

## Best MSR Practicum: Sheff vs. O'Neill Team

The Master of Survey Research practicum project provides students with a hands-on experience conducting survey research projects from start to finish. Under the supervision of Ken Dautrich, students conducted all phases of a working project, from project design and working with clients, to data analysis and presentation. This year's winner for the best practicum project was the Sheff Movement Survey Study conducted by Alexis Browne, Lauren Friedman, and Sean Harrington.

The Sheff Movement is a Connecticut coalition of parents, citizens, educators and others who work to educate the public and increase support for voluntary school integration measures. The Sheff Movement coalition asked the MSR students to develop and analyze a statewide survey of Connecticut residents to accomplish two tasks. The first was to measure present levels of support and awareness of the remedies for racial isolation resulting from the landmark school integration case *Sheff v. O'Neill*. The second was to test messages that most effectively make the public more supportive of integrating public schools.

To accomplish these objectives the Sheff practicum team conducted two focus groups and worked directly with the client to design a questionnaire for a telephone survey of 1,010 Connecticut residents. They analyzed the survey data, wrote an extensive report of the findings, and presented the results to the client in April.

The Sheff practicum team found the project to be tremendously rewarding. "We were lucky to have had the opportunity to work on such a wonderful project," said Alexis Browne, MSR/MPA '08. "It was a great learning experience for all of us."

After hearing the news that the team had won Best Practicum, Sean Harrington, MSR '08 said, "It means a lot to see our hard work recognized."

The Sheff Movement made the findings public in early June and has since printed numerous copies of the report and distributed them to educators, state legislators and other public officials. Some of the results were published in the *Hartford Courant*.

To read the report, or to find out more about the Sheff Movement coalition, please see their website at [www.sheffmovement.org](http://www.sheffmovement.org).