



Q Comp Requirements and Guiding Principles

Program Purposes

The purpose of the Quality Compensation (Q Comp) program is for participating school districts, intermediate school districts, integration districts, education districts, state schools/academies and charter schools to: recruit and retain highly qualified teachers; encourage highly qualified teachers to undertake challenging assignments and support teachers' roles in improving students' educational achievement; and, provide incentives to encourage teachers to improve their knowledge and instructional skills in order to improve student learning.

Contents

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

Statute:

122A.414, subdivision. 2(b) The alternative teacher professional pay system agreement must:

1. describe how teachers can achieve career advancement and additional compensation;
2. describe how the school district, intermediate school district, school site, or charter school will provide teachers with career advancement options that allow teachers to retain primary roles in student instruction and facilitate site-focused professional development that helps other teachers improve their skills...

Practices Required by Statute:

District plans must, at a minimum, meet the following requirements as defined by MDE based on the statute language:

- 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.
- Teacher leader roles are focused on facilitating site-based professional development to help other staff improve instructional skills.

Examples of Recommended Best Practices

Where appropriate, districts are encouraged to focus on implementing best practices that will make their program more effective. Some examples of best 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 or money) is based on the time required for teacher leaders to complete the additional job responsibilities.
- Teacher leaders are responsible for facilitating learning team meetings, coaching, conducting peer observations, mentoring, and field-testing or researching instructional strategies.
- Teacher leaders receive ongoing feedback and are formally evaluated in the leadership roles at least annually, and the evaluation results identify growth areas and impact the awarding of the salary augmentation or the continuation in the roles for the teacher leader positions.
- Teacher leaders receive initial and ongoing training.

Core Component: Job-Embedded Professional Development

Statutes:

122A.414, subdivision 2(b) The alternative professional pay system agreement must:

4. provide for participation in job-embedded learning opportunities such as professional learning communities to improve instructional skills and learning that are aligned with student needs under section 120B.11, consistent with staff development plan under section 122A.60 and led during the school day by trained teacher leaders such as master and mentor teachers...

122A.60, subdivision 1a Staff development activities must:

1. focus on the school classroom and research-based strategies that improve student learning;
2. provide opportunities for teachers to practice and improve their instructional skills over time;
3. provide opportunities for teachers to use student data as part of their daily work to increase student achievement;
4. enhance teacher content knowledge and instructional skills, including to accommodate the delivery of digital and blended learning and curriculum and engage students with technology;
5. align with state and local academic standards;
6. provide opportunities to build professional relationships, foster collaboration among principals and staff who provide instruction, and provide opportunities for teacher-to-teacher mentoring...

Practices Required by Statute:

District plans must, at a minimum, meet the following requirements, as defined by MDE based on the statute language:

- Licensed staff members receive ongoing, site-based professional development facilitated by trained teacher leaders.
- Professional development is designed to improve content knowledge and instructional skills of all licensed staff members to increase student achievement through the examination of data and professional learning.
- 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 and state and local academic standards.
- A teacher induction and mentoring program is in place to provide continuous learning and sustained support to probationary teachers.
- Professional development focuses on the needs of all student groups.

Examples of Recommended Best Practices

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

- Licensed staff members receive ongoing professional development through individual (coaching and mentoring), team, and schoolwide activities either weekly or every other week.
- Licensed staff members receive a minimum of 180 minutes per month of regular professional development.
- When ongoing professional development occurs in teams, all members have a reasonable opportunity to actively participate.
- Learning from professional development applies directly to classroom instruction with coaching and support provided as needed.
- Learning from professional development provides continuing support and is connected to classroom practices and evaluations.
- The leadership team at each school facilitates the process used to set and monitor ongoing progress toward schoolwide SMART goal(s).
- The leadership team guides the selection and monitors the implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies to be used schoolwide.
- Professional development is aligned to student growth and schoolwide goals
- Staff uses data to plan professional development.
- Staff uses data frequently.

Core Component: Teacher Development and Evaluation

Statute:

122A.414, subdivision 2(b) The alternative teacher professional pay system agreement must:

- iii. an objective evaluation program under section 122A.40, subdivision 8, paragraph (b), clause (2), or 122A.41, subdivision 5, paragraph (b), clause (2)...

122A.40, subdivision 8(b) To develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success, the annual evaluation process for teachers:

2. must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan, a peer review process, and at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator such as a school administrator. For the years when a tenured teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained evaluation, the teacher must be evaluated by peer review...

122A.41, subdivision 5(b) To develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success, the annual evaluation process for teachers:

2. must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan, a peer review process, and at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator such as a school administrator...

Practices Required by Statute:

District plans must, at a minimum, meet the following requirements, as defined by MDE based on the statute language:

- The evaluations are objective and based on multiple, valid and clearly defined criteria.
- Evaluations are aligned with the World's Best Workforce plan and designed to achieve ongoing progress and growth in teacher practice.
- The evaluation program and activities align to other district and charter school teacher evaluation practices and measures.
- The same rubric is used in all evaluation processes by all observers/evaluators for all staff in the same category
- Summative evaluators are qualified and trained to perform summative evaluations every three years.
- Peer review occurs in years without summative evaluation by trained peers.
- An individual growth and development plan is included in the evaluation process that focuses on student and teacher growth.
- The three-year professional review process provides a comprehensive picture of the teacher's instructional skills.

Examples of Recommended Best Practices

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

- All components of the evaluation program aligns with Minnesota's Teacher Development and Evaluation statute and other related state and federal requirements.
- Annual differentiated training for new and returning teachers includes the teacher evaluation process, the use of the scoring rubric, inter-rater reliability, and activities to help define high-quality instruction.
- All eligible teachers (licensed staff members) participate in multiple classroom observations by at least two 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.
- A locally selected team of evaluators and peer reviewers is highly qualified and trained to conduct observations and provide support.
- Coaching and other forms of support 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.
- At least sixteen hours of training for new evaluators and peer reviewers is provided that covers the process for conducting evaluations by examining rubrics and forms, evidence gathering techniques, and methods of coaching and providing feedback.
- At least eight hours of annual training for all evaluators and peer reviewers occurs annually and includes one or more high-quality, inter-rater reliability activities.
- Evaluators and peer reviewers are required to demonstrate inter-rater reliability on an ongoing basis.
- 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.

Core Component: Performance Pay and Reformed Salary Schedule

Statutes:

122A.414, subdivision 2(b) The alternative teacher professional pay system agreement must:

3. reform the “steps and lanes” salary schedule, prevent any teacher’s compensation paid before implementing the pay system from being reduced as a result of participating in this system, base at least 60 percent of any compensation increase on teacher performance using:
 - iii. schoolwide student achievement gains under section 120B.35 or locally selected standardized assessment outcomes, or both;
 - iv. measures of student growth and literacy that may include value-added models or student learning goals, consistent with section 122A.40, subdivision 8, clause (9), or 122A.41, subdivision 5, clause (9), and other measures that include the academic literacy, oral academic language, and achievement of English learners under section 122A.40, subdivision 8, clause (10), or 122A.41, subdivision 5, clause (10); and
 - v. an objective evaluation program under section 122A.40, subdivision 8, paragraph (b), clause (2), or 122A.41, subdivision 5, paragraph (b), clause (2)...

122A.414, subdivision 2(c) The alternative teacher professional pay system agreement may:

1. include a hiring bonus or other added compensation to provide students with equitable access to teachers who, consistent with section 120B.11, subdivision 2, clause (3):
 - i. are identified as effective or highly effective under the local teacher professional review cycle or, when being considered for hire as first-year teachers, have demonstrated skills during student teaching for being highly effective at closing achievement gaps;
 - ii. work in a high-need or hard-to-fill position; or
 - iii. are hired to work in a hard-to-staff school such as a school with a majority of students whose families meet federal poverty guidelines, a geographically isolated school, or a school identified by the state as eligible for targeted programs or services for its students;
2. include incentives for teachers to obtain a master’s degree or other advanced certification with at least 18 credits in their content field of licensure required for teaching concurrent enrollment or college in the schools courses, or to pursue the training or education necessary to obtain an additional licensure in shortage areas identified by the district or charter school; or
3. help fund a Grow Your Own new teacher initiative involving nonlicensed education professionals, including paraprofessionals and cultural liaisons.

122A.40, subdivision 8(b) To develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices, improve student learning and success, and provide all enrolled students in a district or school with improved and equitable access to more effective and diverse teachers, the annual evaluation process for teachers:

2. must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan, a peer review process, and at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator such as a school administrator. For the years when a tenured teacher is not evaluated by a qualified and trained evaluator, the teacher must be evaluated by a peer review;
9. must use data from valid and reliable assessments aligned to state and local academic standards and must use state and local measures of student growth and literacy that may include value-added models or student learning goals to determine 35 percent of teacher evaluation results;

10. must use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection, and other student outcome measures explicitly aligned with the elements of curriculum for which teachers are responsible, including academic literacy, oral academic language, and achievement of content areas of English learners;

122A.41, subdivision 5(b) To develop, improve, and support qualified teachers and effective teaching practices and improve student learning and success, and provide all enrolled students in a district or school with improved and equitable access to more effective and diverse teachers, the annual evaluation process for teachers:

2. must establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan, a peer review process, and at least one summative evaluation performed by a qualified and trained evaluator such as a school administrator;
9. must use data from valid and reliable assessments aligned to state and local academic standards and must use state and local measures of student growth and literacy that may include value-added models or student learning goals to determine 35 percent of teacher evaluation results;
10. must use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection and other student outcome measures explicitly aligned with the elements of curriculum for which teachers are responsible, including academic literacy, oral academic language, and achievement of English learners;

Practices Required by Statute:

District plans must, at a minimum, meet the following requirements, as defined by MDE based on the statute language:

- Teacher compensation is reformed to address all of the following:
 - The steps and lanes salary schedule, or the base salary improvement system, is revised to link performance to increased compensation.
 - No teacher's compensation is reduced.
 - At least 60 percent of a teacher's increase in compensation must be based on the performance gains in three areas: (1) schoolwide student achievement on a standardized assessment, (2) measures of student growth and (3) teacher evaluation.
- The schoolwide student achievement goal(s) on a standardized assessment is measurable, and it can be clearly determined if the goal(s) have been met and compensation is earned.
- The measure of student growth is measureable and can be clearly determined if the standard of student performance has been met and compensation is earned.
- The standard for teacher performance is clearly defined and can be measured through the evaluation program. There is a process in place to determine if a teacher has met the standard and earned compensation.
- **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)
 - A hard-to-staff school is one at least one of the following is true:
 - The school has a 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

Examples of Recommended Best Practices

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

- The salary schedule reform links movement in one direction (step movement) to performance gains in three areas: (1) schoolwide student achievement on a standardized assessment, (2) measures of student growth and (3) teacher evaluation.
- Schoolwide goals assess rigorous annual gains and are written in specific/strategic, measurable, attainable, results-based and time-bound (SMART) format.
- 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.
- Schoolwide goals are written to compare year-to-year achievement of all students tested and include additional measures (e.g., closing achievement gaps, increasing performance levels for all students and student groups).
- 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.
- The standard of teacher performance is rigorous and demonstrates effective teaching.
- Student growth and literacy data should be disaggregated for all student groups including English Learners.

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 to intentionally 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