



CENTER FOR  
APPLIED RESEARCH AND  
EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

# **Implementation of the Quality Compensation Program (Q Comp): A Formative Evaluation**

Conducted and prepared by

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI)  
College of Education and Human Development  
University of Minnesota

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The College of Education  
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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# **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUALITY COMPENSATION PROGRAM (Q COMP): A FORMATIVE EVALUATION**

CONDUCTED AND PREPARED BY  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

This evaluation report was produced by the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Its purpose is to describe the range of implementation strategies and activities early adopter districts and sites have used in the implementation of the Quality Compensation Program (Q Comp), which is the alternative pay initiative enacted by the Minnesota Legislature. This report will also summarize successes and concerns of those pilot sites, since their experiences can be highly informative for other districts and charter schools moving forward to create their own Q Comp plans.

This report examines only the first phase of the Q Comp application process and implementation activities. As such, it is intended to be a formative evaluation, in that the goal of the report is to provide information. This evaluation does not attempt to evaluate district outcomes. A more extensive summative evaluation is planned by MDE and is scheduled to begin by 2007.

## **METHODS AND SAMPLING**

From the first group of Q Comp pilot sites, five were purposefully sampled to include a variety of settings (i.e., large and small, urban and rural, districts and charter schools). The sampled group included four school districts and one charter school. They are: St. Francis, Mounds View, LaCrescent-Hokah, and Hopkins school districts, and Beacon Academy Charter School. Our intent was to examine how implementation was rolled out in a variety of settings and to

determine which implementation strategies, at this early stage of implementation, appeared to be the most promising.

The CAREI team analyzed data collected from various sources, which included interviews of principals, teachers and coordinators in participating districts and sites; review of information that the districts and schools supplied to MDE during the application process; and observing and conversing with Q Comp participants at MDE conferences and workshops. These sources, in addition to responses to an electronic survey generated by MDE staff, provided multiple avenues for learning about the Q Comp Program. A brief description of the methods and individual sources is provided below.

### ***District and site interviews of key stakeholders***

An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was designed to solicit the opinions of Q Comp participants, as well as to gain an understanding of the strategies and objectives districts and sites employed in the early stages of implementation. The interviews also helped CAREI evaluators ascertain the extent to which implementation strategies were successful and to identify possible barriers to success.

The interviews were conducted with principals, district administrators, and teachers involved in a variety of Q Comp roles. For example, some teachers were curriculum or Q Comp coordinators. Others took on the roles of teacher-observers, peer review team members, mentors, mentees, teacher participants and the like. In all, we conducted 24 interviews with individuals in these roles from five of the twelve initial implementation sites. Interviews were generally conducted in-person and were audio taped.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Application forms***

The applications forms that were submitted by each district or site to MDE were reviewed for common and unique features. While we recognize that proposed activities change under real-world conditions, the applications were an important resource for determining the specific objectives hoped for and indicators used to measure those objectives.

The applications were compared based on several main content areas. These areas included participation, district goals, site goals, indicators, staff and compensation. A summary of the findings is provided later in this report. See Appendix B for a table which provides the details of the comparison among the applications from the Q Comp pilot sites.

### ***Responses to an electronic survey***

An online survey was designed and administered by MDE staff. In January 2006, MDE launched an online survey for personnel in districts who had submitted applications to participate in the Q Comp Program. Some districts did not respond to the survey at all, while others had several hundred responses. The surveys were tailored to each district's program and staff terminology; therefore, the surveys were administered separately to each district or site and varied slightly from one another. Due to the wide differences in terminology and response rates,

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<sup>1</sup> Distance and time limitations made it impossible to travel to one district. For this site, interviews were conducted over the phone. The majority, but not all, of the interviews were taped.

the data from that survey was not useful as a comparative source for this report. Rather, districts chose to use that data as internal feedback information for their local discussions.

### ***Other sources***

The evaluation team drew from various other data sources that augmented the data that was gathered from the districts and sites. These sources included information obtained through various state and federal Web sites, including the Minnesota Department of Education, the Institute for Educational Science's National Center for Education Statistics, and census data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

## **SITE CHARACTERISTICS**

### ***Beacon Academy Charter School (ISD #4124)***

Beacon Academy is a public charter school located in Plymouth, Minnesota. Like all charter schools in the state, Beacon Academy is considered its own school district. The school opened in 2004 as a K-3 school with the intention of adding a grade every year until it became a K-8 school. In the 2005-2006 academic year, the school offered classes in kindergarten through grade 4. There were approximately 150 students and 13 teachers, including Special Education and Title I.

Beacon Academy initially applied to participate in Q Comp in September 2005 and then later revised their application and resubmitted it in November 2005. Their plan received final approval from MDE in February 2006.

All Beacon Academy teachers had the option of participating in Q Comp and all but one teacher chose to participate. Because the school is small, all the teachers involved were able to have a coordinating or lead role in the Q Comp program. The director/principal played a minor administrative role, and the site had a part-time Q Comp coordinator position.

### ***Hopkins School District (ISD #270)***

Hopkins Public Schools is a first-ring suburb west of Minneapolis and serves all or parts of seven suburban communities: Hopkins, Minnetonka, Golden Valley, Eden Prairie, Edina, Plymouth, and St. Louis Park. Approximately 8,100 students attend seven elementary schools (K-6th grade), two junior high schools (7th-9th grade), and one high school (10th-12th grade). The district's profile of racial/ethnic diversity is about 77% Caucasian, with the remaining 23% comprised of Black (11%), Hispanic (4%), Asian (3%), American Indian (1%), and Multiracial (4%). More than 38 different language groups are represented in Hopkins Public Schools' diverse student population. The free/reduced lunch rate for the district population is at 19%.

The district has approximately 600 full- and part-time teachers. Many Hopkins teachers have received state and national recognition, including two teachers who were winners of Minnesota's Teacher of the Year Award. Also, many students have won awards for exceptional academic achievement, such as National Merit Scholarships and Advanced Placement Program awards. About 85% of all Hopkins seniors continue after graduation in post-secondary education. Hopkins participation in Q Comp began in the fall of 2006.

### ***LaCrescent-Hokah School District (ISD #300)***

LaCrescent-Hokah is a consolidated school district, located in the predominantly rural, southeastern corner of Minnesota. In many ways, the district and surrounding communities have retained many of the characteristics that were present in rural areas of Minnesota two and three decades earlier.

According to 2000 census data obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Web site, 95.4 percent of LaCrescent's population under the age of 18 is white (non-Hispanic, non-Latino). Ninety-seven percent (97.3%) of the population was at or above poverty level in 1999 and about 60 percent of the population over age 25 has a high school diploma or GED, has attended at least one year of college, or has obtained their baccalaureate degree.<sup>2</sup>

In 2005, fall enrollment for the district stood at 1,496 students. Of those children, 149 students (10%) were receiving free lunches and 55 students (3.7 %) were receiving reduced price lunches. Currently no students are listed as having received English Language Learners (ELL) accommodations during this school year. The district has also provided special education to 142 of its students in 2005.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, unable to pass a school referendum, the district has been faced with budget cutbacks, forcing teachers to look for alternative funding streams to maintain or enhance their instruction. Q Comp participation is one of several strategies the district has used to ensure that teachers are able to maintain their current benefit structure and the fewest numbers of teachers will be laid off.

### ***Mounds View School District (ISD # 621)***

Located approximately nine miles north of the downtown areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Mounds View Public Schools provides instructional services to students who live in the cities of Arden Hills, Mounds View, New Brighton, North Oaks, Roseville, Shoreview and Vadnais Heights.

Mounds View is among the larger districts in Minnesota. With six elementary schools, three middle schools, two high schools, one alternative school and an area learning center, the district serves nearly 10,000 students and employs more than 1,400 staff members.

Mounds View was one of the first districts in the state to apply for and be accepted to the Q Comp Program. The district began the Q Comp initiative in October 2005. The program was adopted with 83% of the teachers in the district voting for it. Once the decision was made to implement Q Comp, all teachers were required to participate.

### ***Saint Francis School District (ISD #15)***

The Saint Francis School district is located north of the Twin Cities metropolitan area in Anoka County. Once considered a rural county, Anoka has witnessed growing development in recent years. The district is composed of nine schools with a total enrollment of nearly 6,000 students.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Data/index.html>

One distinguishing feature of the district has been the formation of the Teaching Academy (TA). The TA provides training and professional development to all district teachers as well as teachers, beyond the district, in association with St. Mary's College of Winona. The Research and Evaluation Curriculum (REC) is based on a set of thirteen modules (courses) developed by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Saint Francis has offered all AFT/REC courses and has become a leader in providing professional development to teachers in Minnesota. The district used the Teacher Academy as the mechanism for providing professional development to its teachers. It was also its main avenue for disseminating Q Comp policies and requirements to staff.

## FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

It is important to note that each individual in the districts and sites plays a different role in the implementation of Q Comp and will naturally have a unique perspective on the process. Our interviews attempted to solicit the opinions and attitudes of a variety of stakeholder positions including district administrators, school administrators, Q Comp coordinators, peer leaders, master teachers and the observed teachers. In some instances, the views of these stakeholders were remarkably consistent, and in other instances, stakeholder views varied substantially.

### SECTION I. BELIEFS AND CULTURE OF READINESS

#### *Beliefs about Links between Pay and Performance*

Respondents were asked in the opening question to provide their personal opinion about whether or not pay-based incentives should be linked to instructional practice and student achievement. Their responses appear to be directly related to their role in the district or school. For example, participating classroom teachers and Q Comp observers/mentors who had previously been classroom teachers expressed caution about having a direct, one-to-one correspondence between student performance and teacher pay. However, this same group was fairly unanimous in their belief that pay related to instructional practices was appropriate and, perhaps even beneficial, with its potential to increase student performance as the indirect result. Representative quotes from interviewees include the following:

*The link to student achievement, for me, is still a bit shaky, and if it was linked only to student achievement it would be harder to accept. As it is now, it has more of a link to the professional development piece than the student achievement piece. And I believe that when instructional practices improve, that the increase in student learning will follow. If it was only linked to what the students did on a test, I could not support it. As it is structured now, with supporting effective teaching, I think it is a good thing.*

[a district Q Comp coordinator, and former teacher]

*I think they should be linked, but it depends how you evaluate it. You shouldn't just look at one test score and decide if that is what the link is. There are a lot of other things that enter in (e.g., classroom composition, background of kids, etc.)* [classroom observer]

*It is both good and bad. It is good to provide incentives and reward both achievements of teachers and improved student learning, but it is challenging to control what it is that we are rewarding. [classroom teacher]*

*I think they should be linked very little. There are so many factors beyond the teacher's abilities to influence achievement. When I have taught advanced level classes, the kids take off and learn no matter what I do. I can use those same lessons with classes of underachieving kids and their achievement gains can be very little. Thus, it is unfair to judge my performance as a teacher by the academic gains that my students have made. I think that there is coaching that can be done so that teachers can grow. Still, I am not sure that that should be dependent on pay. [classroom observer]*

*I don't necessarily agree [on the link between pay and achievement]. We cannot always impact achievement. It depends on the class we have. [classroom observer]*

*I think it should be done in such a way that it isn't directly linked to student performance. It should be linked to student growth. It should not be the total of someone's salary. It is a way to create a culture of improving student achievement. [classroom teacher]*

*[The link between pay and achievement should be] fifty percent at most. It is nice to have some of it linked to provide a focus, but I think only a portion should be linked to achievement. [classroom observer]*

*It should be linked to some extent. It is fair and logical if the school has the appropriate data to make instructional decisions. However, it is important to have a value-added piece included in the growth expectations. [classroom teacher]*

*There's no real research here [about the direct relationship between teachers' pay and student achievement]. I see it as more of a way for teachers to improve practice through professional development. [classroom observer]*

*I guess I have mixed feelings about it. Teachers are willing to make changes in their instructional practice. I would not be for it if it was 'cut and dried'—'this is how your kids did, so this is how you will be paid.' [classroom teacher]*

The responses from individuals who were in district administrative or supervisory roles differed from the opinions expressed above and were clearly more supportive of having a direct link between student performance and teacher pay:

*High stakes testing is the way of the future therefore there has to be some monetary connection. [district administrator]*

*It gives the district a measurable goal. In the beginning I was unsure, now I think it is OK. [classroom observer]*

*I think it is a good idea. It encourages professional learning communities. We have been working on something similar for the past few years. [district administrator]*

*Absolutely! This is similar to what business expects of its employees. People get rewarded with pay for reaching target goals. [district administrator]*

*I think it is a great idea. It forces you to prove that what you are doing is resulting in improved student performance. [classroom observer]*

*I like it. I am a 'goal-based' kind of guy, so I like to tie together student achievement and teacher performance. [district administrator]*

It is striking to note that in the five pilot sites there was near unanimity among current and former classroom teachers that student performance should not, as a sole factor, be directly tied to teacher pay. Nearly all of them noted their inability to control for factors outside of their reach, such as lack of parental support in school attendance and homework completion, and the existence of difficult home and neighborhood environments which cause children to come to school distracted and worried about safety. On the other hand, teachers are very positive about the link that Q Comp has emphasized about the benefits of extended professional development. They appear to view professional development as the best and most logical route leading to improved student learning.

Administrators tend to believe a direct link between pay and student performance is a good idea, but also are currently supportive of making the monetary connection to professional development rather than only to student achievement. The administrators who have the strongest support of pay for performance have not been classroom teachers themselves, which may account for the range of responses heard among the administrative group.

### ***Acceptance of Pay-Based Incentives***

A follow-up question was asked of the interviewees to determine whether or not they thought that pay-based incentives would achieve the desired outcomes sought by those who supported the creation of the Q Comp Program. The responses to this question were mostly positive from all persons interviewed. A classroom observer enthusiastically said, “*Yes. It has made teachers really look at what they can do to improve achievement.*” Other teachers and observers provided very thorough explanations:

*Yes, I think it will. It will encourage staff to go above and beyond. It will also encourage them to work with other teachers. It is a good motivator and also a good way to reward teachers who are already doing all that. [classroom teacher]*

*I think that pay for desired outcomes puts a 'driver' on people thinking more critically about choices for teaching that will lead to improved student growth. It puts an emphasis that otherwise wouldn't be there to the same extent. [classroom teacher]*

Administrators who were interviewed also had strongly positive perceptions of benefits and attainment of outcomes:

*Yes, I think it will. It has been a benefit for teachers. They are talking with one another about best practices; they are observing each other and providing feedback. There's lots of coaching and collaboration going on. [district administrator]*

Another district administrator wanted their district improvements to go beyond the teachers, to include the principals and other administrative staff:

*I wanted to connect our administrative contract to our district's Q Comp goals. [district administrator]*

Finally, one administrator voiced concerns about “outcomes” versus “links”:

*First, the outcomes need to be connected to staff development, and then if we do staff development well, then teaching will improve and there should be some pay incentive. I look at the staff development component of Q Comp as the most important outcome. Student achievement will then follow. [district administrator]*

It is interesting to note that several respondents thought that a clarification of the desired outcomes would help. A classroom teacher noted,

*If we over-reward only academic achievement, we might be neglecting other kinds of achievement. Given where we are right now, it is probably a good thing to try, but I cannot say that it is a wholly good thing.*

Another teacher replied that the desired outcomes may not be reached—“because it depends on the outcomes you are looking for.” Yet a third classroom teacher explained,

*I think it is complex. Q Comp is more about cultural change than economics. Until you change the culture, economic incentives don't do the trick. I think we have seen that in our district—our culture had already started to shift in this direction, so the economic incentive was a boost for those not quite on board yet.*

Overall, the respondents to this question often spoke about the value of Q Comp providing a “focus” and that it was a “motivator” for teachers and administrators to make changes in their practices. The potential for Q Comp to make a difference was at the heart of the positive statements made about the program. People appear to believe that it is an excellent incentive for professional growth, but are somewhat reluctant to definitively attach that to improved student achievement. The need to define or elaborate on the program's outcomes may be the basis of the hesitance a few respondents expressed.

### ***Acceptance of Q Comp***

Respondents in each pilot site were asked to describe the levels of acceptance of Q Comp among both teachers and administrators as it was locally and uniquely designed and implemented for that site. The interesting finding for this query was that the perceptions expressed in any particular site were consistent, no matter the role of the respondent. If it was well accepted, then

most of the interviewees had similar answers. If the acceptance was mixed, with the teachers most often providing the negative view, then this kind of response was consistent across all of the persons and the roles interviewed.

### Teachers' Views

When teachers spoke positively about Q Comp, they noted most often the support they are receiving to improve their practice. The support is in the form of workshops, time to meet with colleagues about new instructional ideas, observations by peers to receive feedback, and the monetary boost for these efforts. Comments from respondents who perceived high acceptance centered on its being “teacher to teacher”. Others noted that, “*it worked out because everyone was on a level playing field*” and that “*there are a variety of expectations but they are fair and perceived as fair.*” Acceptance was noted in several different sites as being higher among their younger teachers, and the presence of Q Comp in their district is perceived as a reason why some older teachers have chosen to retire rather than comply with all of “the hoops.”

Among the teachers who are more hesitant to say that the acceptance has been widely positive, they cite many of the difficulties normally associated with the start-up of a new initiative. Clearly, among all sites interviewed, the acceptance has grown over time. In some cases the time has been several years, while in others, it has been less than nine months in which teachers were expected to embrace a new support structure. Lack of acceptance appears to have much to do with unclear local goals and a lack of adequate coordination. This was cited by several respondents in different locations.

*Most teachers are hesitant because [local] expectations were unclear and still are. We need better administration of the program so we know what is expected.*

Besides ineffective local administration of Q Comp, the second most commonly cited reason for its non-acceptance is the fear that teachers have about being observed and evaluated by colleagues:

*Competition was a big concern for teachers when this was first approached because we believe that all the teachers here do their best always.*

A similar response was heard in a different district:

*Some are afraid of other teachers coming into their classrooms – they are somewhat okay with the principal observations but don't want to look bad in front of their peers.*

However, another teacher in that district spoke of the same situation in a positive tone:

*Having the evaluation process does allow teachers to get feedback about their work that they otherwise just don't get. We all need to hear from our colleagues and our supervisors what a great job we are doing.*

The “pay for performance” aspect of Q Comp received several comments from teachers, which clearly had an impact upon its local acceptance. A classroom mentor observed,

*Is there really pressure to limit it to a test score? Not in our plan, not as long as they let us do it the way we are doing it. A very small percentage of our pay raise is linked to a test score.*

A similar candid comment was provided by a classroom teacher who noted,

*I think there were about 60% of the teachers who voted for it, and I was not one of them. I have always been suspicious of merit pay because I think there are too many administrators who do not have a clue of what is going on in the classroom. However, there were other teachers in the district that I trusted who supported it, so I thought that maybe I should give it a chance. I applied for the job of master teacher so that I could be sure that the job got done right. ...I have changed my opinion of it over the year, as I have seen it really help teachers grow professionally. I think the acceptance [of Q Comp] is directly related to the relationship that the classroom teacher has been able to establish with the master teacher.*

Finally, several teachers brought up the amount of “extra” pay that one can receive via Q Comp. As one noted in his district, “... some veteran teachers are bitter that new teachers can quickly achieve higher salaries, which took them many years to achieve.”

#### Administrators’ Views

Acceptance among administration in all of the Q Comp pilot sites where interviews took place was uniformly high. Teachers perceived administrators as liking it, and administrators themselves confirmed this. There are two main reasons that administrators cite for why they like Q Comp. The first has to do with the fact that accountability for improved student performance publicly rests with them, and Q Comp has provided a mechanism and a structure in which building and district administrators can have a local dialogue about linking instruction to student achievement. As one administrator noted, “[Q Comp] gives us a common language and it is less punitive. Teachers have the responsibility to show student gains. Language helps hold teachers accountable. Q Comp puts accountability into teachers’ hands, and principals like that.” One of several administrators gauged the levels of acceptance among teachers as being: “10% hate it, 15% tolerate it, and 75% are okay if it doesn’t change significantly.” Another administrator put it this way, “I don’t know if the state will continue to fund this or not, but this is the way we’re going to do this in our district. People do believe that what we’re doing is the right thing.”

The second reason that administrators have strongly accepted Q Comp is that it has provided financial support to sites/districts when they have otherwise struggled to give teachers an increase in pay. The financial incentive for participation is not considered “huge” as one person described it, but the administrator went on to say, “In a little district our size, a little money makes a difference.” A different respondent noted, “I think support came not because it was a great program, but because teachers saw it as the only way to get any raise”.

## SECTION II. ROLL-OUT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT

### *Overview of the categories discussed*

Interviewee comments concerning roll-out, implementation and assessment were clustered into four main areas: communication, increased workloads, teacher observations, and impact on students. Recurrent themes, as well as convergent or divergent opinions, are presented in this section. At the end of the analysis of interviews, we devote two more sections to summarize participants' perspectives on what has worked well, and to highlight areas where further growth will need to take place for successful implementation to continue.

### *Communication*

One recurrent theme of implementation, whether successful or unsuccessful, is the importance of communication up and down the chain of command from state policy makers, to district administrators and school boards, down to school principals, coordinators, and teachers.

*Communication for our district has been tremendous! Our coordinators teach every introductory professional development course. In doing so, they talk to every new teacher and tell them exactly what is necessary. [district administrator]*

Principals, Q Comp coordinators and teachers stated how important it was for them to receive clear expectations from their immediate superiors. Districts where communication was positive and was perceived *not* to be an impediment to the implementation process possessed a clear and unique mechanism for the regular dissemination of information. In smaller districts or sites, this authority may have been embodied in a single person, usually the Q Comp coordinator.

In larger districts, a large committee, which usually included all stakeholder groups, was formed. In one district, for example, this committee was named the "Oversight Committee" and all information regarding Q Comp expectations, rules, salary changes, and other decisions were channeled through this committee. In another district, a pre-existing Teacher Academy, an institution that provided professional development to both district teachers and the region, was the source and clearinghouse for similar communications. Interview subjects from even the smallest sites were in agreement that, because of the volume of communications and the complexities of implementation, a full-time position should be a requirement for the Q Comp coordinator position.

### *Increased workloads*

Another important theme raised by interviewees was that in order to faithfully carry out Q Comp, districts and schools had to invest significant additional time during the preparation of the application and the early stages of implementation. The time was used to prepare the application, convene and attend meetings, train staff, and develop observation and assessment instruments. These activities were over and above the current workloads of teachers and administration.

According to many individuals, once Q Comp was approved for their site, paperwork and teacher observations then became the most time- and energy-consuming activities in Q Comp. How the

program was structured in a particular district largely determined whether increased workloads, were equally distributed across all district staff or if extra work fell on specific individuals or classes of employees. For example, workloads for administrators increased dramatically when they remained a key player in classroom observations:

*In our school district we have 225 teachers participating in Q Comp and I am one of ten principals. That translates to each principal having, on average, 22 classroom observations we need to complete this year. This year we had to do all this between January and April, and that's in addition to the new teacher observations the state mandates.*

In a different location, however, the principals had very little to do with any of the Q Comp activities. As one interviewee noted, *"Because the principals have not had a [direct] role and no one is taking over what they used to do, I think our Q Comp work has been only a blip on their screen."* The only rare exception for extended principal involvement in this site is when a principal is needed to observe a tenured teacher in order to settle a disagreement over the outcome/rating of the observation of the teacher's instruction.

Mentor/master teachers who serve as observers have their own unique workload demands that require new skills to act in the roles of teacher-leaders. As one mentor teacher observed, *"I have found that looking for resources for my teachers has been very time consuming, and something that I had not thought about when I took on this job."* A different obstacle for mentor/master teachers has been how to accurately and fairly observe non-classroom teachers, such as school counselors, librarians, social workers, etc. In one location, non-classroom staff participated in developing their own rubrics for their specialty areas to be used in the observation requirement. Finally, part-time mentor/master teachers have often encountered scheduling problems when the only time to observe someone is when they themselves are teaching.

Q Comp may, in some districts, also place an additional burden on the newest teachers. These teachers, in many instances, are required to participate in the program, as well as complete all first year teacher requirements for the district. In one district for instance, first-year teachers were required to participate in action research activities, receive three provisional observations and produce an extensive instructional portfolio to demonstrate a high level of competence in their certificate area, in addition to fulfilling the Q Comp requirements.

### ***Teacher Observation***

Teacher observation is a central element of Q Comp and an essential ingredient of most Q Comp implementation strategies. Opinions of the teacher observations range, as expected, from resistance to acceptance.

Veteran teachers are considerably more hesitant to support observations of their teaching, according to those interviewed. Most respondents suggested that long-time teachers were less accustomed and less eager to have people come into their "domain" to watch them teach. In particular, these teachers preferred not to be observed by their peers. Interview subjects told CAREI evaluators that veteran teachers did not want to "look bad in front of their peers."

*I am afraid that “dead wood” will remain “dead wood.” There are teachers in every building (as well as state-wide) who don’t follow curriculum guidelines, refuse to work cooperatively with peers, etc. Will this system do anything to change that? Will it, at least, guarantee that they won’t be tenured in the first place? Maybe early peer review will perhaps make some realize that “June, July, and August” are not good enough reasons to be a teacher.*

[Comments from a veteran teacher who has elected to remain in the traditional salary structure]

Having said this, observation, as a tool for professional growth, has received growing acceptance in the districts we visited. Teachers are also becoming accustomed to having visitors in their classrooms and they stated that they see a stronger connection between their practice and student achievement. Acceptance of teacher observations as a means to assess instructional practice was considerably more common among young/newer teachers. These teachers seemed genuinely interested in feedback from mentors and/or peers and saw the observations as an opportunity for professional growth and support.

Teacher observations were usually required by the participating districts, but they varied in the level of formality and level of consequence. Typically, the observations were used to signal strengths, challenge areas, or deficiencies, and to spur changes in instructional patterns over time. In most districts, teachers who did not agree to be observed or who received a low score on their observation assessment were not eligible for the full compensation.

In some districts, observations were formal and included a pre-observation conversation, the observation itself, which included a detailed observation instrument, and a post-observation meeting to discuss the classes that were observed. However, in at least one district, observations were less formal or non-existent. As one interviewee explained,

*In our district, evaluations are pretty informal. No evaluation paperwork is turned in, each teacher just has to write a summary— a reflection. In some cases, teachers choose to share portfolios, lesson plans, or journals. Even personal conversations could be substituted for classroom observations.*

Specific benefits and challenges of incorporating an observation element in Q Comp were raised during the interviews. An example of a challenge is the pressure which is sometimes placed upon peer observers to provide a positive assessment of the classroom observation. Another stress placed on teacher-observers was how best to deal with intransigent teachers who refuse to adopt best practices in instruction.

One of the benefits of forming peer observation teams has been to spread assessment beyond the administration or a single administrator. Administrators said that this change in practice has tended to depersonalize the criticism coming from the administrator by spreading it to a team of observers. Also a comment from a veteran teacher noted,

*This [Q Comp] has been good for our administrators since we [mentor/master teachers] are doing a lot of what they don't have time for—observing tenured teachers and helping them to grow. Our principals are very busy just assessing the probationary teachers, and most of us experienced teachers have not had any real principal observation and feedback since we got tenure, and for me that was over 20 years ago!*

### ***Impact on Students***

Even at this early stage of implementation, Q Comp has had some general impact on schools that have fully implemented school-wide goals. For these schools, spelling lists, math computation skills, book groups have been broadcast and reinforced in each grade and classroom with positive results. School-wide goals have helped to remind teachers and students of important learning objectives for the district and school.

More specifically in classrooms, there has been a measurable impact on some students, according to the teachers interviewed. This is especially true for teachers whose action research, for instance, was specifically designed to address student achievement in a given area. For example, administrators at two different implementation sites said the following:

*I think our test scores show improvement, and there are a lot of teachers doing action research.*

*One teacher altered her teaching strategies in an attempt to raise her seventh graders' math scores on a standardized norm-referenced test. She discovered students in all of her classes surpassed the norm of other seventh graders in the school for the term this year.*

*Another teacher struggling with class management saw decreases in behavior problems after she adopted new discipline techniques and compared the spring term with the previous term.*

In general, however, students are likely not aware of any noticeable changes to instructional practice and classroom activities. Teachers interviewed did say that some students had noticed and commented that more observations appeared to be happening among teachers. To this the teachers replied,

*We are all trying to get better at what we do, and one of the ways we do this is to have other teachers watch us work.*

One unfortunate outcome of Q Comp for students may become the pressure that they could feel for having an effect upon their teachers' salaries. One teacher explained this issue as follows:

*In my [secondary] building at least, the students heard that their teacher's pay was going to be related to how the kids did on the state tests. The teachers thought that this was very unfortunate, for both the kids [with self-inflicted pressure on them if they wanted to do well to support their own teacher's pay] and for the teachers who had to explain this in their classes.*

### ***Positive outcomes in communication and professional development***

Q Comp is beginning to have several positive effects on the districts that have chosen to participate, but especially positive are aspects that involve communication and professional practice. With regard to communication, we consistently heard from interviewees that, through peer observations, common training, and other professional development activities required of all teachers who participate, teachers are developing a common language and a common experience. This change is difficult to understate in a profession that generally isolates individuals and limits peer interaction. Improved communication has not been limited to the teachers alone. Instead, people who were interviewed stated that communication among administrators, teachers and union representatives, and between teachers and administrators was positive and improved in most instances.

Moreover, more than one administrator commented that when they hear teachers talk among themselves in the break room/teachers' lounge that they are aware of a shift in teacher conversations to conversations about instructional practice and professional development. One high school principal remarked,

*I hear conversations taking place among teachers that are all about, "How I can become a better teacher." The whole conversation in the building has changed to be about teaching and learning, and not just whining.*

In the area of professional practice, teachers said that they are clearer about their lesson objectives and are more able to convey those goals and expectations to students and parents. In many cases, teachers speak about being more attentive to their own practice. Principals, coordinators, and teachers all consistently feel that Q Comp has helped focus their attention more solidly on professional development to improve instructional practice.

Finally, administrators view peer review teams as a tool to help encourage and support teachers who are interested in becoming better teachers. Q Comp expectations have also assisted school leaders to remove those teachers who adamantly refuse to reflect on their own professional practice and make changes.

### **SECTION III. TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

Teachers obviously play a key role in the implementation of the Q Comp program in schools and districts. In order to examine how well the program worked in a district it is important to look at the level of support they received in implementing the program into their classrooms. According to interviews with administrators, coordinators and teachers, support came in the form of financial compensation, release time, training and resources.

#### ***Support from school and district leaders***

When asked how school and district leaders supported teachers and lead teachers through the process, responses varied from feeling not at all supported to feeling very supported. Most teachers commented that they received some initial support with the roll-out of the program. For

example in one district, administrators or peer leaders assisted teachers in writing their professional growth goals for the program. However, administrators and teachers alike reported that teachers were basically on their own for most of the year to work through the process and customize it to fit their classrooms. One district Q Comp coordinator said,

*Overall, principals and administrators have been primarily hands-off in the program.*

Teachers in one of the larger districts used team leaders or building representatives as resources and spoke very highly of the support they received through monthly meetings:

*The members of the building leadership teams attend regular meetings and then bring back the pertinent information to us. It has been a wonderful source of support and an efficient way of getting questions answered.* [classroom teacher]

On the other hand, according to teachers interviewed in the smaller districts, the people in lead roles were often too busy to really provide much support to classroom teachers since they were already being stretched thinly and had limited resources from which to draw. As one classroom teacher said,

*The teachers in lead positions are not really a huge resource. They don't have a lot of time to help other teachers. They are getting paid more, but not really doing much.*

When asked about the kinds of assistance they were receiving, some teachers commented that the post-observation meetings they had with colleagues were a form of support because they received feedback and suggestions from other teachers and were able to implement some of the suggested techniques. This kind of instructional support was not, however, coming from the district or school administrators in most cases.

The financial support provided to districts from MDE was perceived by many as embodied in mentor teachers and professional development activities. While teachers recognized and appreciated the financial boost they received, they reported that they would have liked additional support to come in the form of additional training and time to plan, coordinate, and collaborate with colleagues. However, in one district, the administrators and the Q Comp coordinator alike believed that the primary support they had provided to teachers was in the form of financial compensation and that “the rest should take care of itself.”

### ***Training***

With the implementation of a new initiative often comes the need for special training or instruction. According to interviewees, the amount of training teachers said they received to prepare for the Q Comp program ranged from none to a full blown course. It is worth mentioning that some teachers only commented on training that was directly related to informing them about or implementing the program. Other teachers discussed training or workshops they participated in that focused on teaching or observation strategies that related to the work they would be doing for Q Comp in their district.

In the case of one of the districts, mentor teachers reported that they didn't receive any training at all. The only person in that district who received any training was the Q Comp coordinator who attended the workshops and trainings sponsored by MDE. These sessions focused primarily on the logistics and implementation of Q Comp. In other districts, training topics for mentor teachers included things such as how to write smart goals, training on observing other teachers, action research and coaching. Teachers and coordinators in more than one district mentioned that they received training using *Pathwise* from Charlotte Danielson. Several districts used the Danielson model and rubric for outlining their teacher observation and evaluation procedures.

### *New stressors and demands on time*

When people were asked if the Q Comp program was seen as a new stressor on teaching staff, the responses were fairly similar across all sites. Most teachers, administrators, and coordinators alike said that teachers considered the adoption of the program a new stressor in the beginning. The primary reason cited was that no one was sure exactly what the expectations were or what impact it would have on classroom instruction. However, as the program took shape, most teachers considered it as part of their regular day and worked it into what they were already doing in the classroom. As the year went on, teachers and administrators became more comfortable with the components of the program and implementing it was no longer seen as an additional task.

One coordinator commented that the program created slightly more work for the administration, but significantly more for master teachers or peer leaders as well as for the classroom teachers. For example, one master teacher commented that the amount of time required to locate resources for her teachers had been a significant demand on her time—one she had not considered when she agreed to the position. Another Q Comp coordinator questioned why the district didn't provide financial compensation for the Q Comp coordinator like they did for classroom teachers involved in the program. She believed that her position should also be compensated even if she wasn't working directly with improving student achievement.

Recognizing that an initiative is a new stressor on educators only addresses the initial concern for many—following through with support that helps to reduce the stress of additional responsibilities is also a concern. We asked what, if anything, was being done to reduce the new demand on teachers' time? In smaller districts there was not a lot being done to reduce the demands on teachers to implement Q Comp. According to a principal in one of the smaller districts,

*There just aren't enough resources to do so. We can't afford to bring in subs to allow for release time.*

In this district, teachers were working it out and making things fit into their regular classroom day and routine. Teachers commented that they were doing what they could with what they were being given, regardless of time and resources.

In one of the other districts, teachers were offered \$49 an hour if they used their prep time for Q Comp work. Teachers could apply for this and it was approved by the administration on an as-needed basis. Administrators in this district also reported that they thought significantly

increasing teacher salaries was the preferred form of support because many of the teachers didn't want time away from their classrooms. While this was not the case across all sites, the teachers interviewed in this district did echo this opinion and said that they considered release time where a substitute teacher was brought into their classroom to be "a last resort."

In several sites, the stressors related directly to the teacher observation and evaluation process. For example, changes are being made for next year (2006-07) in one district to reduce the number of "domains" in which they are observed from five to three, as well as to allow classroom teachers the opportunity to choose the domain areas in which they will be observed. During the pilot year there was a great deal of anxiety expressed about the observation/assessment process and the expectations. In this district, there will also be a shift to having the administrators, rather than the master teachers, rate the observations as "proficient" or "not proficient". Master teachers will be merely coaches in hopes of reducing the perception across the district that they are the "bad guys," as one teacher in the district put it.

### ***Site team meetings***

Interviewees were asked if they met as a site team to discuss Q Comp activities. Most reported they have regularly scheduled meetings at least once a month to talk about Q Comp. The membership composition of these meetings varied from one site to another. In one of the smaller districts, Q Comp meetings were held in conjunction with existing staff meetings and therefore everyone was involved in the discussions. In this case, teachers noted that some issues previously part of ongoing staff meetings were now never discussed because of the time needed to focus on Q Comp activities.

In larger districts, the meetings were usually limited to the Q Comp coordinator and lead teachers or building representatives. In addition to these formal meetings, most teachers indicated that they tried to meet on a more regular basis (daily or weekly) with colleagues to discuss how the program was going and successful strategies. However, most admitted that time doesn't allow for this level of collaboration on a regular basis.

## **SECTION IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### ***Changing School Cultures***

In the Q Comp districts where CAREI conducted interviews, researchers discovered several positive trends, namely that:

- a common language of assessment and practice is being established
- there is growing acceptance of classroom observations by one's peers
- districts have expanded time for teachers to discuss instructional practice, and
- school administrators report that teachers are spending more time outside of class discussing instructional practice.

Moreover, an alternative pay system has clearly captured the imagination of school administrators and union leaders alike. In the majority of the districts we visited, we heard about positive relationships and increased open discussion among teachers, the unions, and the administrators.

### ***Key factors affecting implementation***

When asked about which factors have hindered the advancement of Q Comp, several mentioned the quick turn around or limited time to complete the application and begin implementation. Schools and teachers were thrust into this in many cases without a lot of time for contemplation or preparation. One teacher reported that teachers felt pressure to vote for adopting the program without all the information or time to really consider how the program would impact their work in the classroom. In some sites, implementation began as late as January or February 2006.

There was also frequent discussion about a classic roadblock to any education initiative—the wide range of characteristics among their student populations. While some classes might be easily advanced academically, others may be particularly difficult, therefore making student achievement goals more challenging to reach. Basing pay on student performance instead of instructional practice was viewed as a major philosophical difference needing to be addressed before this initiative would be fully embraced.

Another crucial factor leading to greater or lesser success, addressed by one of the Q Comp coordinators, was that of the choice of the master or lead teacher. This coordinator believed that selecting the right person was critical in making the program successful either in the district or school. According to this interviewee, the master teacher/observer must be: “(1) *credible as an experienced teacher*; (2) *high in ‘people skills’*; and (3) *have a passion for teaching*.” This coordinator strongly believed that without having those attributes, the person in the lead position will have a very hard time doing the work and gaining respect from his/her peers.

Finally, coordinators in a couple of districts believed that any reduction in the financial support coming from the state could easily hinder the progress of the program. In one district a funding cut from the state would be enough to cause the district to discontinue the program. In the other district, when questioned further about what would be the greatest issue with the funding cut, the Q Comp coordinator responded by saying,

*We would certainly try to continue doing what we are doing, but it would become a sticking point with teachers and somewhat difficult to communicate our expectation that they [teachers] would continue in the same direction without the compensation component of the program.*

### ***Issues or areas needing further attention***

There are some issues identified during the interviews that need to be addressed by the district and other issues that are more the domain of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

- Specific to some districts, they saw a need to determine how it would handle atypical teaching staff, which included part-time teachers, special education teachers, media services and library staff and counselors to name a few. It was unclear whether these staff members would be eligible to receive the same alternative pay opportunities as full-time classroom teachers or not.
- Districts also needed to determine whether participating teachers would transition to the alternative pay system immediately or whether it would be phased in over a period of years. There were clearly some advantages for each method.
- A third issue that particularly concerns smaller districts and charter schools is the infrastructure necessary to implement the alternative pay system. Larger districts generally have an infrastructure that will support program development and coordination. Smaller districts and charter schools will likely need to appoint and fund specific positions for the task of planning, development and coordination of Q Comp. Also, charter school interviewees and smaller districts repeatedly emphasized the importance of having a full-time Q Comp coordinator as a key to the success of the implementation, even though it may be perceived as not needed due the smaller size.
- Finally, one district sought the support of veteran teachers by creating a “penalty” for the early termination of the program. In this instance, if the alternative pay program was terminated by a vote of the districts’ teachers during the first three years, new retirees would lose \$25,000 dollars from their pension fund. With such an incentive, veteran teachers were strongly supportive of Q Comp and wanted to see it succeed.
- Programming issues that apply more broadly to MDE include the following suggestions:
  - Interviewees from all sites suggested that MDE be more open to variations in the implementation model
  - Some interviewees described an over-emphasis on regulation and compliance, which fueled a sense of suspicion about MDE’s goals and purposes for Q Comp
  - Districts also urged MDE to commit to keeping Q Comp fully funded for the next several years, because a number of informants underscored the valuable culture shift that Q Comp had created and emphasized that systemic changes of this nature take time. All districts and schools sites stated that this work would end if funding were dropped from the State’s next biennial budget.

### ***Final Comment***

Alternative compensation plans have only recently been adopted in Minnesota and at the present time only a small percentage of districts and schools have participated in the Q Comp Program. Therefore, nearly all Minnesota districts remain in the early stages of implementation.

The early implementation stage of any major initiative, whether it refers to curriculum adoption or a policy change, is often characterized by incomplete information, disrupted communications, and confusion, even under the best of circumstances. When these factors are also coupled with restructuring and necessary changes to school culture within a short time frame, one would

expect less-than-perfect implementation; the Q Comp Program is no exception. Still, we found that local solutions were often generated to address the local problems, or at least the problem was brought to the attention of MDE staff who then often helped to facilitate a solution.

Overall, the views of most respondents were that Q Comp is a good initiative and worthy of continuation until further study is done to determine the broader array of outcomes—with the need to look at both student achievement and changes in instructional practices.

## APPLICATION COMPARISONS

The Q Comp applications for ten districts (including two charter schools) were reviewed for the purpose of providing a comparison among them of what districts proposed to implement for their pilot of the program. (See Appendix B.) Program applications were submitted to The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) beginning in September, 2005. Applications were approved between October, 2005 and January, 2006.

There was significant variance in the level of detail provided by applicants on the approved district and site applications. While some districts provided extremely detailed information about how they would implement Q Comp in their districts, others provided merely the bare bones of what the program would look like once it was fully implemented. While some applications were accepted at the initial submission, other districts were asked to make changes to their applications and resubmit them.

### *Participation*

Based on the information provided in the applications we reviewed, all but two districts reported that all of the teachers in the district would participate in the program. One district reported that 100% of teachers in the designated school sites would participate, but not all schools in the district were participating. Only one district of the ten reported participation was voluntary and in that case, only one teacher chose not to participate. In all districts seeking to implement Q Comp, teachers were provided the opportunity to vote on whether or not Q Comp would be adopted in their district. However, if the majority of teachers voted for the program, then most districts mandated teacher participation district-wide.

### *Q Comp goals and indicators*

Most districts provided a district-wide goal that was fairly general and then expected more specific goals to be developed for each school site within the district. There was only one district that had the same set of goals for every school site. Districts and sites often varied the goals by grade level or individual classroom. Several districts provided very specific and individualized goals for each site. For example, one district provided the following as their district goal:

*District Goal: Improve student achievement through high quality professional development and data-driven decision making.*

However, the sites goals were much more specific:

*Site Goal: Improve student achievement for students at or below the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile on the NWEA math assessment in the goal area of math computation. See a 10% increase in the number of students meeting and exceeding their growth targets as defined by the NWEA/MAP norm groups.*

Of all the district applications that were reviewed, only one district focused strictly on achievement in mathematics. Three other districts included mathematics in their Q Comp goals in addition to reading and/or writing. However, the majority chose to focus primarily on reading achievement. One district focused their Q Comp goal on writing in their high schools. The majority of districts and/or sites reported they would use the *NWEA/MAP* test, *Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs)*, and/or local classroom assessments as indicators of student achievement.

The level of specificity for the goals also varied from simply stating that achievement would increase to specifying target student populations and indicating percentage goals for improvement. For example, one district's goal simply indicated they would "*improve student achievement in reading.*" This was the identical goal for across all sites in the district. However, other districts provided greater detail by targeting specific student populations. For example, one district had a site goal that read, "*87% of students in grade 7 will be scoring at levels 3, 4, or 5 on reading MCAs in the area of main idea.*"

While some districts kept the focus to general reading or math achievement, other districts or sites specified academic areas in greater detail. Some specified a learning area on the *MCA* or the *MAP* such as *computations and operations*, or *literal comprehension*, and one district specified particular classroom assessments.

### ***Q Comp staffing and compensation***

Each district reported a different configuration of staff and positions relating to the Q Comp program. Some of the positions that were created were teacher mentors, teacher leaders, master teachers, instructional leaders, curriculum specialists, and instructional coaches. The positions offered anywhere from \$500 to \$10,000 stipends depending on the district and/or the position. The majority of the positions paid lead teachers an additional \$1,000 - \$4,000 per year and provided additional release time, but this varied significantly from district to district. For example, one district offered lead teachers \$1,000 plus three release days, compared to a district that offered \$2,000 plus 25 release days, and a third district that offered lead teachers \$4,000 per year. Several district applications did not provide any monetary details for the various staff positions they were proposing.

### ***Compensation structure***

The review of applications revealed that most districts described their alternative pay system as being determined by a variety of outcomes, with a percentage of pay ascribed to each of several outcomes. In districts where compensation was determined in this manner, student achievement results most often made up 25% of the total compensation, but ranged from 10% to 50% depending on the district. The results of the peer and principal formal classroom observations usually made up 25% of the compensation, and professional development or growth plans made up the remaining 50%.

On the other hand, some districts allocated specific dollar amounts to specific tasks or accomplishments. For example in one district, teachers received \$300 if school achievement goals were met, \$500 for achieving specific classroom gains, \$300 for professional development activities completed, and \$300 for developing their professional growth plan. Several districts set a cap or a limit on how much teachers could earn at about \$2,500 for a sum total of their accomplishments.

### ***Classroom observations***

Most districts indicated that they would include 3 formal observations as part of their Q Comp review process. This was the minimum recommended by the Minnesota Department of Education. One district however, included a total of 4 formal observations. Confusion was generated by the apparent interchangeability of the terms *observation*, *assessment*, and *evaluation* in both the legislation and the application forms.

### ***Comments and suggestions to MDE regarding the application form and process from interviews and our review include:***

- Review the application form to reduce its length and complexity
- Clarification and definitions needed for such terms as: “reforming steps and lanes” , “job-embedded activities”, and identifying differences (if any) among “observation, assessment, and evaluation”
- Provide guidelines for the characteristics of those selected to be master teachers/classroom observers—i.e., is there training needed for persons selected to do this work?
- Be more explicit about the kinds of indicators that a district might use to assess growth in teachers
- Set realistic timelines between when the application is approved and when Q Comp activities are expected to begin

## **FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

The evaluation of the Q Comp Program has been completed with feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders in a range of positions. The recommendations which follow are a result of synthesizing the data collected from the 24 respondents during individual interviews. The recommendations represent those persons’ experiences, perceptions, and opinions which emerged in the end as common themes among them.

- MDE needs to more fully define the expected outcomes of Q Comp, but also must continue to allow the districts/schools local flexibility in determining how to achieve them.

- The availability of continued financial resources being available to districts is key to the continuation of the program. In addition, sufficient financial support is needed so that smaller districts are able to afford a full time coordinator for the program.
- Requiring formal observations by a trained peer, who is separate from the school administrator, needs to become a requirement of participation for all districts and sites receiving Q Comp funds.
- Training on peer observations needs to be available to mentor/master teachers/observers. This is best offered by both district and MDE staff who have the knowledge and the capacity to deliver such training.
- MDE needs to establish and broadcast a clear chain of command within the Department for questions regarding the Q Comp program and its implementation.
- Districts have a need for MDE to create a committee or body, which is composed of a diverse set of statewide stakeholders, to be responsible for communicating the state's Q Comp policies and requirements, and who can fairly address issues that arise during implementation.

## **EVALUATION CONCLUSION**

Overall the Q Comp program appears to be working well in the districts where it has been adopted. Smaller districts seem to be struggling somewhat with securing the necessary resources and staff to keep the program running smoothly. For most districts included in the interviews, the financial compensation provided by MDE for implementing the program was and will continue to be a deciding factor in whether or not they participate. Both teachers and administrators alike are supportive of the concept, particularly as Q Comp is focused on professional development. Although it is too early to know for sure, Q Comp is not likely to be the silver bullet leading towards improved student achievement, but given time and support it may indeed be a significant, positive advance for education in Minnesota.

## APPENDIX A. Individual Interview Protocol

### Beliefs and Culture of Readiness

1. To what extent do you think pay-based incentives should be linked to instructional practice and student achievement?
2. As a **principal/teacher**, do you believe this type of incentive will achieve the desired outcomes?
3. How would you gauge the level of acceptance to Q Comp among teachers and administration in your school (district)?

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### Roll-out, Implementation, and Assessment

4. To what extent have district administrators communicated expectations to school leaders and/or to you?
5. In general, how do you feel about the roll-out of the Q Comp plan in your school (district)?
6. To what extent do you believe that your school administrators view Q Comp as a long-term process and commitment as opposed to a one-time event?
7. So far, what successes have been achieved? Have any obstacles (i.e., student differences, time, limited resources) been encountered that limit your ability to move forward with this initiative?
8. Could you please describe the indicators your school (district) is using to assess the degree of change?
9. Are students aware of any changes in your instructional practices?

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**Teacher  
Support**

10. Please describe how your school leaders support teachers and lead teachers in their attempts to enact Q Comp.
11. Did you receive any special training or instruction to prepare you for Q Comp activities? How much time (in hours)?
12. PROBE: If yes, please describe the type of training/instruction.
13. Do you feel that your school leaders recognize Q Comp activities as a new stressor that has been placed on the teaching staff?
14. Are there any aggravating factors (student differences, time, and limited resources) that prevent this initiative to advance, that you did not expect?
15. Is anything being done to reduce this new demand on your time or this additional stress?
16. Do you meet as a site team to discuss the implementation of Q Comp plans and activities?

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH YOU,  
I HAVE ONE FINAL QUESTION...**

17. What one piece of advice would you offer to MDE and school administrators regarding how to support you through the Q Comp initiative?

**APPENDIX B. Q COMP APPLICATION COMPARISONS, BY SITE**

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	% VOTING FOR Q COMP	PARTICIPATION	GOAL	INDICATORS	Q COMP STAFF	RATIO	PAY SYSTEM	OBSERVATIONS	RELEASE DAYS/ PD DAYS
Duluth Edison Charter		97%	Not mandatory	Improve student achievement on MCA Reading and additional classroom assessment	MCA-Reading	Lead Teacher - \$2,500-\$5,000.  Curriculum Coordinator - \$500 - \$1,500.	1: 2-5  1: 2-20	25% - observations. 50%- professional growth goals. 25% - student achievement.  Observation portfolio- \$400 Professional growth plan- \$800  School-wide achievement- \$200  Individual teacher achievement- \$200	3 per year	6 professional development days  Weekly meetings
	Kenwood	93% (27/29)		Increase MCA Reading 5% in 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> and maintain 5 <sup>th</sup> and 70% will increase on SRI	MCA-Reading SRI					
	Raleigh	100% (13/13)		Increase MCA Reading 5% and 70% will increase on SRI	MCA-Reading SRI					
	Washburn	100% (20/20)		Increase MCA Reading 5% and 70% will increase on SRI	MCA-Reading SRI					

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	% VOTING FOR Q COMP	PARTICIPATION	GOAL	INDICATORS	Q COMP STAFF	RATIO	PAY SYSTEM	OBSERVATIONS	RELEASE DAYS/ PD DAYS
La Crescent-Hokah		73%	Mandatory District-wide	Improve student achievement through professional development and data-driven decision making	MAP	Teacher Leaders  Oversight Committee  Curriculum Committee  Bldg Leadership Teams	105: 105  6:105  25:105	\$200 – student growth. \$500 – personal advancement. \$750- Oversight Committee. \$1,000 – Curriculum Committee.		3.5 – 4.5 days of staff development  Additional release time provided as needed
	Elementary			Improve student achievement for students at or below the 30 <sup>th</sup> percentile on MAP- Math. See a 10% increase in the number of students meeting growth targets.	MAP-Math					
	Middle School			Improve student achievement for students at or below the 30 <sup>th</sup> percentile on MAP- Reading (word recognition). See a 10% increase in the number of students meeting growth targets.	MAP- Reading					
	High School			Students demonstrate growth in computation/operations	MAP- Math					
	Bluff City Learning Options			Improve student achievement for students at or below the 30 <sup>th</sup> percentile on MAP- Math	MAP- Math					

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	% VOTING FOR Q COMP	PARTICIPATION	GOAL	INDICATORS	Q COMP STAFF	RATIO	PAY SYSTEM	OBSERVATIONS	RELEASE DAYS/ PD DAYS
Fridley			Mandatory for all teachers in the district	<p>1. Effective Use of Data Classroom formative assessments Course summative assessments MAP, MCAs, BSTs and Gates MacGinite Assessment</p> <p>2. Understanding By Design (UbD) Model curriculum and methodology</p> <p>3. Implementation of the Middle Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate Organization- fully authorized by spring 2007</p>	MAP MCA BST	Instructional Leader- \$4,000	16: district	<p>25%- individual growth –Danielson (up to \$500).</p> <p>25% - classroom observations (up to \$500).</p> <p>25% - professional growth plan (up to \$500).</p> <p>25%- student achievement gains (up to \$500).</p>	3 formal observations	<p>2 days of training per year</p> <p>Weekly meetings</p>
	Hayes Elementary			<p>Math: Computation and operations Reading: Literal comprehension</p>	MAP- Math  MCA- Reading					
	Stevenson Elementary			<p>Math: Meet or exceed growth expectations based on MAP by grade level Reading: Focus on moving students from MCA level 1 and 2 to levels 3-5</p>	MAP – Math MCA- Reading MAP- Reading					
	Fridley Middle School			<p>Math: Meet or exceed growth expectations based on MAP by grade level IBO: Fully implement MYP IBO through Areas of Interaction application UbD: Full application of UbD model of instruction</p>	MAP- Math MCA					
	High School			<p>IBO: Fully implement MYP IBO through Areas of Interaction application UbD: Full application of UbD model of instruction Writing: Improvement on 10<sup>th</sup> grade MCA writing by utilizing 6+1 Traits of Writing</p>	MCA- Writing					

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	% VOTING FOR Q COMP	PARTICIPATION	GOAL	INDICATORS	Q COMP STAFF	RATIO	PAY SYSTEM	OBSERVATIONS	RELEASE DAYS/ PD DAYS
St. Francis				Focus site improvement upon student achievement		Mentor teacher- \$1000 Peer leader- \$4,000 Curriculum Specialist - \$8000 Instructional specialist - \$10,000	1: 36-40  1: 20  1: 24	50% -teacher performance and 50% - student growth	4 formal observations	Weekly meetings
	Cedar Creek Community School			Improve achievement on MAP- computation/operation so students perform above national level.	MAP- Math					
	East Bethel Community School			Improve achievement on MAP- computation/operation so students perform above national level.	MAP- Math					
	St. Francis Elementary			Improve achievement on MAP- computation/operation so students perform above national level.	MAP- Math					
	St. Francis High School			Improve achievement on MAP- literal comprehension so students demonstrate growth during the year.	MAP- Literal Comprehension					
	St. Francis Intermediate School			Improve achievement on MAP- computation/operations so students perform above national level.	MAP- Math					
	St. Francis Jr. High			Improve achievement on MAP- evaluative comprehension so students demonstrate growth during the year	MAP – Evaluative Comprehension					

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	% VOTING FOR Q COMP	PARTICIPATION	GOAL	INDICATORS	Q COMP STAFF	RATIO	PAY SYSTEM	OBSERVATIONS	RELEASE DAYS/ PD DAYS
Alexandria			Mandatory district-wide			Site Leader Instructional Coach Mentor Coordinator	1: 10 1: 30 1: 300	\$420- work plan to meet goal. \$600- partial completion of both goals. \$900- Completion of one goal and partial of other. \$1200- completion of both goals. \$0, \$600 or \$800 to each teacher based on school-wide goals.	3 formal observations per year	Weekly meetings
	Creating Learner Early Childhood			Students going on to K will recognize some uppercase alphabet letters	Pre and post local assessment					
	Washington Elementary			83% of 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade students and 89% of 5 <sup>th</sup> grade students will be scoring at levels 3, 4, and 5 on MCA-Reading in the area of main idea.	MCA- Reading					
	Voyager Elementary			85% of students will be scoring at levels 3, 4, and 5 on MCA-Reading in the area of inference	MCA-Reading					
	Lincoln Elementary			85% of 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> grade students will be scoring at levels 3, 4, and 5 on MCA-Reading in the area of compare/contrast	MCA-Reading					
	GMC Elementary			Students will be scoring at levels 3, 4, and 5 on MCA-Math in the area of space, shape and measurement.	MCA- Math					
	Discovery Middle School			87% of students in grade 7 will be scoring at levels 3, 4, and 5 on MCA-Reading in the area of main idea.	MCA-Reading					
	Jefferson High School			School will meet AYP standards in 10 <sup>th</sup> grade reading- MCA in the area of analyze/evaluate text.	MCA-Reading					

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Mounds View		83%	Mandatory district-wide	<p>Improve student achievement in word meaning on MCAs, MAP, and locally developed criterion referenced measures using content area reading strategies.</p> <p>***Each grade level team has a different goal.</p>	MCA-Reading MAP Local assessments	<p>Mentors</p> <p>Bldg Instructional Leaders-\$4,000</p> <p>Instructional Strategies Facilitators</p> <p>Resource Teachers</p> <p>SDCC Member-\$3,000</p> <p>Staff Dev Panel Member-\$3,000</p>	<p>1: 12-15</p> <p>1: 6-10</p>		3 observations	<p>3 professional development days</p> <p>Weekly meetings</p>
	Bel Air Elementary			Same as above						
	Island Lake Elementary			Same as above						
	Pinewood Elementary			Same as above						
	Sunnyside Elementary			Same as above						
	Turtle Lake Elementary			Same as above						
	Valentine Hills Elementary			Same as above						
	Chippewa Middle School									

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	% VOTING FOR Q COMP	PARTICIPATION	GOAL	INDICATORS	Q COMP STAFF	RATIO	PAY SYSTEM	OBSERVATIONS	RELEASE DAYS/ PD DAYS
	Edgewood Middle School									
	Highview Middle School									
	Irondale High School									
	Mounds View High School									
	Oak Grove									
	Mounds View ALC									

DISTRICT	SCHOOL	% VOTING FOR Q COMP	PARTICIPATION	GOAL	INDICATORS	Q COMP STAFF	RATIO	PAY SYSTEM	OBSERVATIONS	RELEASE DAYS/ PD DAYS
Beacon Academy Charter School		91% (9/10)	Voluntary	Improve student achievement in language usage on MAP and ITBS by integrating writing skills throughout Language Arts and Core Knowledge. Scores will increase one grade level. Students that scored below grade level will increase scores to reach at least 50 <sup>th</sup> percentile.	MAP- Reading ITBS	Peer Leader - \$1000 (+ 3 PD days)  Instructional Mentor- \$1000 (+ 2 PD days)  Curriculum Mentors- \$500	1: 11  1: 11  9: 11	50% -student growth.  25% -school-wide growth.  25%- professional (observations)  \$300 –school achievement. \$500 –classroom gains. \$200 – participating in observation team. \$300- individual growth. \$300 – professional dev activities.  Total up to \$2500.	3 formal observations	1-3 professional development days for lead roles  No release days for classroom teachers

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Hopkins		66%		Accelerate reading, math and language arts achievement for all students as measured by performance on MCA- Reading, Math and Writing	MCA-Reading MCA-Math MCA-Writing ITBS	Master teacher-contracted position. Site Instructional Leader. Site Content Leader.	1: 4/ 1:11  1: 4/ 1: 11  1:20/ 1:14	80% - Performance (observations)  10%- student achievement  10%- school-wide achievement		
	All Hopkins Elementary Schools			Improve Math Computation scores on the ITBS by 10% per year.	ITBS					
	All Hopkins Secondary Schools			Improve scores on MCA-Reading by reducing the number of students in Levels I and II by 4%	MCA-Reading					

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St. Cloud		81%	All teachers in the district	Improve student achievement in Reading, Math and Science on MCAs		Mentor teachers- \$1200	1: 1	70% -professional growth (observations)	3 formal observations	Up to 25 days release time depending on job position
						Dept Coord- \$1500	1: 19	10%- goals tied to student achievement.		
						Instructional Leaders- \$1750 (+3 PD days)	1: 15	10% -student achievement.		
						Lead teachers- \$2,000 (+25 days release)	1: 25	10% - school-wide achievement. Possible \$2250		
	Clearview Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA- Reading					
	Discovery Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA- Reading					
	Kennedy Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	Lincoln Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA- Reading					
	Madison Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	Oak Hill Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	Talahi Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	Westwood Elementary			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	North Junior High			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	South Junior High			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	Apollo High School			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					
	Technical High School			Improve student achievement in Reading	MCA-Reading					

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Minneapolis		70%	All teachers at participating sites			Mentor - \$5,000  Coach - \$3,000	1:12-18  1: 6-9	60% of compensation- 50%-professional growth based on classroom observations and 50% student achievement on NALT and MCAs (20% on school-wide and 30% on classroom)	At least 3 formal observations per year.	60 minutes per week for QC professional development
	Edison High School			Increase daily attendance. Improve performance on NALT reading – 70% will make at least one year's growth. Students scoring in highest level will maintain scores.	NALT					
	Folwell Middle School			Increase reading achievement on NALT reading – 70% will make at least one year's growth. Students scoring in highest level will maintain scores.	NALT					
	Elizabeth Hall Elementary			Increase reading achievement on NALT reading – 70% will make at least one year's growth. Students scoring in highest level will maintain scores.	NALT					
	Seward Montessori			Increase reading achievement on NALT reading – 80% will make at least one year's growth. Students scoring in highest level will maintain scores.	NALT					
	Webster Open			Increase reading achievement on NALT reading – 9% will make at least one year's growth. Students scoring in highest level will maintain scores.	NALT					
	Andersen Open			The combine percent of students continuously enrolled in grades 3, 5, and 7 achieving at Levels 3, 4, and 5 will increase by 5%. The percentage of students making one year's growth will increase 5% as measured by NALT.	NALT					
	Andersen Elementary			Percentage of students scoring at level 3 or above in MCA Reading will increase 10%. Students scoring in highest level will maintain scores.	MCA					
	Northeast Middle School			Accelerate student learning so they are on track to pass the MBST in Reading. 80% will make at least one year's growth on the NALT Reading test. Students scoring in highest level will maintain scores.	NALT					