DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Q Comp Requirements and Guiding Principles

Program Purposes

The purpose of the Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System (commonly known as "Q Comp") is for participating programs to improve student learning through:

- recruiting and retain highly qualified teachers
- encouraging highly qualified teachers to undertake challenging assignments and support teachers' roles in improving students' educational achievement
- providing incentives to encourage teachers to improve their knowledge and instructional skills

Contents

This document describes required and recommended practices for each of the core components within the Q Comp Program. Districts and Charter Schools should use this document for writing, implementing, reviewing and updating plans. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will use this document in the review of Q Comp applications and program updates.

The statutory requirements are based on Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.414, which outlines the Q Comp requirements. Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.60 Staff Development Program, Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.40 Employment; Contracts; Termination and Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.41 Teacher Tenure Act; Cities of the First Class; Definitions are also included because of statutory links with Q Comp statutory requirements.

Note: Definitions related to understanding statutory terms are included in the glossary at the end of this document.

For questions or further information, please contact mde.q-comp@state.mn.us.

Core Component: Career Advancement Options

Career advancement options refer to opportunities for teachers to step into formal teacher leadership roles. Teacher leaders are professional educators who act as change agents to build capacity in self and others to increase effective educator practices and improve student learning. Q Comp sites typically have teacher leaders take on a variety of roles, such as: professional learning community team leader, peer reviewer, instructional coach, mentor, literacy specialist, math specialist, data coach, classroom demonstration site teacher, equity coach, and site team leader.

As Q Comp teams review and update their program, consider the following guiding questions.

- How are the roles and activities of teacher leaders in our school system supporting equity and inclusion?
- How do we recruit, hire, train, and otherwise support teacher leaders so that they thrive and have deep impacts on the teaching and learning community? How do we ensure our teacher leaders are highly effective and represent the diversity of our school community?
- How can teacher leaders facilitate the collection, analysis and use of classroom and school based data to identify opportunities to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school culture for students who are historically underserved?

Practices Required by Statute:

Q Comp plans must meet the following requirements:

- The plan describes teacher leader (career ladder) roles that licensed staff members may assume, while maintaining a primary role in instructing students, and outlines the additional compensation provided for these responsibilities.
    - If the compensation for the position includes full-time release from the classroom, the position must have a term limit, not to exceed five years.
- Teacher leader roles are focused on facilitating site-based professional development to help other staff improve instructional skills.

[See Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.414, subdivision 2, paragraph (b), clauses (1), and (2), (4)]

Examples of Recommended Practices

Where appropriate, districts are encouraged to focus on implementing practices that will make their program more effective. Some examples of practices within career advancement options are:

- The teacher leader roles and job descriptions are posted within the district. The selection process includes an application process and a personal interview.
- Additional compensation for teacher leaders (time and/or money) is based on the time required for teacher leaders to complete the additional job responsibilities.
- Teacher leaders are responsible for utilizing an equity lens in facilitating learning team meetings, coaching colleagues, conducting peer observations, mentoring new teachers, and field-testing or researching instructional strategies.

- Teacher leaders receive ongoing feedback, they are formally evaluated in the leadership roles at least annually, and the evaluation results identify growth areas and affect the awarding of the salary augmentation or the continuation in the roles for the teacher leader positions.
- Teacher leaders receive initial training and ongoing training and coaching to develop their leadership knowledge and skills.
- Teacher leaders, in collaboration with administration, play a key role in program oversight and improvement.
- Teacher leader positions, supports and activities are based on student needs and data.

Core Component: Job-Embedded Professional Development

Job-embedded professional development refers to all the professional learning opportunities teachers have during their contract day throughout the school year. Q Comp districts and charters typically use this opportunity to implement an effective professional learning community (PLC) where teams focus on identifying and addressing student needs through improved instruction.

As Q Comp teams review and update their program, consider the following guiding questions.

- What professional learning systems are already in place for teachers? In what ways are these systems "sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused" (from ESSA's definition of "Professional Development"). How can professional learning activities be strengthened to reflect this definition?
- How does the professional learning system focus on the needs of all student groups, particularly those representing historically marginalized communities? Do professional learning opportunities include culturally responsive and inclusive instructional methods? Are community perspectives included in the process to help connect instruction to student lives?
- How does the professional learning help staff take responsibility (individually and collectively) when minoritized students are not learning?

Practices Required by Statute:

Q Comp plans must meet the following requirements:

- Licensed staff members receive ongoing, site-based professional development facilitated by trained teacher leaders.
- Professional development occurs regularly during the school day through individual, team and schoolwide learning activities and allows licensed staff members to improve instructional skills to meet identified student needs.
- Professional development is collaborative in nature and builds professional relationships among staff members and with administrators.
- Professional development is aligned with district and site staff development plans as well as state and local academic standards.
- Professional development activities are designed to improve content knowledge and instructional skills of all licensed staff members.

 [See Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.414, subdivision 2, paragraph (b), clause (4); Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.60 subdivision 1a]

Examples of Recommended Practices

Where appropriate, districts are encouraged to focus on implementing practices that will make their program more effective. The following examples of practices are provided to help districts:

- According to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, "the purpose of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students perform at higher levels. Their standards include:

- o **Learning Communities --** People committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment
- o **Leadership --** Skillful leaders develop capacity, advocate and create support systems for professional learning
- o **Resources** -- Resources for educator learning are prioritized, monitored and coordinated.
- o **Data** -- A variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data are used to plan, assess and evaluate professional learning.
- o **Learning Designs** -- Theories, research, and models of human learning are integrated to achieve intended outcomes.
- o **Implementation** -- Research on change is applied and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.
- o **Outcomes** -- Outcomes are aligned with educator development and evaluation results and student curriculum standards.

- A teacher induction and mentoring program is in place to provide continuous learning and sustained support to newer teachers
- Professional development goals and activities are informed by student needs and data.

Core Component: Teacher Development and Evaluation

Though the Q Comp program predated Teacher Development and Evaluation (TDE) by several years, there is significant overlap in their core principals and legal requirements. Key aspects of this area of Q Comp plans include the selection (or refinement) of an instructional framework or rubric; decisions about the method(s) to conduct teacher observations or to examine student academic growth; defining the activities of peer reviewers/coaches or other teacher leaders as well as school leaders/principals; and the training and ongoing support for all parties.

As Q Comp teams review and update their program, consider the following guiding questions.

- The instructional framework or rubric defines the criteria and qualities of effective practice and establishes common language to develop the knowledge and skills of teaching over time. Does your rubric clearly describe effective teaching practices for your community? Does it provide language to focus instructional conversations on equity and meeting student needs, such as culturally responsive pedagogy?
- Evaluations must be evidence-based and that evidence should be aligned to your rubric. Do evaluators have access to sufficient, relevant and comprehensive evidence in order to make their decisions based on the kinds of observations or other activities in your model?
- How are student needs and data utilized to change adult practices? What systems are in place to focus conversations on educational equity for historically marginalized student populations?

Practices Required by Statute:

Q Comp plans must meet the following requirements:

- Q Comp plans are designed to develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success.
- The Q Comp evaluation program and activities are the same as the teacher development and evaluation practices and measures.
    - There should be one instructional framework or rubric for the district/charter. It is allowable for that framework or rubric to be differentiated for specific licensed, non-instructional positions (e.g., school psychologist, guidance counselor, nurse) and for other licensed positions that are not classroom based (e.g., media specialist, some special education positions, teachers on special assignment).
        - Rubrics must align to the teaching standards in rule (MN Rule 8710.2000). [Note: Well researched and published rubrics—such as but not limited to Danielson, Marzano, Marshall—meet this requirement]
        - The rubric is also used to clearly articulate a standard of performance.
            - For TDE, the distinction between "meeting" and "not meeting" professional teaching standards is particularly important, as those teachers not meeting standards must receive support to improve through a teacher improvement process.
            - For Q Comp, participating programs must establish a standard of performance that must be met to receive performance pay. This Q Comp performance pay standard must be an equal

standard or higher standard that is used to identify teachers for an improvement process for TDE.

- o The method for measuring student growth and literacy for performance pay in Q Comp should be the same method used to determine at least 35% of a teacher's summative evaluation for TDE. For more on performance pay, see next core component.

- Summative evaluators are qualified and trained to perform summative evaluations.
- Summative evaluations occur at least every three years.
- Peer review occurs in years without summative evaluation by trained peers (exception: cities of the first class).
- An individual growth and development plan is included in the evaluation process that focuses on teacher growth.

[See Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.414, subdivision 2, paragraph (b), clause (3)(ii) and (iii) which align to Minnesota Statues, section 122A.40, subdivision 8, paragraph (b), clauses (2) and (9) as well as Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.41, subdivision 5, paragraph (b), clauses (2) and (9). Note: In plain language, the Q Comp law (122A.414) requires alignment to the teacher development and evaluation (TDE) law (122A.40, subd 8) or (122A.40, subd 5).]

Examples of Recommended Practices

Where appropriate, districts are encouraged to focus on implementing practices that will make their program more effective. The following examples of practices are provided to help districts:

- The three-year professional review process provides a comprehensive picture of the teacher's instructional skills by including evidence that spans the entire instructional framework or rubric.

  - o The rubric for teacher evaluations aligns with state standards of effective practice for teachers and includes three or more performance levels that are clearly defined.
  - o Rubrics include language that includes culturally responsive practices are expected as part of defining an effective teacher.
  - o Rubrics provide for objectivity and are based on multiple, valid and clearly defined criteria.

- **Evaluators and peer reviewers/coaches** are qualified and regularly trained to conduct observations and provide support.

  - o New evaluators and peer reviewers successfully complete comprehensive training that covers the entire Q Comp/TDE plan including the process for conducting evaluations by examining rubrics and forms, evidence gathering techniques, student outcome measures, and methods of coaching and providing feedback.
  - o All evaluators and peer reviewers complete annual training that reviews the process for conducting evaluations by examining rubrics and forms, evidence gathering techniques, student outcome measures, and methods of coaching and providing feedback.
  - o Evaluators and peer reviewers are required to demonstrate inter-rater reliability on an ongoing basis.

- Annual differentiated training for **new and returning teachers** includes the teacher evaluation process, the use of the instructional framework/rubric, activities to help define and demonstrate high-quality instruction, and methods for measuring student academic growth and engagement.

- All teachers participate in multiple classroom observations by different trained observers.
- Formal evaluation cycles include a pre-observation conference, observation and post-observation conference with conferences occurring within two weeks of each observation.
- Peer review and evaluation results should inform and align with professional learning opportunities for teachers.

    - Coaching, professional learning communities, and overall professional development are provided to promote teacher growth.
    - Written feedback, including comments and areas for further coaching, is provided after each evaluation that allows teachers to track growth and progression toward attaining performance standards.
    - Teachers receive ongoing formative feedback on practices, student growth, student engagement, and specific goals named in their individual growth and development plan each year.

Core Component: Performance Pay and Reformed Salary Schedule

The reformed salary schedule refers to a change in how the "steps and lanes" salary schedule functions. Performance pay refers to opportunities to earn an additional financial award based on demonstrated performance. Q Comp requires that at least 60 percent of any compensation increase (reformed salary schedule and performance pay) be based on a) school-wide student achievement gains, b) measures of student growth and literacy, and c) teacher observation/evaluation.

As Q Comp teams review and update their program, consider the following guiding questions.

- Each Q Comp core component requires some funding, and increases in one area result in reductions in other areas. Budgets represent values. As you look at how your budget is currently constructed, what story does that tell about the values or priorities of your system?
- In what way(s) does performance pay support or enhance your work, and in what way(s) does it distract from or limit your work? What could be done to leverage the former and mitigate the latter?
- How is performance pay distributed across the three teacher performance areas? Is the ability to earn performance pay equitable across staff (e.g., licensed instructional and non-instructional staff)?
- How will performance pay that is not earned be budgeted in future years so that it is leveraged to improve teaching and learning?

Practices Required by Statute:

Q Comp plans must meet the following requirements:

- Teacher compensation is reformed to address all of the following:

  o The steps and lanes salary schedule, or the base salary improvement system, is revised to link performance to increased compensation.
  o No teacher's compensation is reduced.
  o At least 60 percent of a teacher's increase in compensation must be based on the performance gains in three areas that are clearly defined:

    ▪ The schoolwide student achievement goal(s) (site goal) on a standardized assessment is measurable and shows a gain. Schoolwide goals are written in specific/strategic, measurable, attainable, results-based and time-bound (SMART) format.
    ▪ The measure of student academic growth is measureable and based on student outcomes.
    ▪ The standard for teacher performance is established using an instructional framework or rubric, and this standard must be met to earn a performance increase. This standard must be equal to or higher than the standard of performance teachers must meet under teacher development and evaluation requirements.

- **Optional**: A hiring bonus is available to teachers in either a hard to fill position or hard-to staff school who meet or exceed the performance standard from the professional review cycle (teacher evaluation process)

  o A hard-to-staff school is one where at least one of the following is true:

    ▪ The school has a majority of the students with families who meet federal poverty guidelines
    ▪ The school is geographically isolated

- The school is identified by the state as eligible for targeted programs/services for students
- **Optional**: A teacher incentive(s) is available for teachers demonstrating any of the following:
  - The teacher obtains a master's degree or other advanced certification in their content field of licensure
  - The teacher pursues the training or education necessary to obtain an additional licensure in a shortage area identified by the district
  - Participating in a "Grow your Own" new teacher initiative within the district

[See Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.414, subdivision 2, paragraph (b), clause (3) and paragraph (c), clauses (1) and (2)]

Examples of Recommended Practices

Where appropriate, districts are encouraged to focus on implementing practices that will make their programs more effective. The following examples of practices are provided to help districts:

- Schoolwide goals represent a rigorous and relevant student achievement growth target.
- Schoolwide student achievement goals are consistent with goals set in the district strategic plan and other state or federal programs, such as world's best workforce.
- The measure of student growth is measured by a valid and reliable assessment, aligned to state standards. The growth goal may focus on student groups, classroom, grade level or building wide. A review and reporting process is used to ensure equity and rigor among all staff members and to determine if compensation has been earned for the measure of student growth goal or goals.
- Student growth and literacy data should be disaggregated for all student groups including English Learners.
- The standard of teacher performance is rigorous and represents a comprehensive picture of effective teaching.

Statutory Terms of Reference

Academic Literacy: for English learners in Minnesota, development of English language proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening concurrently with academic language to succeed in school in all content areas. In Minnesota's English language development framework, the features of academic language are linguistic complexity, language forms and conventions, and vocabulary usage.

Additional Compensation: teacher leader compensation, such as stipends, release time, additional contract days and salary increases, for additional leadership responsibilities

Assessment: formal and informal measures of student learning that provide information about performance and progress over time

Compensation increase: all new money provided to teachers through movement on the salary schedule, one-time performance awards, or both

Continuous: occurs on a regular, defined basis; happens more than once per month, once per term, or once per year

Foster collaboration among principals and staff: principals and staff working together to identify student and staff needs in order to design and implement professional development

Gain: demonstrated by an increase of performance on the standardized assessment (baseline results and year end results) selected by the site

Integrated ongoing: occurs on a regular, defined basis; happening more than once per month, once per term, or once per year; and provides a focus for schoolwide and differentiated efforts to improve student achievement and teacher practice

Multiple criteria: teacher evaluations examine many facets of practice using a variety of measurements

Objective evaluation program: teacher evaluations using a set of criteria that is fair, measurable, and evidence-based standards aligned to the state standards of effective practice for teachers to comprehensively assess individual performance over time

Oral Academic Language: for English learners in Minnesota, development of English language proficiency in the area of oral academic skills in all content areas. In Minnesota's English language development framework, the features of academic language are linguistic complexity, language forms and conventions, and vocabulary usage. Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford (2011) have identified five key oral academic skills as:

1. Elaborate and clarify;
2. Support ideas with examples;
3. Build on and/or respectfully challenge a partner's ideas;
4. Paraphrase; and
5. Synthesize conversation points

Over time: occurs on a regular, defined basis; happens more than once per month, once per term, or once per year

Peer Reviewer: qualified and trained peers that provide evaluations for colleagues in years when there is not a summative evaluation

Periodically trained evaluators: select individuals who receive sufficient, ongoing training to conduct valid and reliable evaluations

Reform steps and lanes: connecting increases in teacher compensation to one or more of the performance gains in the following areas:

1. schoolwide student achievement on a standardized assessment
2. measures of student achievement
3. teacher evaluation

Research-based strategies: teaching practices and methods used to engage students in acquiring or extending knowledge or understanding. They are designed intentionally to move all students toward clearly defined learning goals and standards and may involve any or all learning experiences provided in an educational setting. The specific instructional strategies should be scientifically research-based with proven results in improving student academic achievement, translatable to a wide variety of content areas, and selected based on student achievement trend data and needs. They must be rooted in current research and knowledge of learning processes, learners and content

Retain primary roles in student instruction: teacher leaders who maintain their role with students while assuming leadership responsibilities or have a set term length with a return to the licensed role after the term limit

Rigorous: clear, high and increasing standards; additional work or effort may be necessary to meet the expectation

School day: the teacher-contract day, which may or may not be limited to the student-contact day

Schoolwide: a measure that:

- Applies to as many students and teachers as possible
- Relates to school or program wide effectiveness
- Relates to the organizational unit/site or program as long as:
  - Is equitable across schools
  - Does not encourage competition among staff

Site-based professional development activities: individual, team or schoolwide learning opportunities (through coaching, observation, mentoring and other collaborative learning activities) that teacher leaders facilitate focused on instructional strategies, techniques and practices to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of instruction

Site-focused professional development: professional development focused around the needs of the students and licensed staff members at the school and provided on an individual, team or schoolwide basis

Standardized assessment: an assessment that meets all of the following criteria (or if all are not possible as many as are):

- constructed from a pool of items which were field-tested with an appropriate sample using a specific norm-referenced or criterion-referenced test design defined for the given population
- administered with specific structured procedures and instructions given to the test-taker by the test administrator or read by the test-taker
- test results that allow comparison of data from large numbers of students or subgroups of students
- standardized scores that allow comparison of student performance from year to year
- performance standards determined by a formalized process for either a norm-referenced or criterion-referenced interpretation of results

Summative Evaluators: qualified and trained individuals such as school administrators who provide summative evaluation for all teachers at least once every three years

Teacher: all licensed staff members included in the bargaining unit or directly employed by a charter school

Trained teacher leaders: licensed staff members who assume teacher leader (career ladder) roles and have the skills or receive training to ensure they have the skills necessary to perform the job responsibilities