



▶ **Midwest
Instructional Leadership
Council**

A Brief History

The mission of the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is to build and sustain capacity for improving the achievement of ALL children

The Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is a not for profit organization currently in the process of securing 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt status.

Midwest Instructional Leadership Council

A Brief History

So, how did this whole thing get started? How does an idea for planning and delivering a practitioner-based conference lead to the development of a fledgling organization dedicated to building and sustaining capacity for improving results for ALL children? From time to time it pays to reflect upon these things as it shows us where we have been; honors the hard work and dedication of all those, including those of you that are attending or have attended the Midwest Leadership Summit, that have helped us along the way; and it generates opportunity for dreaming of a better future for children, ALL children.

A Rainy Night in Georgia

Many of you have heard about the rainy night in Georgia (and are perhaps sick of hearing it) where the idea of developing and delivering a practitioner-based conference on response to intervention was born. The fact of the matter is that it was a rainy night in Georgia and the story goes something like this.

It was November 2006 and several of us were attending a membership meeting and subsequent conference of a national special education leadership organization in Savannah, Georgia. The meeting before the conference was fruitful and the conference itself was well-planned with strong content. However, it seemed that something was missing and

that something was answered by the question, “So, we have heard the theory, but how does all this work in practice back in my local school or district?” This question kept rattling around the mind of one of our now miLc committee members. This must have been an important thought because it would not go away. Finally, the thought needed to be shared so it was decided to share the idea over a beer or two with some colleagues.

The small contingent of folks from Minnesota (Nan Records, Gaynard Brown) and Wisconsin (Ed O’Connor, John Faust) thought it would be beneficial to meet once we were back in the Midwest to see if we could put some legs under the idea. You will have to excuse my fading memory if there were others there that night at the bar where this idea was sketched out on a napkin, but the truth is that my mind is starting to falter. Or is that the result of something else? In any event that rainy night in Georgia transformed itself to a meeting in Minnesota in January 2007. It was not rainy nor was it warm that fateful day in January 2007.

Meeting in St. Paul – January 2007

Well, if we were going to put on a practitioner-based conference on response to intervention we thought we had better discuss it more formally. That meeting occurred on a Saturday in January 2007 in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was cold that day, but the energy in the condo on Dayton Street made the temperature seem irrelevant.

Present at the meeting were Elisabeth Rogers, Nan Records, Mia Urick, Gaynard Brown, Chris McHugh (who also hosted this meeting), and some guy from Wisconsin. The group was energized and came together very quickly as a well-functioning group.

The group discussed briefly the meeting that occurred in Georgia (yes, that same old rainy night) and talked about the vision created that evening of wanting to change the educational world and what it would take. At that point in time we were only

focused on a conference. Wow, does that seem like a lifetime ago!

The group was of one mind and agreed from all of our individual perspectives that we wanted to work on changing the educational world. The decision was made to go forth with planning a conference with the launch date of that conference in September 2007.

This was quite a momentous decision because there were no structures in place to assist us in doing that. The planning of the conference and all the requisite structures that we needed for success became part of our task.

We knew we needed other members to help us with this work, so we also decided to bring others to the planning sessions.

The original planning committee consisted of the following people: Nan Records, Minnesota; Mia Urick, Minnesota; Elisabeth Rogers, Minnesota; Chris McHugh, Minnesota; Gaynard Brown, Minnesota; Susan Risius, Minnesota; Bev McCoun, Wisconsin, Elizabeth Freeman, Wisconsin; and Ed O'Connor, Wisconsin.

One of the wisest decisions that we made was to hire Larry Iwen and Quest Educational Services as our conference planner. Undoubtedly, without Larry's considerable contributions, the success that we had would not have been realized. Thanks Larry, you are the best!

One of the most contentious points of discussion during the planning for the first Summit was how many people would actually come to this thing. Well, reasonable people can disagree. When the figure of 750 conference participants was thrown out, committee members responded in many different ways. Some were believers and others a bit more skeptical.

We continued meeting once a month on Saturdays in St. Paul, Minnesota to plan the first Midwest Leadership Summit. I must say that the dedication of the members of the planning committee amazed me. What drove these people to give up a Saturday each month to in essence place more work on their plates? There must be something special about these people and, if you are reading this, I am certain that you recognize what it is. A definite need exists to change outcomes for children. If you did not believe that, you would not be here and you would not be reading this. Thank you for your desire, dedication, and commitment to improving outcomes for children. This truly is important work.

Well, the first Midwest Leadership Summit occurred in September 2007 in Rochester, Minnesota. From a rainy night in Georgia to Saturdays in St. Paul, this small group of people accomplished what they set out to do.

Midwest Leadership Summit – The Inaugural

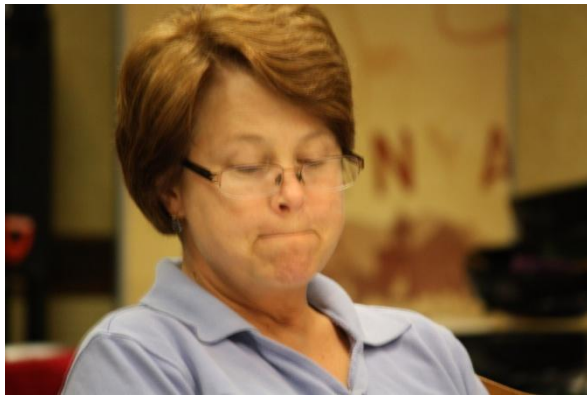
The inaugural Midwest Leadership Summit occurred in September 2007 with over 750 people in attendance. Wow! In our wildest dreams on that rainy night in Georgia we never expected that you would respond as you did. Could this be evidence (data) that there is a gap between the world of research and the world of practice?

Since the inaugural Midwest Leadership Summit was so successful, we decided that it would be a good idea to have a second Midwest Leadership Summit.

Midwest Leadership Summit II

The original planning committee decided that it wanted to put on another Summit. Since the site in Rochester, Minnesota really met our needs, we decided to return there in September 2008. History suggests that the second Midwest Leadership Summit was more successful than the first with over 850 people in attendance.

Are we on to something here? Is there a need that is not currently being met in professional development? Are there more like minded people that see the need to change the educational world to improve outcomes for children? We pondered this question.



Then we pondered it some more.



The seeds of doing something more were sewn and waiting to germinated and blossom.

Change is in the Wind

There have been changes in the committee along the way. Elizabeth Freeman and Susan Risius have left us. Bev McCoun has left us. Nan Records has left us on an extended leave of absence. We were joined by other great contributing members that include Brad Niebling, Iowa; Sarah Brown, Iowa, Kim Gibbons, Minnesota; and Lori Mueller, Wisconsin, and Julia Espe, Minnesota.

Did I mention that change is in the wind? With growth comes change and, at times, there are speed bumps along the way. Our committee has not been without its challenges and we have hit those unexpected speed bumps from time to time.

The challenges we have faced and continue to face are nothing more than opportunities for growth. There has been some pain, but there has been even greater joy! For each dashed opportunity an even brighter opportunity has come along.

It has also provided members of our committee to contribute in very unique ways. As an example, one of our committee members had a meeting in February or March 2009 in Brainerd, Minnesota that really rescued us from some despair. We suffered an unexpected loss and Gaynard Brown was able to throw us a lifeline. That meeting was another watershed moment for our organization and is affectionately known among us as the “Blizzard in Brainerd” as a tremendous snow storm covered the area during that meeting.

The focus on improving outcomes for children has sustained us in good times in and those challenging times that always occur. That same focus has provided hope and vision for the future.

December 2008 – Moving the Vision Forward

The committee had been discussing for quite some time the notion of expanding our efforts beyond a once per year professional development conference. It is not that we view the Midwest Leadership Summits as lacking, but more that we see them as springboards to other opportunities to build and sustain capacity to improve educational outcomes for ALL students.

In December 2008, the committee dedicated its meeting to visioning the future. To that end, Judy Hoskens from the Cunningham Group in Minneapolis led the committee through a visioning process.

Through Judy's facilitation skills, the committee generated areas where work needs to be done in order to improve educational outcomes for students. These four areas included the following: Professional Development, Partnerships, Advocacy, and Governance.

This meeting also produced a name for our organization. Through discussion and deliberation, we decided to call ourselves the **Midwest Instructional Leadership Council** or miLc.

To guide our current and future efforts, we also developed vision and mission statements that day. The **vision** of the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is:

The Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is committed to improving the education of ALL children by promoting data-based practices in a unified system using evidence-based resources through a collaborative network.

The **mission** of the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is:

The Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is to build and sustain capacity for improving the achievement of ALL children.

Pretty heady stuff, eh? Well, it just put in words what we all brought and continue to bring to the table – the desire to improve outcomes for children.

So, what's next?

That is a great question! Does anyone have an answer?

Well, the truth of the matter is that we are still in the process of determining the answer to that question. It is our hope that we are always asking that question because, you see, there is always something that is next and if we really want to improve outcomes for students we really need to ask how are we doing, how do know, and what's next!

We do believe that in order for us to move forward, we need to do more than just plan and deliver a once per year professional development conference. We believed that in order to move forward we needed to have a website that allows us to disseminate information and to create a community of practice around the constructs of what it takes to improve educational outcomes for children. That website was launched about a year ago and can be found at www.milcleaders.org. We invite you to visit our website often and let us know what you would like to see on the website. We do believe that there is more work to be done.

John F Kennedy boldly challenged the country in 1962 to place a man on the moon before the end of the decade. Although President Kennedy did not live to see the manifestation of his bold vision and challenge, it was accomplished on July 20, 1969.

Likewise, the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council possesses a similar vision for the future. We need your support and commitment to children to assist us in striving toward attainment of that vision. Will you join us on our journey?

A Really Bold Move

As we continue to meet on a monthly basis the synergy and ideas flow like milk and honey. These ideas are really sweet and I wish you could experience that synergy, those ideas, and the passion and commitment of those committee members giving

of their time and energy for a singular purpose – improving outcomes for all students.

This synergy created momentum and it created some frustration. We began to think that we need to do more than just a onetime per year professional development conference and generated some wonderful ideas on what some of those things could and should be. We were simultaneously frustrated because we all have full-time jobs and personal lives that are full and demanding. We made the decision sometime in the spring of 2010 to have staff and as of July 1, 2010 we have two staff Ed O'Connor and Elizabeth Witter Freeman. We could not have selected two more dedicated, knowledgeable, and passionate professionals as the inaugural staff of the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council.

We also recognized that we needed to become “something” other than a group of people coming together one time per month on a Saturday to vision the future. We decided to become our own “legal” organization and became incorporated on June 4, 2010. We are now in the process of securing status as a not for profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Let me tell you, this process is truly a government operation!

So, we continue to pursue the mission on improving outcomes for all students and we really need you to engage in dialogue with us.

What's up with that crazy logo?

That is another great question. In case you do not remember what the logo looks like, here it is again.



There is a perfectly logical explanation for this logo. Really, there is! Trust me! Here it is....

The miLc logo reflects the organization's commitment to excellence in evidence-based educational practice.

The triangle is the mathematical symbol for change. It also reflects miLc's history, grounded in the Rtl Summits.

The double wavy line is the mathematical symbol for “everywhere.” It is incorporated in the miLc logo to remind us of how important it is to meld vision, research, and practice, that each element without the other two is inconsequential.

In the acronym, only the “L” is capitalized, giving emphasis to the importance of Leadership in all levels of educational practice.

The reflection of the type in the logo is a nod to the importance of reflection in thoughtful practice.

The colors: the orange triangle of change emerges from the blackness of sameness. Green and blue indicate growth and vitality.

Honoring the past

It is difficult to know where this section should go because it is important and probably more vital and important than the work miLc wishes to do. If I were smart, I would know where to place this section.

There are many outstanding researchers and practitioners that laid the foundation for what the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is about today. Without the groundbreaking work of these researchers and practitioners, none of us are here today.

There are so many people that have blazed and are continuing to blaze this trail. To name some of these researchers and practitioners leads to the potential

for inadvertently missing someone, but this history is important.

The following people have contributed deeply to the commitment to evidence-based instructional practices and have built the foundation upon which we now stand. We stand on the shoulders of giants. These people include, but are not limited to:

- ✘ Amanda VanDerHeyden
- ✘ Bob Pasternak
- ✘ Dan Reschly
- ✘ Dave Tilly
- ✘ David Prasse
- ✘ Deb Simmons
- ✘ Doug Fuchs
- ✘ Doug Marston
- ✘ Ed Kammenui
- ✘ Ed Shapiro
- ✘ Frank Gresham
- ✘ Gary Germann
- ✘ George Batsche
- ✘ Gerald Tindal
- ✘ Jack Fletcher
- ✘ Janet Graden
- ✘ Jeff Grimes
- ✘ Jim Ysseldyke
- ✘ Joe Torgeson
- ✘ Joe Witt
- ✘ John Hosp
- ✘ Joseph Kowaleski
- ✘ Judy Elliott
- ✘ Judy Schrag
- ✘ Kim Gibbons
- ✘ Luann Purcell
- ✘ Lynn Fuchs
- ✘ Mark Shinn
- ✘ Matt Burns
- ✘ Michelle Hosp
- ✘ Phyllis Mirken
- ✘ Randy Allison
- ✘ Reid Lyon
- ✘ Roland Good
- ✘ Russell Gersten

- ✘ Sally Shaywitz
- ✘ Sharon Vaughn
- ✘ Stan Deno
- ✘ Tom Kratochwill

These are but a few of the researchers and practitioners that have inspired, inspire, and will continue to inspire the work of the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council. We do not see our work as negating the work that has been done, but rather building upon the incredible knowledge and skills that these founders provided us. It is building upon, expanding, and honoring the work that has already been done.

In a previous section it was noted that one of the areas of focus for the Midwest Instructional Leadership Council is partnerships. Our work would be enhanced tremendously through partnerships with any of these founders.

So, we thank and honor those who are before us and in so many ways greater than us. We are humbled and honored to be involved in this work.

Stay Tuned

Hopefully, there will be more to report to you at the September 2010 Midwest Leadership Summit IV and also on our website. In case you cannot remember the website (boy, can I related to that), here is the address again: www.milcleaders.org.