

## MMAC AGENDA: EDUCATION REFORM AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

*“A regional workforce powered by innovative, knowledgeable  
and skilled individuals who are productive lifelong learners”*

There is a fundamental connection between the prosperity of a regional economy and the skills and education of its population. But to MMAC members, who employ over 300,000 people in the region, this is more than economic theory; it is the difference between success and survival. Filling these jobs and meeting their future requirements is the connection that will drive the prosperity of greater Milwaukee.

To quote Wayne Gretsky, the goal of MMAC’s education reform and workforce development agenda is to help Milwaukee “*skate to where the puck will be*” by preparing the region to meet current and future job requirements in the industries that will determine the region’s growth. We need to skate with urgency in responding to the needs of employers. The gap between educational attainment and skills needed by employers is widening, and that increases the chance that jobs will move from the region. Outlined below are a set of recommendations aimed at improving educational attainment and better tailoring our workforce development to meet the needs of the region’s employers.

In addition to these recommendations, included is a performance scorecard that identifies where the region stands today, and where it needs to be to effectively serve our current employers, as well as compete for job growth and capital investment. This agenda will serve to both repair and patch the cracks in the region’s talent pipeline, and over time serve as a competitive advantage for the greater Milwaukee region.

### **Background**

It is export activity that brings “new income” and jobs to the region, growing our economic pie. Meeting the job requirements in companies, small and large, who export their goods or services outside of the region is job one. These companies, by definition, have little to no customer base to keep them here. The good paying jobs and the economic impact they impart on the region is anchored, for the most part, by our ability to meet their human capital requirements. These are the employers that fuel the growth of the region’s one million jobs. Alone, these driver companies account for 275,000 jobs at pay levels significantly above the regional average wage of \$42,000.

The driver companies support a chain of suppliers that create 325,000 additional local jobs. This supplier spending also drives the demand for high-end, value added services in accounting, legal, construction, and engineering to list a few. Combined, the 600,000 (driver and supplier) jobs generate the 400,000 jobs that support our quality of life in areas like education, health care, hospitality, entertainment, and housing.

For example, the largest driver of exports from the region is manufacturing, accounting directly for 160,000 jobs, the second highest concentration per capita of a major metro area. Meeting the human resource needs of manufacturers from the plant floor, to engineering and upper management is not optional it is essential to our economic health. Skilled welders and machine tool operators remain in demand, and training for the innovative manufacturing environment continues to challenge our educational output.. Even in the face of a 33% decline in manufacturing jobs since 1998 (171,000 to 115,000), employers routinely comment on the lack of people with the education/skills to take advantage of their job openings. Seventy percent of the projected job openings due to retirement (over next 7-10 years) will require a two year degree We are not making enough connections with these employers, despite the fact that there are 38,000 students with a 4 year degree attending technical colleges in Wisconsin (far more than the 20,000 who there to get a GED).

The region's economy is also diversifying, with a large number of corporate headquarters, a vibrant money management sector, information technology, and specialized health care services. Each of these industry sectors generates its own set of educational requirements, but also provides the region with the opportunity to grow new services and product offerings that could have a global market.

To meet the education, skill, and talent demands of driver companies will require a significant improvement in the region's educational attainment. In short, without major improvements, we can't get there from here. To be in the top ten metro areas for talent, Milwaukee would need to have 36% of its adult population holding a 4 year degree, and 89% holding at least a high school degree. In metro Milwaukee, 31 % of adults have a 4 year degree, and 89% a high school degree. This goal is not a bridge to far, but to cross it we need steady and significant gains in the city of Milwaukee with our fastest growing population, where only 11% of African-American and 6% of Hispanic adults have a four year degree. For the same groups of adults, 77% and 52% respectively have a high school degree.

The evidence feeding our mismatched adult skill set can be traced to the performance in our K-12 schools, performance that is an overwhelming indictment of our ability to educate poor, largely minority students. With 83,000 students MPS is the largest educator in the City. There are a number of good schools in MPS with hard working teachers, and committed leaders. But outside of a small number of MPS charter, magnet and regular schools there are few **high performing schools in MPS** ( Defined as a school where enrollment is not based on academic performance, the poverty rate is at least 60%, and the students test at 75% of the state average on the WKCE exam. By any objective measure, we are not effectively teaching poor and minority students at the level they need to achieve).

When we look beyond MPS, at the 21,000 students who populate the school choice program, we see evidence (from a group of schools) that graduation rates are higher than MPS and we see some good performing schools (by objective test measures). But there is not enough school by school data to identify more than a dozen "performing" schools

based on the same previous measure of MPS schools. We need more information, school by school, to fully assess the impact of school choice, as well as weed out those schools that fail the kids they are attempting to educate.

Next in number are the 7,500 kids who attend a private school of their choice, and the 7,000 kids who leave the city to attend suburban public schools (again with little information on results).

Finally, more than 5,000 students attend schools chartered by UWM or the City of Milwaukee. Of the six charter schools that have been in existence for more than 5 years, 5 of them outperform the MPS average on the WKCE exam and in some cases even the statewide average. One is underperforming MPS. The results here are demonstrable and transparent in terms of higher performance.

While there are positive signs from good performing schools, overall our K-12 system has such huge cracks that much of our population is labeled unavailable. The education and skill sets are so far from matching employer needs, or being prepared for two and four year colleges that this group is the region's number one "under-performing asset".

Addressing education as our top priority-is the right priority for MMAC. In advocating for the interests of the membership, for the competitiveness of the region, and in serving our citizens, if we are to make gains, we need more individual schools that take poor students below grade level and turn them into achievers.

It is with this background, that we make the following recommendations for MMAC's education reform and workforce development agenda:

## **EDUCATION REFORM AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

### **1. Goal: Increase the number and capacity of high performing schools.**

Our top recommendation is to help facilitate the growth, replication and attraction of high-performing schools (defined so by their performance with students in high poverty environments by getting results that put a large majority at or above their respective grade levels). The specific proposals outlined below clarify and strengthen the approval process for the expansion and creation of new schools, improve access to facilities, and support better financing for high performing choice and charter schools, with a goal of 50 high performing schools by 2020.

#### **Strategy:**

- **Pass legislation to:**
  - **increase the per-pupil funding for students in a choice or charter school;**

- increase the cap on the number of students in the school choice program while strengthening the accreditation requirements; designate a replacement entity for new school approval and simplifying the administrative requirements; and
- fix the funding flaw.

- **Consider legislation to:**

- remove income limits on eligibility;
- provide for alternative testing to the WKCE; and
- exempt accredited schools from mandates.

(Objective: Lobby for inclusion in state budget now thru 6/11)

- **Support the work of Schools That Can Milwaukee to increase the capacity of high performing schools to 20,000 students by 2020. Specifically looking at capacity for high schools, and helping to recruit board members and corporate support for these schools. (Objective: Serve on board, partner, and make a financial contribution with a goal of growing from 1,900 seats to 3,200 seats by 2011 school year)**
- **Partner with the Milwaukee Charter School Advocates on a comprehensive legislative agenda to improve and stabilize the creation of charter schools in the City of Milwaukee. (Objective: Lobby for legislative package now thru 6/11)**
- **To accelerate the number of high performing charter schools, explore the creation of the Milwaukee Charter Trust. This entity would be responsible for gaining charter authority, providing facilities, and financing for a network of charter schools in high need areas of the city. (Objective: Make assessment visit by 3/11, bring recommendation to ET by 6/11)**
- **Work to open MPS facilities to high performing charter operators. (Objective: New charter operators by 2011 school year)**
- **Work to remove the M.O.U. language that caps the MPS charter school participation at 8% of enrollment. (objective: See school board recommendations)**
- **Support efforts in MPS to allow school-based authority over staffing in the lowest performing schools.**

**2. Goal: Support the creation of a city-wide Common Report Card (CRP).**

A system of schools that provides parents with a range of choices, and school leaders with a market to innovate is a great asset for improving education in Milwaukee. To drive quality we need a clear and comparable way to access performance across the range of K-12 school choices in Milwaukee. Value added gains, graduation rates, attendance, and teacher performance are all part of a common report card that would help to provide parents, school leaders, and policy makers with a way to access our progress towards greater educational attainment.

**Strategy:**

- **Develop a proposal to produce a Common Report Card. Using strong academic standard, a broad professional working group, and funding to move this to final product. (Objective: Approval by working group, and funding by February of 2011)**
  - **Help produce a symposium/summit to communicate and gain adoption of the CRP by a broad set of stakeholders in the community. (Objective: Public rollout by May)**
  - **Promote the publication of the CRP through the media and products like the Milwaukee School Chooser. (Objective: Collect data and produce for the 2012 school year)**
- 3. Goal: Align education reform efforts, and identify initiatives into a strategic partnership that has a demonstrable impact on educational attainment in Milwaukee**

A number of school reforms have been pioneered in Milwaukee, but our passion for reform has produced a fragmented set of gains in educational attainment. There is a growing sense of frustration over the clutter, overlap, and missed opportunities to improve school quality and raise educational attainment. Our third goal is to provide leadership in bringing solid individual efforts together in a cohesive strategy to drive towards our goal of being a top ten metropolitan talent market.

**Strategy:**

- **Produce (facilitate) city-wide agenda for education reform.**
- **Provide a strategic framework that outlines how each organization/effort supports the overall goal of better educational attainment. (Objective: In concert with legislative agenda, and for 2011 school year)**

- **Continue to facilitate regular meetings with “educational impact” organizations working in Milwaukee to improve quality, performance, and capacity. Work with organizations like City Year, Teach for America, and New Leaders, PAVE and others to make this efforts additive and not duplicative. (Objective: Group meeting before January legislative session, building on individual meetings)**
  - **Make a recommendation to MMAC board members and others for supporting specific schools with board members and corporate support. (Objective: To fill board seats at six schools by the start of 2011 school year)**
  - **Propose through legislation the movement of MPS board elections to the higher turn out fall time period, and make all board seats city wide. Change the residency requirements for teachers. (Objective: 2011 legislative floor period in time for fall elections)**
  - **Support the expansion of the Milwaukee Summer Reading project from 84 to 200 participants. Improve on the 62% that reported gains. (Objective: Help raise \$\$ to expand the project)**
  - **Assess models for the governance of MPS. ( Objective: Assess alternative structures for operating MPS to improve educational outcomes and fiscal stability-ongoing)**
4. **Goal: A workforce development system that provides focused funding, training, and targeting for the job requirements of our key driver industries.**

Improving the number of quality graduates from our K-12 system is a step we cannot skip in patching our talent pipeline. Connecting these graduates to the training, skills and education they need to plug into our economy is a step we cannot forget. Our goal here is to match the workforce needs of select industries that will drive our growth with the training and post secondary educational system that is charged with producing this workforce.

**Strategy:**

- **Review the need for an updatable employer driven survey that projects the near term employment needs for key industries in the region. Results would include type and number of openings, compensation, and skill sets. The purpose would be to provide a map to guide public workforce and job training expenditures, produce a clearer picture of industry needs, and better connect our technical college system with each industry. (Objective: Produce recommendation of survey, by industry group, spring of 2011)**

- **Support the recommendations of the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment including the development and funding of regional industry partnerships, improving career information for middle and high school students and holding workforce development boards accountable for meeting employer/employee needs. (Objective: Adoption of recommendations by Governor Walker in 2011)**
- **Restart employer/industry visits by school leaders at the grade and high school levels to foster better partnerships for job opportunities and industry needs. (Objective: Fall of 2011)**

## Summary

As employers, customers of the system, taxpayers, and concerned citizens, we have a vested interest in seeing this region develop the talent and skill necessary to drive economic prosperity. We believe these recommendations provide additional resources along with the authority and accountability to those charged with educating Milwaukee's youth. An urgent shift from the current ship of state, which is under fire, but steered by administrative rule, dysfunctional governance, and shifting captains.

We are facing an unprecedented challenge to our \$98B regional economy. This recession has put us 61,000 jobs behind our post recession peak in 2007. If we can meet the needs of our job drivers, we can help fuel their recovery and make ourselves a more attractive location. So these recommendations, with a focused number of strategies, become a deep commitment to improve on our biggest challenge and our greatest opportunity—talented and skilled citizens.

Furthermore, if we are to pursue a proscriptive tuning of our job training and technical institutions to better match with the region's demonstrated job requirements, this part of our education agenda will require an additional team of employer representatives to fine tune and push the recommendations in this part of the strategy. So an acknowledged first step is to recruit that team of business leaders.

There is a "big lift" required to make all of these recommendations a reality. We will need an ongoing commitment from our education team, full support from the board, and significant staff time and resources to carry this part of our agenda forward.

We believe this is an appropriate commitment and focus for MMAC.

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