URBAN MILWAUKEE

New Director Takes Over Beleaguered MPS HR Department

Outsider brings diverse experience to challenged department.

By Terry Falk - Oct 1st, 2025 12:43 pm

Dominick Maniscalco is now the chief officer of the Milwaukee Public Schools' Office of Human Resources (OHR), a division plagued by its inability to hire and maintain teachers for the district and one singled out in a February third-party audit.

It is a division that has seen numerous leadership changes in its top ranks for decades. Maniscalco believes he is up for the challenge.

Born and raised in the Chicago area, Milwaukee is just a short drive up the road. "When I saw the opportunity to come to MPS, I jumped at it," says Maniscalco in an interview with Urban Milwaukee.

He arrives with a diverse background in HR, first working in the private sector for United Airlines and then fashion retailer H&M. His high school English teacher became superintendent of Niles Township school district and asked him to head its HR department. Niles is a high school district of three schools, 70 spoken languages and 4,600 students.

After spending five years there, he spent seven years at Hinsdale, a 4,000-student district with a diverse population with varying poverty and academic achievement.

Maniscalco worked at the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) for the last four years as deputy director of HR. Although CHA has only 700 employees, it serves more than 65,000 residents with a budget of $1.4 billion, about the same as MPS. Maniscalco says CHA has almost as many sites as MPS has schools, and he saw, as part of his job, getting to as many sites as possible to see how its teams were working with its residents. "It's not just employer based; it's getting out in the community," he points out. How well new teachers perform is an important consideration in his new position within MPS.

"I was really itching to get back in schools... There is no energy or vibe like it..." He saw MPS as a great fit.

Maniscalco has analyzed the final report on the MPS OHR by the Council of Great City Schools, requested by Superintendent **Brenda Cassellius**. "The audit actually showcased,

not only the deficiencies, but also, we had a team of people who were doing their very best to keep the district afloat." However, "we needed strategic direction… What does the plan look like over the next 12, 24 months?"

One of his first goals is to get a qualified teacher in every classroom.

He underscored that right now every classroom in MPS has a certified teacher, but admits that some of those teachers are in a temporary status, either as central office employees or substitute teachers. Ninety-eight percent of MPS schools are staffed with full-time teachers.

The district is still looking for some 90 more teachers. "We had 7 teachers start this week," he said. "We have 27 in the pipeline."

One of the deficiencies identified in the CGCS audit was that MPS was slow in securing contracts for potential new teachers for the upcoming school year. He now wants to "target those [college] students sooner than later. We are looking to, potentially, have an early contract program, locking in those teachers while they are still in college, just before they graduate for the coming year, so they have a full-time job at MPS when they get out of college."

In addition, he wants to establish "recruiting workshops in those community-based schools. We haven't done that in a very long time." The district will "work with some universities that we have not worked with in the past, [casting] a wider net."

Cassellius, herself, has thrown a wider net to bring the most talented individuals to her cabinet. Maniscalco has vast experience in human resources and shows great enthusiasm for the job. He says he is "creating a roadmap for the next school year." Come next September, we will know how successful he has been.

Terry Falk *served for years on the Milwaukee school board, and before that on the executive board of the MTEA.*