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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Partnerships with Local Schools Inspire Teacher Education Advisory Committee

Summary: The committee aims to define best practices for supervision and to support area teachers.

(February 13, 2014)-In the fall of 2012, the University of Minnesota, Morris teacher education program established the [Teacher Education Advisory Committee](#) to foster relationships with its area K–12 school partners. The purpose of the committee is not only to define and use best practices for clinical supervision, but also to help the university and its partners support pre-service, beginning, and experienced teachers.

The committee is comprised of University education faculty and staff as well as teachers and administrators from Morris Area Schools, West Central Area Schools, Willmar Public Schools, and Tiospa Zina Tribal School. It was originally conceived by UMM’s education faculty, led by division chair Gwen Rudney, who wanted to delve into issues that could strengthen their partnerships.

“We wanted to make sure it was seen as an ongoing, meaningful conversation with an eye toward improving experiences for area teachers and children,” says Rudney. “It was very carefully designed to get different voices by role and location.”

The meetings provide all parties an opportunity to discuss the processes that govern their work as well as potential improvements, opening pathways for open communication and relationship-building. Although the committee has only met four times, it has already discussed a wide range of topics, including student teaching and field experiences, teacher performance assessment, and the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examinations. Members are also examining opportunities to make changes for meaningful collaboration and professional growth.

“This committee is beneficial because of the collaboration that takes place, along with the brainstorming about how schools and UMM can partner to help further develop high-quality education graduates who are prepared to begin their teaching careers,” says Scott Monson, superintendent of Morris Area Schools. “The work is also beneficial because of the back-and-forth professional dialogue happening—it is my impression that UMM education faculty gain a better perspective of challenges area schools have and what we are looking for in ideal teaching candidates, while area schools have an improved understanding of the direction teacher-education at UMM is going.”

“The collaboration is an asset to any district,” adds Amy Millard, a fifth-grade teacher at Morris Area Elementary School. “The committee allows teachers, administrators, and University faculty to reflect on the current teacher-education program, share updates in the program, and brainstorm possible collaborative projects.”

According to Rudney, another important element of the advisory meetings is its research of improved practice related to student learning. To support this project, the team has received University of Minnesota, Morris Faculty Research Enhancement Funds to further explore research collaboration and external funding possibilities.

Additional information on teacher education at Morris is available [online](#).

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