation around topics VISTAs requested in their reports and in communication with DPI project staff. Our first webinar was held in early April and the topics included handling the political tension at your site and building relationships with families and staff. Project staff did not facilitate these conversations; instead just provided VISTAs the opportunity to talk and hear from each other.

We plan to offer more webinars through this spring and summer for VISTAs to talk together about specific challenges they are

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facing and to get ideas and feedback from each other.

Partnership/Collaboration Development

This quarter we began planning an end-of-year celebration, open to all VISTA members in Wisconsin. A planning committee was established with representatives from different VISTA projects and the State Office. The celebration will be held at Devil's Lake State Park on June 17. All participants will perform a service project for the park that day in return for an entrance fee waiver, and reflection activities are being planned to allow all VISTAs an opportunity to think about their year of service and the impact it had on them. We are looking forward to reconnecting with fellow VISTA members from across the state that also participated in the In-Service Training in the fall.

Additionally, we are planning to collaborate once again with Wisconsin Campus Compact to offer an In Service Training to all VISTAs in Wisconsin. This was a very successful training this past year and we would like to continue to offer it to members, especially when training dollars are becoming scarce.

Finally, our VISTAs also emphasize partnerships as part of their day to day work. Creating sustainable partnerships and collaborating with the community is a critical part of our project, and an effective way to mobilize more resources. This quarter, VISTAs have established 56 new partnerships with community organizations, non profit agencies, businesses and faith based groups to increase the impact they are having on their sites. Jon Peters in particular has had a large focus on community partnerships this past quarter and has helped secure the following organizations as partners for the Racine Unified School District: YMCA, YWCA(Girls Inc.), Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Racine Parks Recreation and Cultural Services, Racine Public Library, Cops'N'Kids, Racine Art Museum, Focus on Community, Workforce Development, Gateway Technical College, UW-Parkside, Racine County 4-H, Mad Science, and Just Add Kids. These partners are serving on a planning committee for the summer activities resource fair he is helping to organize for families.

Resource Development

VISTAs continue to have good success with soliciting donations for their sites. In this quarter alone VISTAs received over \$20,000 of cash and in-kind donations to support programs, events, and other family partnership efforts at their sites.

Ellen Carpenter, serving with the Madison school district received over \$1,500 in donations this quarter including:

- 1,000 bagels, donated from Einstein Bro's Bagels.
- Talula's - \$20 gift card
- Manhattan Hair Designs - \$21 gift card
- Fired Up Pottery -- 4 \$10 gift cards
- 5 pizzas from Falbo Bro's Pizzeria (\$83)
- 3 pizzas from Pizza Pit (\$50)
- 4 pizzas from Angelo's (\$70)
- 5 Papa John's University (\$78)
- 5 Ian's Pizza (\$68)
- 5 Falbo Bro's Pizzeria (\$83)
- Gift Certificates from the following:
 - o Woodman's Markets (\$25)
 - o Copps S. Park (\$25)
 - o Rossati's Pizza - (\$10)
 - o Rutabaga (\$10)
 - o Monona Garden (\$10)
 - o Wal-Mart (\$100)

Mike Valente, serving with Clarke Street School in Milwaukee, received over \$1,200 in in-kind donations from a local printing service (to publish the school's newspaper), a local grocery store (food for their family night), and Half priced books (children's books to distribute to students).

Jenne Orcutt, serving at Grove Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids, received over \$1,000 in donations this quarter including used books for the school's summer reading program, additional books for the school's Book BINGO event, and water from Wal-mart for their Popcorn Friday family event.

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Finally, Kathy Lewis, serving with Ashland High School, received over \$1,000 in donations from local businesses. These included the following:

- Matched \$120 donations to local businesses
- Treats for tutors (\$10)
- 4 free meal coupons from Arby's (\$24)
- 15 free whopper coupons from Burger King (\$45)
- 2 gift cards to JC Moon (\$10)
- 6 free admission to Bay Theater (\$42)
- El Dorado's gift card (\$20)
- Co-op gift card (\$25), coupons & recipe book (\$20)

Sustainability

As with every other quarter, sustainability continues to be a focus for our project and for our VISTA members. We see the primary tool for sustainability as the Action Teams the VISTAs help to set up. With representation of families, school staff and the community, these teams can sustain partnership work after the VISTA is gone. The VISTA helps to get the team established and helps them write a one year action plan before the end of their service so that momentum is not lost at the start of a new school year.

In addition to providing support for the establishment of these Action Teams we have also focused on additional efforts to support sustainability. We are requiring all VISTAs to do an end of year presentation at their sites to share the successes of the past year. These presentations are meant to include site staff, families, and community members. We hope that with more effort at reaching out to the site and to the community it will create more buy-in for the partnerships as well as the VISTA project. We also hope it will serve to motivate the site to continue the work their VISTA did over the past year. VISTAs have submitted plans for their end of year presentations to Project Staff. We encouraged our members to be creative and we have a variety of formats for these presentations including the use of video and other media. Project staff hope to attend select presentations if possible.

Additionally, our April Check-In webinar will be focused on sustainability and allow VISTAs to discuss strategies for their own sites. We will review the sustainability binder, which we ask all VISTAs to complete, and have discussion about the progress their sites are making towards sustainability.

At the end of the year we will distribute a sustainability letter, which we ask all VISTAs to complete to share with incoming VISTAs. These letters serve to pass on the insight and lessons learned from each VISTA to future Corps.

Finally, we see our summer VISTA program as a great tool for sustainability, especially at sites that no longer have a full year VISTA. Summer VISTAs can help shore up programs, expand summer programs, and build on the work of full year VISTAs. This also helps us stay connected to our former sites, particularly public libraries.

Multi-Site Performance

The impact our VISTAs are having on their sites is evident from the feedback they receive from staff, families, patrons and community partners. What follows are quotes from several VISTA's Quarterly Reports.

Ellen Carpenter

* "Thank you so much for doing the English and Spanish classes. My husband [a student of the Spanish class] is getting so much out of it and it just seems like a really great program for everyone." --Nuestro Mundo teacher

English Comments from EIS students (Translated from Spanish):

* "Thank you... For the English Program. I hope the school can do it again. Thank you for thinking of us -- You've helped us so much!"

* "Thank you for taking the trouble to help us so that we can help our children. I hope this program continues. Ellen, thanks very much for your extra effort and attentiveness."

* "Thanks for letting us come and be a part of this program -- I hope that you continue to do it in the future."

* "Thanks! I'm very grateful for you. God bless!"

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- * "Thanks for the program. It was very enjoyable."
- * "Thank you very much for allowing us this time and teaching us English!"
- * "I'm very grateful Ellen, for the time and support you have given us. Thank you very much."

Josh Cowles

● "My resume was old, outdated, and too long. With the assistance of Paul I have a new, much better, far more interesting resume I am proud to present to an employer! I will be back to work on a cover letter and use the online job searches! Thank you for your assistance. I really had no idea where to go for help. A friend said this center was available and could help me. I'm glad because I was getting very frustrated on how to even go about getting it done."-- Opportunity Center user

Kristen Donat

● "I think that Kristen's presence is powerful. In less than a year, this young unassuming woman has been effective in connecting to the school's culture, extending to parents and to busy stressed teachers who may have never seen themselves getting involved."-- Ms. Constance Aehl - Literacy Coach

Emily Minerath

● Passing conversation with the reference supervisor at the library: "You're here through May, right?" "No, mid-August." "Oh thank God." That was a nice thing to hear- it's great to feel appreciated!

Jenne Orcutt

● This is a quote from our principal in the March school newsletter. "Over the past few years, we have been working hard to bring parent engagement to a new level at Grove School through parent surveys, our volunteer options, the Global Caf  format and parent information sessions. Both Nicole Stachurski, our previous VISTA volunteer, and Jenne Orcutt, our present VISTA, have had as their mission the deepening of parent engagement at Grove. Our staff has also had this as a focus."

Jon Peters

● "Keep up the good Work"--RUSD Staff member

● "This is the first year. It will not be perfect. Look at it as a stepping-stone. Just make it the most stable stepping-stone possible"--VISTA Supervisor

Mike Valente

● "Keep nights like this coming" Mary Lee, parent.

This was a very rewarding quote on one of the evaluations collected after math night.

● "You do such a wonderful job on the paper" -- Ms. Liberty, one of the school secretaries

Amanda Vandehey

● World Day of Snowman: "It was great seeing people/families having fun together!" --Parent

● World Day of Snowman: "I'm so glad you offer experiences like these to families. It was a wonderful day. The volunteers were friendly and informative!" --Parent

● Out of This World: "This was a lot of fun for my family. Everyone enjoyed it -- I hope you do this again and more frequently" --Parent

● Out of This World: "It was 'OUT OF THIS WORLD!'" --Parent

Katrina Waldron

● "Thank you Katrina for ALL your help in getting the Intercambio panel organized... your assistance is SO appreciated! :) You do amazing work ... Midvale/Lincoln schools are lucky to have you as part of their team!" --Amy Christianson of MMSD ESL/Bilingual Education Department

● "Thanks for all your work!" --Minetta Koblings, Literacy Network ESL teacher for Intercambio

● "You have been such an asset to our school this year." --Laureen Yoshino, Midvale librarian

● "I really appreciate all of the work and energy you give to our school." --Meri Lau, Midvale art teacher

● "Thank you for being an AmeriCorps volunteer." --Owner of Berkley Running Shoe Store, a business which donated to our Intercambio program

● "Thank you so much for all that you do Katrina." --Amani, one of our Intercambio adult participants and now a close friend

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Brittany Williams

● "Just keep working with us as parents and keeping us involved in the program." -- GEAR UP Parent.

● "I have been very happy with these informative sessions and I would like them to be repeated often so that other parents can realize the usefulness and benefits of GEAR UP." -- GEAR UP parent.

Other Accomplishments

On March 22 in Milwaukee, the day before DPI's Beyond Random Acts of Partnership conference, we brought all of the VISTAs together for a training on the topics of power and privilege. Our intention was to provide resources, ask VISTAs to reflect on the kind of privilege they bring to their work, and encourage them to begin a personal action plan. One of our VISTA members, Brittany Williams, serving the Madison WEOP Office, and her supervisor, Alexis Anderson-Reed, an Education Specialist with the Madison WEOP Office, were our presenters. This topic, which is so important to VISTA work, is something we have long wanted to offer to members. Brittany and Alexis both have experience presenting on these topics and were interested in sharing their experiences. The day started with discussion about different types of power and in particular, what kinds of power manifest at VISTA sites. Members spent time discussing race, socio-economic status, ability levels, education, gender, sexual orientation among other things. Small group and large group discussion were the primary formats. The afternoon focused on how race and privilege affect our personal lives, as well as VISTA work. Alexis and Brittany showed video clips from a few different sources to help spark conversation and encourage dialogue. At the end of the day, there was an opportunity for VISTAs to develop their personal action plans that would help them to determine the next steps they would take on their journey towards understanding these issues. VISTAs reacted positively to this workshop, despite the heavy and sometimes difficult topic, and indicated their satisfaction in the evaluation. VISTA Project staff are developing a power and privilege section on our Google Site to post resources shared at the training but also provide further reading and suggested resources.

On March 23, VISTAs attended the Beyond Random Acts of Partnership Conference, hosted by the DPI and the PTA, along with about 200 other parents, teachers, administrators and staff from across the state. This conference allowed for in depth discussion among participants about how to move from random acts of family involvement towards a developed and well-planned system of family engagement. Expert panelists provided suggestions and resources and small groups then worked on action plans for their own school and community. VISTAs contributed well to these discussions and offered great ideas to other participants about ways to improve family engagement and community partnerships.

Finally, we were excited to learn that one of our VISTAs, Tracy Steffens of Washington Elementary School in Oshkosh, received the Governor's Award for Wisconsin's Outstanding VISTA member. VISTA Project Staff and her supervisor nominated her for this award, which was well deserved. In addition, we learned that two other VISTA members, Mike Valente and Ellen Carpenter were nominated for this award. We joined Tracy, her family, and her supervisor at the Governor's Award Luncheon in early April to celebrate her success!

Stories

At Mitchell Elementary in Milwaukee, Kristen Donat has seen immense success with her Parent Focus Groups. They have taken place on three separate occasions so far, with increased attendance each time. These groups are a tool to help parents build relationships and trust with other parents, and to give them an opportunity to share ideas and concerns. As discussions continue, they are slowly but surely moving from talk to action. Parents have expressed how much they value the opportunity to talk with one another and have their voices heard. This is one of the first steps to creating an environment that values parents. The idea of parent focus groups has spread to a regional level at MPS, and at least one middle school that has already implemented a similar group.

Heather Keyes has been helping with the FAST (Families and Schools Together) program at Indian Community School in Franklin. She organized and planned activities for older children who attended the sessions with their parents. Overall, nine families completed the FAST series and Heather saw the participants realize great personal growth and strength from the program.

Kathy Lewis, at Ashland High School, has focused heavily on donation solicitation this quarter, particularly because the Creating Caring Communities (CCC) program is dependent solely on donations. In addition to completing a grant for All State Insurance, she also coordinated multiple donations from local businesses through initial contacts and follow-up visits. With each donation received, businesses received a student poster and thank you card. The hope is to create long-term donors. The

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goal is to set CCC up with a sufficient start-up pool of donations prior to the beginning of the 2011 school year. To build sustainability in these endeavors, Kathy has created an asset map that documents all business donations within the community.

A big success this quarter for Emily Minerath at the Madison Public Library was the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance free tax filing program. This partnership between the library, the Department of Revenue, and Edgewood College filled out and filed people's 2010 tax returns for free. The program is geared towards low- to moderate-income people, but anyone is allowed to use it. Even a few VISTAs in the Madison area took advantage of the program and got their taxes filed. The VITA program served an impressive 511 people this year.

At Racine Unified School District, Jon Peters has helped to create a group of community organizations and school district staff, now called the Community Partners Committee, to work together on youth issues in the Racine area. A major project this committee has worked on is a "Collaborative Summer School Catalogue." This catalogue is a compilation of information about summer school offerings, summer youth programming in the community, and summer parent classes that are offered throughout the Racine area. This will create an easy way for families to discover all the opportunities available to them during the summer.

At Clarke Street Elementary School in Milwaukee, Mike Valente was pleased that over 75 families attended the Black History program. Each class presented on this theme and parents were very enthusiastic to volunteer to bring a dish to the pot luck which took place after the performances. With the impressive turn out, Mike was able to meet some new parents at the post program pot luck. It was great to see everyone turn out for the event, and then share a meal afterwards.

At Sennett Middle School in Madison, Ellen Carpenter planned and hosted a PT3 -- Parents and Teachers Talking Together -- session. This is a community discussion with parents and staff that was facilitated by trained professionals from DPI and Parents Plus. The parents and staff discussed ways they could improve the school and the educational achievement of the students. Ellen offered dinner and door prizes donated from the community. Parents and staff all reported being very happy with the session especially since several action plans were started, including work on school--parent communication, student support and resource development.

Josh Cowles, at the Fond du Lac Public Library, related a meaningful client success that occurred recently. "A woman came into the Opportunity Center while I happened to be in, and brought a friend along. She told the friend about the lab and asked me to fill in the blanks and provide any additional information we had available. Then she told her friend (and me) that she had used the Opportunity Center for weeks when her computer stopped working in the middle of a job search. She said our volunteers were always very helpful and encouraging. She also shared that she had taken advantage of our one-on-one mock interviews with a volunteer. This volunteer took extra time after the mock interview to help coach her. The next job she was interviewed for, she was hired, and she asked me to thank that volunteer again because she believed it was all because of working with him."

Brandon Jackson, with the Milwaukee PTA, has created a monthly, district-wide, PTA newsletter that is sent to schools, PTA chapters, and families. The newsletters contain updates about the amount of donation support, different activities and events, volunteer opportunities available for PTA households and solicitations to annual PTA partner businesses who also believe in the future of our students and public schools. Brandon has also been working on creating a more user-friendly and comprehensive PTA web site.

Angela Rumsey, at Milwaukee Public Schools Central Office, has been having meaningful Parent Coordinator meanings this past quarter. Though they have been good in the past, she feels that they have really hit their stride at this point. Attendance is good, the parent coordinators are really interested in the topics provided, and they are staying connected and using the information at their schools. This has been a good way for Angela, who is at the district, to connect with people on the school level and to effectively shift some of the work to the school level as well.

At Washington Elementary in Oshkosh, Tracy Steffens has been doing a lot of sustainability work for the school as this is their last VISTA year. She created three binders (the Grants Binder, Partnership Resource Binder, and Donation Forms Binder) that will help the staff sustain the efforts to find resources that will benefit the school. She also continues with other proactive planning steps that are really paying off. Her "duties list" has helped the other members of the Action Team see how much work needs to be done for different programs and how to spread it out evenly. The nice thing about this "duties list" is that it can be used over and over again while allowing for other tasks to be entered for different needs.

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This quarter with Madison GEAR UP, Brittany Williams' focus has been to help the Parent Advisory Board (PAB) strengthen its already existing projects. Primarily, this meant developing the previous parent workshop series into the College Readiness Conference. This conference provided PAB members plenty of opportunities to show off and practice their skills since the PAB members volunteered as greeters, registration table workers, introductory speakers and breakout session presenters. This event has really demonstrated Brittany's development as a leader as well as the Parent Advisory Board's development over a few years. The first year she served with GEAR UP, they didn't have strong enough parent involvement to even consider holding an event like the CRC, then in the second year, with the help of the PAB, they hosted the parent workshop series, and finally, this year they tweaked the parent workshop series and created the College Readiness Conference. In a few years they went from having essentially zero parent involvement, to being able to sponsor an entire conference devoted to parent resources and information.

At Wadewitz Elementary in Racine, Bethany Bridges' major success this quarter was to create an Action Team. She is really proud that the team has come together and created an action plan as well. The team is filled with very good-spirited people, who seemed to really hold the interests of the children at Wadewitz in their hearts. Bethany was really surprised and grateful that the members have so much to contribute to the meetings.

At the MPS Metro Region, Angie Domagalski has had much success establishing a community garden summer internship program for students. She presented to classes at Milwaukee African American Immersion regarding the internship opportunity and developed and distributed applications to the students there. She'll soon be conducting interviews. Angie has also secured donations of lumber and supplies from a local Hardware store for the project, as well as a volunteer to build the raised beds. The community and MAAI have been very receptive to this program, and see its value in both the school and community.

Bix Firer, also at the MPS Metro Region, has created a newsletter that is distributed only within this region. Unlike a district-wide newsletter, this allows communication between schools in similar contexts, with similar ages of students, and similar challenges. While there is often frustration among high school parents in the metro region about the fact that so many resources exist for grade schools and much of the information seems better suited to smaller districts, Bix is attempting to fill this gap by allowing parents of the metro region to act as resources to each other. The regional newsletters provide families and schools with opportunities to share best partnership practices.

At Grove Elementary in Wisconsin Rapids, Jenne Orcutt and the Parent-Teacher-Council hosted several events this quarter in which they helped establish or support meaningful relationships with students and their families. One major success was the school Family MATH Night. This event had the best turnout it has had in the last couple of years and Jenne believes it is very much in part due to the teamwork and collaboration of dedicated teachers at the school. She worked mainly with four teachers on the planning of this event along with the school principal and several other teachers who helped to make the event run smoothly.

For Amber Richardson at the Racine Public Library, the biggest success of her year so far happened this quarter. After long months of construction and waiting for a space to be available, the Community Resource Center opened on January 24th. The previous months of getting to know her community and compiling resources into user friendly formats paid off when she was able to hand a patron a list of places to look for a job and help him update his resume. She also knows that when patrons request information she and other volunteers at the Center will be prepared to direct patrons to various social service outlets in the area.

At Longfellow Elementary in West Allis, Amanda Shapiro was glad to see the improvement all the ELL class participants had achieved in their English speaking and reading skills. The parents made connections with one another and exchanged contact information throughout the classes so they could continue to keep in touch. These classes provided a real sense of community for the parents.

At the Wausau School District, Amanda Vandehey and the Family University Network hosted a "World Day of Snowman" event. This day was designed for all ages and specifically for families of Title I schools. They had the largest number of families sign-up for the morning activities with 114 people in attendance, making it our largest event at that point in time. All ages were represented and many families used the transportation that F.U.N. provided. Science was the main learning component, but reading and art were also featured.

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Juanita Peck held an NNPS "Lead and Succeed" workshop for the Altoona School District administration. This workshop served to introduce the Action Team concept as well as the 6 Types of Family Involvement. Juanita plans to install a modified district Action Team model which will include administrators, parents, and community members.

At Cunningham Elementary, Emily invited Beloit College dancers to volunteer to teach dance classes for 2nd grade students. The classes were held in the newly finished Da Vinci Room. It was great to see the room actually in use after months of planning. The parents that picked up their children from class were also very impressed with the progress of the room compared to the beginning of the year. It is the first step in transforming the space into a room where creativity flows and that gives the students a chance to think and create differently than in the classroom

At the suggestion of a parent, Katrina Waldron has helped to organize a new parent group at Midvale Elementary. This parent expressed interest in building community and relationships among the Dual Language Immersion families since this is a new program for them. With her leadership and Katrina's assistance, Midvale now has a new DLI parent group that has received the support of teachers, the school principal, and many families. A community potluck has been organized to celebrate a successful first year of the program and to be a social hour for all DLI families.

Attachments and Links

Links:

* January, February, and March Newsletters

<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/vnwsltrhm.html>

* VISTA Voices

<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/vsitproj.html>

* Life after VISTA section on Google Site

<https://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/resources-1/misc-vista-resources/life-after-vista>

* Article on Racine Library's Community Resource Center

http://journaltimes.com/news/local/article_54144eee-2a12-11e0-b425-001cc4c03286.html

* Article on Wausau's Family University Network (F.U.N.) in Teaching Today

http://www.wischoolnews.com/12_10.pdf

Attachments:

* Handbook for Parent Involvement (Ellen Carpenter, Sennett Middle School, Madison)

* Parent Focus Group Agenda (Kristen Donat, Mitchell School, Milwaukee)

* Metro Region Newsletter (Bix Firer/Angie Domagalski, Metro Region, Milwaukee)

* Volunteer Interest Card (Kathy Lewis, Ashland High School)

* Parent Survey (Jon Peters, Racine Unified School District)

* Family University Network Brochure (Amanda Vandehey, Wausau School District)

* End of Year Presentations Guidance document (DPI VISTA Leaders)

* Agenda from March 22 Training on Power and Privilege

* Article from Financial Institutions featuring Fond du Lac Public Library's Opportunity Center