I am an 8th grade Language Arts teacher at Forest Park.

I would like Franklin School District to consider developing a working relationship with the UW-Milwaukee Writing Project (UWMWP). The UWMWP is currently seeking involvement from numerous districts in the metro-Milwaukee area in an effort to start a discussion about how they can best serve the educational community.

The UWMWP is a branch of the National Writing Project (NWP) and is a consortium of teachers committed to improving the practice of teaching writing in any subject at all grade levels. Teachers who become Fellows at the UWMWP improve their practice through research and reflection with colleagues, as well as by writer extensively themselves. The actual experiences of UWMWP Fellows in their classrooms drives each of them through a research process as they inquire into writing instruction that is specifically designed to meet the needs of their students. Each Fellow’s work goes through a process of peer review, creating a community of teachers with expertise in numerous areas, such as scaffolding, revision strategies, the peer review process, and teaching nonfiction writing in the primary grades. Every summer the UWMWP produces a variety of experts on any number of the issues most relevant to student-writers in our community.

I am thrilled when I think of how much I grew as a teacher through my time as a Fellow at the UWMWP. I’ve gained weeks’ worth of strategies to get kids pens flying across the page, participated in more than a dozen workshops which pushed my knowledge of instruction and theory, and researched strategies for teaching my students to write with real voice. After hours spent practicing writing, both as a way to experience what I ask my students to do, I’ve become a writer myself.

All this knowledge and skill that I’m bringing back to Franklin in the fall was tailored to the issues I discussed with my fellow teachers at Forest Park every when we met each week as part of a Professional Learning Community (PLC). Imagine if every year, teachers from Franklin School District could have the opportunity which will enrich my PLC, so that the discussions we are already having could be increasingly propelled by the kind of research and experience I’ve had as a Fellow at the UWMWP this summer. Further, as a Fellow at the UWMWP, I am now part of a much larger PLC, which extends across Southwestern Wisconsin and includes some of the brightest and most driven teachers I’ve had the pleasure to work with.

Consider what partnership with the UWMWP could offer you: access to a huge local network of teachers, both within and beyond Franklin School District, with expertise on a variety of issues; annual, intensive, inquiry-driven professional development for Franklin teachers in the instruction of writing, which would then feed back into department and grade-level discussions about teaching; and the chance to connect Franklin teachers with other high-calibre professionals.