

# Minnesota Partnership for School Connectedness

## Overview

The Minnesota Partnership for School Connectedness (MPSC) is a three-year intercollegiate, interdisciplinary initiative partnering the University of Minnesota with five diverse school districts throughout the State to increase connectedness and engagement between sixth grade teachers and their students.

University staff collaborate with teaching staff in two ways:

### Teacher Fellows

One sixth-grade teacher from each school will participate in a year-long fellowship.

### Teacher Facilitator

Teachers from non-intervention schools develop and assist with trainings, ensure viability and provide quality feedback for on going revisions.

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## Fellowship Components

### Three-day Training Institute

Goal: Impart relevant knowledge, develop skills, provide support, build upon school/district professional development plans. Each Fellow develops a Student Engagement Plan that includes learning goals for the year; student engagement strategies for application in the classroom; and areas for additional coaching.

### Ongoing Classroom Intervention

- Classroom observation and coaching, using a modified version of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Tracking and support of Student Engagement Plan implementation

### Cohort Convenings

Four one-day convenings for Teacher Fellows impart knowledge, develop skills and provide support throughout the school year.

### Attention to School Context

Meetings with school principals and other school district personnel ensure progress, diffusion of new connectedness knowledge and student engagement techniques from Fellows to other teachers and school staff.

Partner Schools
<b>Duluth</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Morgan Park Middle</li><li>▪ Woodland Middle</li></ul>
<b>Mapleton</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Maple River Middle</li></ul>
<b>Mounds View</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Edgewood Middle</li><li>▪ Highview Middle</li></ul>
<b>South Washington County</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Cottage Grove Middle</li><li>▪ Woodbury Middle</li></ul>
<b>Worthington</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Worthington Middle</li></ul>

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## THE KONOPKA INSTITUTE FOR BEST PRACTICES IN ADOLESCENT HEALTH

Housed at the University of Minnesota, the Konopka Institute works in partnership with community organizations, service providers, educators, policy makers and public agencies to promote the use of practices, policies and systems that show the greatest promise of supporting genuine healthy youth development.

### Improving State Public Health Systems

The Institute receives funding from HRSA/MCHB to provide training and support to Adolescent and Maternal and Child Health Professionals in State Public Health departments across the country. Acting as the State Adolescent Health Resource Center (SAHRC), Konopka staff work to increase the capacity of these public health champions to support the needs of adolescents. Center goals:

- Increase attention to adolescents as a group within the state public health system
- Increase the system's capacity to address adolescent health
- Promote healthy youth development approaches and philosophies



### Increasing Youth Connectedness

Continuing the Institute's longstanding practice of listening to young people and professionals in the field, Konopka Institute's staff developed the Minnesota Partnership for School Connectedness (MPSC). Funded by the US Department of Education, the intercollegiate program includes:

- The Division of Adolescent Health & Medicine, Department of Pediatrics
- The Educational Psychology Department, College of Education and Human Development
- Participating school districts throughout Minnesota



MPSC is a statewide teacher fellowship program with monthly classroom teacher observation and coaching. The partnership's goal: improved connectedness between sixth grade teachers and students.

### Resources

**Listening to New Voices: Youth Voices on Staying in School and Dropout Prevention** – A summary of findings from Listening Groups conducted across Minnesota as part of the MN Department of Education's Dropout Prevention Initiative. The report documents young people's attitudes and beliefs toward high school and dropout prevention. Available at the Institute's web site.

**eAdolescence** – A bi-monthly newsletter that delivers a listing of adolescent health resources, publications and web sites. Organized around Healthy People critical objectives for adolescents. Subscribe by sending an email to [boche001@umn.edu](mailto:boche001@umn.edu).

### Dr. Konopka's Legacy

With an unshakable belief in the potential of all young people, the Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health works to answer Gisela Konopka's request:

*"I would like to leave as a legacy people who can work with the young with strength, knowledge, imagination and deep caring."*

Gisela was an early voice in the field of healthy youth development. As a longtime faculty member in the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, Gisela was a pioneer in the social group work method, where she would engage young people by listening to them, hearing their stories, their dreams, their aspirations.

Gisela believed that all young people can achieve their dreams and advocated through out her lifetime for practices, policies and systems that foster health youth development and successful transitions from adolescence to adulthood.

  
Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health

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DIVISION OF ADOLESCENT  
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DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

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## FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In the spring of 1973 the Office of Child Development of the Department of Health Education and Welfare asked Gisela Konopka and the Center for Youth Development and Research, University of Minnesota to develop a statement on their concept of normal adolescence and impediments to healthy development. The statement was viewed as a possible base for national policy.

Youth need the opportunity to:

- Participate as citizens, as members of a household, as workers, and as responsible members of society.
- Gain experience in decision-making.
- Interact with peers, and acquire a sense of belonging.
- Reflect on self in relation to others, and discover self by looking outward as well as inward.
- Discuss conflicting values and formulate one's own value system.
- Experiment with one's own identity, with relationships; try out various roles without having to commit ones' self irrevocably.
- Develop a feeling of accountability in the context of a relationship among equals.
- Cultivate a capacity to enjoy life.

Later, Dr. Konopka added another requirement to the list:

- Participate in the creative arts, to learn self-expression and communicate deep feelings from within.



*Dr. Gisela Konopka*  
1910 – 2003

*Gisela Konopka*  
Konopka Institute for Best Practices in Adolescent Health

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Konopka, G. Requirements for healthy development of adolescent youth, *Adolescence* 8(31), 2-25, 1973.