



## OVERVIEW

The Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN) is a national coalition of multiracial, suburban-urban school districts that have come together to understand and eliminate opportunity/achievement gaps that persist in their schools. MSAN districts have student populations between 3,000 and 63,000 and are most often well-established first-ring suburbs or small/mid-size cities. Additionally, the districts share a history of high academic achievement, connections to major research universities, and for some, resources that generally exceed neighboring cities.

Across MSAN districts disparities on an array of achievement data demonstrate wide gaps in performance across students from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Since 1999, MSAN has worked fervently to achieve the parallel goals of closing gaps while ensuring all students achieve to high levels. To this end, districts work collaboratively to conduct and publish research, analyze policies, and share promising practices that support the Network's mission: *to understand and change school practices and structures that keep racial opportunity/achievement gaps in place.*

## DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT

MSAN has worked to build a community of learners who engage in common practices across school districts. These include:

- Engaging in collaborative research in which practitioners and researchers are equal partners in designing, conducting, and publishing research.
- Conducting evaluations of programs intended to raise the academic achievement of minority students.
- Conducting training and professional development activities for district teachers and administrators relative to the MSAN mission.
- Creating opportunities for students to guide the work of the organization.
- Disseminating results of Network activities among MSAN districts and the larger educational community.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

MSAN is comprised of two organizing structures: the Governing Board and the Research Practitioner Council (RPC). In addition, the Executive Director and other researchers provide guidance and support to MSAN projects.

### Governing Board

The superintendents of MSAN districts serve as the Governing Board. The Governing Board carries out the business and oversight of the organization and, along with the MSAN Executive Director and the RPC, sets the Network's research and development agenda.

Areas of research and development:

- Conversations About Race & Achievement
- Cultural Competence
- Equity-Focused Leadership
- Student-Teacher Relationships
- Discipline Disparities
- Family-School Relationships
- Literacy and Mathematics
- Personnel & Staff Development Equity Practices

### Research Practitioner Council

The Research-Practitioner Council (RPC) is made up of two educators from each MSAN district, including assistant superintendents, research or testing staff, equity or diversity staff, principals, and other professionals who influence research and curriculum policy for the district. The RPC carries out the Network's research and development agenda. To date MSAN has generated more than \$2.5 million dollars in foundation, grant, and local district funding to support their work.

## RESEARCH

In keeping with the vision that research and practice must be developed in tandem, MSAN has developed collaborative relationships with expert researchers in the areas of student achievement, school reform and policy, racial identity development, and curriculum & instruction. In addition to research partnerships with organizations such as the Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP) Institute, the Dana Center at the University of Texas-Austin, and the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), individual researchers who have collaborated with MSAN over the years include Dr. Ron Ferguson (Harvard University), Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Dr. John Diamond (University of Wisconsin-Madison), and Dr. Pedro Noguera (UCLA).

In 2007 MSAN moved from Evanston Township High School District 202 in Evanston, Illinois to the **Wisconsin Center for Education Research** located on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As part of a larger consortium of educational researchers MSAN's capacity for engaging in intervention-focused evaluation projects has expanded exponentially.

## CONVENING/NETWORKING

A central feature of the work of MSAN is to build local communities of learners through the holding of highly-focused professional development opportunities and working group meetings. Convening of representatives from member districts is designed to build a continuous stream of work. While conferences and meetings may include external speakers and presenters, they are more appropriately thought of as team-based professional learning for member districts.

Early in its development, MSAN members committed to creating opportunities for students of color to guide their work. Each year teams of students from member districts gather to engage in discussions about the barriers students of color face in their schools and districts, and develop action plans that outline steps their schools and districts can take to eliminate those barriers and improve the effectiveness of their schools. This youth leadership conference is an opportunity for students to learn from peers from across the country while constructing valuable messages for the academic leaders of their schools.

## MSAN DISTRICTS

- Alexandria City Public Schools  
Alexandria, VA
- Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools  
Amherst, MA
- Ann Arbor Public Schools  
Ann Arbor, MI
- Arlington Public Schools  
Arlington, VA
- Birmingham Public Schools  
Birmingham, MI
- The Public Schools of Brookline  
Brookline, MA
- Buckeye Elementary School District  
Buckeye, AZ
- Cambridge Public Schools  
Cambridge, MA
- Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools  
Chapel Hill, NC
- Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District - University Heights, OH
- East Lansing Public Schools  
East Lansing, MI
- Evanston/Skokie Elementary School  
District 65 - Evanston, IL
- Evanston Township High School District  
202 - Evanston, IL
- Farmington Public Schools  
Farmington, MI
- Federal Way Public Schools  
Federal Way, WA
- Greenwich Public Schools  
Greenwich, CT
- Harrisonburg City Public Schools  
Harrisonburg, VA
- Isaac Elementary School District  
Phoenix, AZ
- Madison Metropolitan School District  
Madison, WI
- Mesa Public Schools  
Mesa, AZ
- Middleton-Cross Plains Area School  
District Middleton, WI
- Oak Park Elementary School District  
97 - Oak Park, IL
- Oak Park and River Forest High School  
District 200 - Oak Park, IL
- Paradise Valley Unified School District  
Phoenix, AZ
- Princeton Public Schools  
Princeton, NJ
- Shaker Heights City School District  
Shaker Heights, OH
- School District of South Orange &  
Maplewood - Maplewood, NJ
- Sun Prairie Area School District  
Sun Prairie, WI
- Verona Area School District  
Verona, WI

For more information about **MSAN** please visit us at [www.msan.wceruw.org](http://www.msan.wceruw.org) or contact the Executive Director, Dr. Madeline Hafner, at the **Wisconsin Center for Education Research**, University of Wisconsin-Madison, at [madeline.hafner@wisc.edu](mailto:madeline.hafner@wisc.edu) or (608) 262-1665.