

Quality Compensation

**SUPPORTING AND REWARDING
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING**

August 2014

"When you get, give.

When you learn, teach."

MAYA ANGELOU

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Letter

TO MINNESOTA

Dear fellow Minnesotans,

We are a group of 14 local teachers who, like you, share the belief that all students deserve great schools and great educators. Increasingly, there is consensus among many that our current education system falls short of that goal, as evidenced by long-standing, inequitable outcomes for students of color and students from low-income households. We share a deep sense of urgency about changing those facts. Whether we are parents, teachers, mentors, or engaged citizens—each of us must ask ourselves what we can do to enact changes. As professional educators, that means we must continually seek opportunities to grow and improve our practice because it matters more to our students' success than any other school-based factor.

Luckily, in Minnesota, we have a system called Quality Compensation (or Q Comp) that offers us a holistic framework for professional growth. Q Comp was passed into law in 2005. The components of Q Comp, outlined in this paper, provide a comprehensive system of supports and incentives for teacher growth and development. We have evidence that shows the program is already working by improving outcomes for students. In fact, recent research found Q Comp's impact on student reading growth is equivalent to an extra month of instruction.

While this evidence is promising, Q Comp needs thoughtful review after nearly a decade of implementation. Based on our research and experiences in the classroom, we believe that if we strengthen Q Comp, we can advance student achievement even further. That's because at its core, Q Comp is about strategically using resources to identify, cultivate, and reward expert teaching. By coupling the components of Q Comp with the new statewide teacher evaluation framework that was put into place in 2011, we have the potential to change the trajectory of student learning in our state.

Our policy recommendations stem from our review of both local research and national case studies that demonstrate the potential impact Q Comp can have on student outcomes. As a team, we believe that successful Q Comp legislation and implementation should: 1) raise student achievement; 2) provide resources to teachers to address opportunity gaps and incentivize practices that close those gaps; 3) use data to support teachers in increasing their own effectiveness; and 4) include teacher voice during Q Comp design, implementation, and review. In order to maximize its impact on student achievement, we firmly believe that Q Comp should be adequately funded by the legislature so that all districts have the opportunity to apply.

Our hope is that this paper, which reflects ideas and beliefs straight from Minnesota teachers and classrooms, will serve as a toolkit for legislators and education leaders to strengthen and expand Q Comp for the benefit of all students. Minnesota's children deserve this opportunity.

Sincerely,

The Educators 4 Excellence-Minnesota 2014 Teacher Policy Team on Q Comp



Preface

QUALITY COMPENSATION (Q COMP)

Q Comp is an optional statewide program that provides additional funding to districts or public charter schools to support alternative teacher compensation and professional development systems. Q Comp began as a bipartisan initiative that was crafted by a diverse set of stakeholders from the business community, education profession, and labor unions, and was signed into law in 2005 by Governor Tim Pawlenty.¹

Districts and schools can apply to receive up to \$260 per pupil to implement their Q Comp plans. The program as a whole has a yearly statewide funding cap of \$75 million, which is already fully allocated. This means that currently no new districts can apply for for Q Comp funding unless more funding is appropriated. In order to receive funding, districts and public charter schools must create plans that address all of the following five components:

Q COMP COMPONENTS

TEACHER CAREER LADDER/ ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Teachers can earn additional compensation or release time for assuming leadership roles such as being a mentor teacher, grade-level team leader, or teacher observer.

JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Schools must provide professional development aligned to the state teacher performance standards and opportunities for on-site collaboration during the work week.

TEACHER EVALUATIONS

Teachers must be evaluated through performance reviews that utilize multiple performance indicators and more than one evaluator.

PERFORMANCE-BASED PAY

Teachers can receive bonuses for meeting goals based on a variety of measures such as schoolwide student growth, teacher evaluation ratings, and student achievement on standardized tests and other locally determined student growth measures.

ALTERNATIVE SALARY SCHEDULES

Districts must provide additional opportunities for base pay increases that differ from the traditional system of “steps and lanes”—annual increases in pay that are based on years of experience and degree attainment.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMPONENTS OF Q COMP

CAREER LADDER

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TEACHER EVALUATIONS

PERFORMANCE PAY + ALTERNATIVE SALARY SCHEDULES

STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

Require that teacher-leader hiring criteria include measures of effectiveness.

Require the creation of a variety of hybrid leadership roles.

Monitor the quality of these roles, and help districts to develop, refine, and implement career ladders.

Require teacher professional development plans to align with teacher evaluations.

Require professional development plans to align with school improvement plans.

Create professional development libraries.

Recommend that districts implement holistic, multi-measure evaluation systems by using research-based, reliable evaluation tools.

Gather and use teacher and principal evaluation data strategically.

Require alignment between alternative salary schedules and performance pay measures.

Include a category for working in hard-to-staff schools in bonus and salary schedule allotments.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategically leverage the skills of highly effective teachers and continue to develop their leadership skills through hybrid and site-determined roles.

Align proposed career ladder programs with their strategic plans.

Tie professional development to needs identified through teacher evaluations.

Make Q Comp-funded professional development ongoing to include feedback loops.

Implement multiple formal and informal observations.

Prioritize funding for trained observers and quality measurement tools.

Utilize teacher evaluation data as a human capital lever to recruit and retain top teacher talent.

Provide additional compensation for effective and highly effective teachers, teacher-leaders, and administrators.

Provide additional compensation for effective teachers and administrators who teach in hard-to-staff schools.

“Hearing from researchers who found positive results from Q Comp made me passionate about this issue because I want every opportunity I can get to improve my instruction to benefit my students. Q Comp appears to be one smart way to do that.”

Kristina Sexe, *First- and second-grade teacher at Armatage Montessori School*

Q COMP'S POTENTIAL TO INCREASE STUDENT OUTCOMES

In recent years, the merits of Q Comp have been actively debated. Some dismiss the program as merely a merit pay system for test scores. Others claim that too many teachers receive a bonus, and therefore, the program just pads teacher salaries. While we encourage discussion about the program and believe there are many ways to improve Q Comp, we think that the truth rests somewhere in the middle of the debate.

As teachers, we feel it is our duty to thoughtfully study ways to improve our practice and drive student achievement. This is what sparked our interest in Q Comp, since the program includes money for job-embedded professional development, encourages time for collaboration, and offers a system of supports for teachers to improve their craft. It also financially rewards teachers who meet locally determined goals. We support these ideas in principle, but wanted to look at the evidence about Q Comp—both what teachers thought of the program and what the research showed.

Focus groups and external reviews found teachers and administrators in Q Comp districts have positive opinions of the program. Educators who work in districts with Q Comp report feeling more supported and having more time for collaboration as a result of implementing Q Comp.²

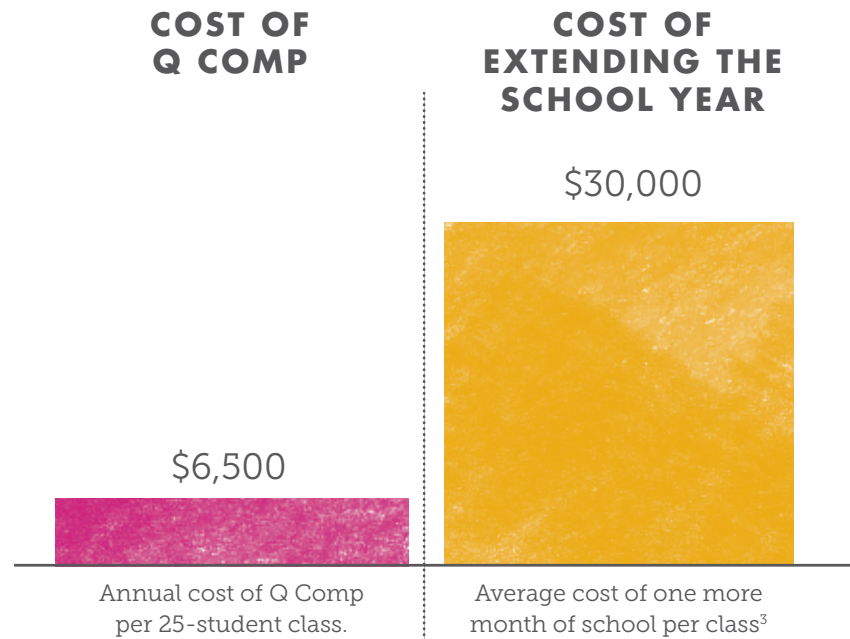
Supporting what we heard in focus groups and in conversations with our colleagues, the most recent and comprehensive study done by labor economists at the University of Minnesota found Q Comp has had a

measurable impact on student achievement.³ Most notably, the study found that districts with Q Comp have seen, on average, an increase in student reading achievement equivalent to one month of extra instructional time. The study highlights the cost-effectiveness of Q Comp as a tool for achieving that increase in reading growth as compared to extending the school year or other more costly interventions. The study also found that the longer that districts had Q Comp in place, the greater its impact on students' reading growth. The effect was magnified in schools with more inexperienced teachers. As educators who entered the profession to improve educational equity, this last finding was significant to us because many of the schools serving the students with highest needs also have the most inexperienced teachers—making Q Comp a potential way to achieve more equitable outcomes.

After a decade of Q Comp implementation, we have qualitative and quantitative evidence that it is a valuable tool for elevating our profession and improving student achievement. At the same time, we believe the system can continue to be improved. By researching other similar systems from around the country, looking at best practices in each component from districts in our home state, and relying on our personal experience in the classroom, we developed key recommendations for how Q Comp can be leveraged and improved. We believe by implementing the modifications outlined in this paper, Q Comp holds the promise to have an even more significant impact on student achievement.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF Q COMP

ON AVERAGE, DISTRICTS WITH Q COMP HAVE SEEN AN INCREASE IN STUDENT READING ACHIEVEMENT EQUIVALENT TO ONE MONTH OF EXTRA INSTRUCTIONAL TIME.



DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL Q COMP SYSTEM

In order for Q Comp to be a more effective system that supports teacher growth and development across the state, three overarching design principles need to be embraced by the state and districts:

MULTI-MEASURE TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS SHOULD SERVE AS THE FOUNDATION OF Q COMP. A HIGH-QUALITY TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM IS CRITICAL TO Q COMP BECAUSE IT SHOULD INFORM:

- Which professional growth opportunities are available for individual teachers.
- Which teachers are well-suited for teacher-leadership roles.
- How teachers receive financial recognition for their work.

COMPENSATION SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND REWARD HIGH-QUALITY PERFORMANCE. AS A COMPENSATION SYSTEM, Q COMP SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- Paying high-performing teachers more.
- Recruiting top talent to teaching by raising starting salaries.
- Providing additional compensation to top-performing teachers to teach in hard-to-staff schools and subjects.
- Compensating highly effective teachers for taking on leadership positions and additional responsibilities.

ADEQUATE FUNDING IS CRITICAL. FOR Q COMP TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT, IT MUST RECEIVE ADDITIONAL FUNDING IN ORDER TO:

- Allow more districts to opt into the program, and expedite the review and approval of applications. Currently, there is a funding cap of \$75 million, which was reached in 2013, preventing additional districts from being able to opt in to the program.
- Increase financial incentives to a level that will drive meaningful change. For example, research shows that highly skilled teachers would be incentivized to move to a hard-to-staff school for \$10,000 but not for \$1,000.⁴

CAREER
LADDER

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

TEACHER
EVALUATIONS

PERFORMANCE
PAY
+
ALTERNATIVE
SALARY
SCHEDULES

COMPONENT 1

Career Ladder and Advancement Opportunities

HOW THE CAREER LADDERS UNDER Q COMP CURRENTLY WORK

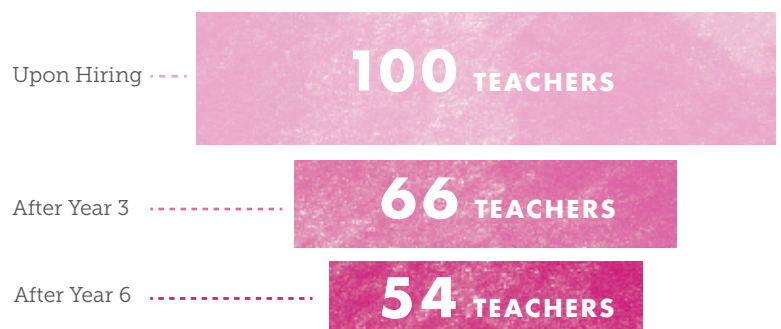
Currently, districts or public charter schools that participate in Q Comp receive extra funding to create a career ladder that rewards teachers who take on additional responsibilities. These roles most often take the form of supplementary duties that are added to the end of a teacher's workday, such as grade-level or content leader, or Professional Development Plan (PDP) coordinator.

MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

Even with Q Comp in place, one common concern that we frequently hear from our peers is that there are few leadership opportunities for teachers to expand their impact without leaving the classroom. In fact, research shows that one of the main reasons successful teachers leave the profession is because of a lack of meaningful opportunities for career advancement.⁵ Traditional career pathways like the ones supported by Q Comp plans are a good start, but too often they are just supplementary responsibilities that need to be completed as opposed to embedded leadership roles that require teachers to develop new professional skills. Additionally, the roles could be more flexible and differentiated to meet the unique needs of individual school settings, instead of standard roles for the whole district.

Furthermore, the selection process for these leadership opportunities is not always transparent, deliberate, or based on effectiveness. Most positions are reserved for teachers who have been teaching for long periods of

NATIONALLY, NEARLY HALF OF ALL TEACHERS LEAVE THE PROFESSION WITHIN SIX YEARS



National Education Association, <http://www.nea.org/home/15758.htm>

“Q Comp has the potential to facilitate and encourage teachers to step up as leaders, and that needs to happen. Teachers know their profession best and need opportunities to lead while staying in the classroom.”

Jen Bowman, *Seventh-grade science teacher at FAIR School–Crystal*

time—leaving early and mid-career teachers without options for professional growth. Districts need to be more strategic about selecting highly effective teachers for leadership roles and about developing role responsibilities, expectations, and methods of support.

OUR VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE CAREER LADDER AND ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We envision a career ladder process that: 1) is transparent about how teachers are selected, 2) selects teachers to fill leadership positions based on their effectiveness and specific strengths, and 3) provides leadership opportunities that appeal to teachers in different stages of their careers. A career ladder that accomplishes these things will attract talented individuals to the profession, reward effective teachers of all experience levels, add capacity to our schools and districts, and prevent high-quality teachers from burning out and leaving the profession.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE STATE SHOULD

- Require that the hiring criteria for teacher-leaders include measures of effectiveness.
- Require the creation of a variety of hybrid leadership roles.
- Monitor the quality of these roles, and help districts to develop, refine, and implement effective career ladders.

DISTRICTS SHOULD

- Strategically leverage the skills of highly effective teachers by developing their leadership skills through hybrid and innovative roles.
- Align proposed career ladder programs with their strategic plans.

RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

STATE RECOMMENDATION #1: MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

The state should require that all Q Comp-funded leadership roles within districts include hiring processes that select teachers based in part on their effectiveness and unique skills, as measured by performance reviews. Having highly skilled teachers in leadership roles will maximize the impact those leaders have within their schools. Having our most effective teachers lead helps to ensure that only high-quality instructional practices are shared with other teachers.

STATE RECOMMENDATION #2: VARIETY OF HYBRID ROLES

Hybrid leadership roles allow highly effective teachers to stay in the classroom part time and lead part time. These roles should be a required element of district career ladders. Teacher-leaders can continue to have a direct impact on their students, and positively affect a wider base of teachers and students. These positions help develop an authentic ladder of career advancement as opposed to just getting paid for adding responsibilities.

By establishing a variety of innovative hybrid roles, schools can also leverage the unique skills of their teacher-leaders to meet the specific needs of the students. For example, a Montessori school may want a teacher-leader position

“Like any school, my school has specific challenges that we are dealing with. Teacher-preneur grants would allow us to develop creative and specific teacher-leadership opportunities to solve the exact challenges that we are facing.”

Luke Winspur, *High school geometry and pre-calculus teacher at FAIR School–Downtown*

specifically dedicated to Montessori implementation. Alternatively, a school with a diverse student population might want a teacher-leader focused on improving cultural competence and other equity practices.

STATE RECOMMENDATION #3:
MONITOR AND ASSIST DISTRICTS

Quality career ladders should include a transparent selection process, ongoing professional development, and clear evaluation measures.

The state should require districts to have:

- Clear role descriptions, guidelines, and expectations for each leadership position.
- Selection criteria and application processes that are accessible and transparent to teachers.
- Systems of support specifically for teacher-leaders so that they can continue to grow as professionals and be effective in their new roles.
- Measurement systems to assess the impact of leadership positions on student growth.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) should start by providing examples of career advancement opportunities that have been proven to increase student achievement. Over time, MDE should work closely with districts and schools to ensure that the roles support their local needs.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #1:
INNOVATIVE HYBRID ROLES

District administration and school leaders should strategically leverage the skills of highly effective teachers, continue to develop their leadership, and increase their impact through a variety of hybrid roles.

We recommend the state create role descriptions that give districts a clear picture of proven leadership roles, but we also think innovation at school and district levels is important. Districts should have the opportunity to expand beyond the existing hybrid roles of mentor teacher, instructional leader, and peer observer, by opening up new teacher-leader opportunities based on site needs. Schools should have the flexibility to design unique leadership roles that reflect the specific needs of students and the community. Here are two possible ways districts can create hybrid and innovative roles:

Teacher-leadership roles at hard-to-staff schools

Districts should use career ladder programs to incentivize highly skilled teachers to lead both students and their peers in hard-to-staff schools. For example, a teacher-leader could mentor a new teacher and demonstrate highly effective teaching techniques alongside the mentee. This would give students access to two teachers for portions of the school day, while increasing the new teacher’s effectiveness. Another option would be for districts to incentivize a cohort of strong teachers to lead turnaround efforts at a struggling school.⁶

Teacher-preneur grants

Teacher entrepreneurs should have opportunities to develop their own proposals for leadership positions in the form of “teacher-preneur” or innovation grants.⁷ A pool of funding would be set aside each year for innovative roles with the purpose of increasing school capacity to close opportunity gaps. A district steering committee of teachers could select the best proposal and monitor outcomes after the first few years of implementation.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #2:
LEADERSHIP ROLES ALIGN WITH STRATEGIC PLANS

Most districts create strategic plans that outline their guiding vision and strategies for how they plan to raise student achievement. It is important for districts to take time to plan career ladders and align leadership roles with their strategic plans. It can help prevent “initiative overload” by ensuring leaders in the district and individual schools are all aligned on the same priorities.

WHY IT MATTERS

An effective career ladder is important because it can:

- Recruit more high-quality candidates to teach in our schools by making the profession more appealing.
- Keep highly effective teacher-leaders from leaving the classroom.

- Develop a teacher’s strengths in a way that facilitates collaboration, benefiting the entire school community.
- Maximize the effect of great teachers on their own students, while impacting students and teachers in other classrooms.

Because we ask our students to continually grow, learn, and challenge themselves, we must demand the same of ourselves. Ultimately, our continued growth and success mean better outcomes for our students as we expand our impact well beyond our classrooms.



Job-Embedded Professional Development

HOW JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER Q COMP CURRENTLY WORKS

Q Comp-funded professional development varies across districts. Some districts use Q Comp funds for one-time trainings, while others implement professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs are ongoing professional development sessions organized by grade level or subject matter and meet throughout the year.

MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

As teachers, we believe honing our craft is key to improving student outcomes. However, many of us have been frustrated by ineffective professional development that felt disconnected from our work and our personal growth goals. Without basing learning opportunities on observations of teacher practice, professional development can often feel generic or even irrelevant. In addition, professional development often lacks meaningful follow-up—after being taught, the skill or topic is never revisited or

administrative support for implementation fails.

Our anecdotal experience is supported by research, which shows that most professional development opportunities have little impact on student achievement.⁸

OUR VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our vision for meaningful and effective professional development begins with a holistic evaluation of individual

“In order to have targeted professional development, which is critical to teacher growth, we need to have effective evaluation methods that tell us as teachers what is working well, and where we can improve.”

Elliot Kohl, *First-grade teacher at College Prep Elementary*

teachers' strengths and areas for growth. Teacher evaluations should inform professional development that is 1) tied to teacher and student needs, 2) data-driven, and 3) structured to include opportunities for follow-up and reflection.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE STATE SHOULD

- Require professional development plans to align with teacher evaluations.
- Require professional development plans to align with school improvement plans.
- Create professional development libraries.

DISTRICTS SHOULD

- Tie professional development to needs identified through teacher evaluations.
- Make professional development ongoing and include feedback loops.

RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

STATE RECOMMENDATION #1: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TIED TO TEACHER AND STUDENT NEEDS

For professional development to be meaningful, it must be based on the targeted needs of individual teachers and their students. Once areas of growth are identified, teachers want consistent support and feedback on our progress toward those goals. The state should require that districts and schools create and implement individualized professional development plans based on teachers' evaluations. These plans should include opportunities for job-embedded learning like peer feedback, observing skilled teachers,

and PLCs. When learning opportunities are tied directly to our areas of need, professional development becomes relevant to our practice, improves our teaching, and as a result, improves outcomes for our students.

STATE RECOMMENDATION #2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONNECTS TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

The current educational climate is one where there are many well-intentioned initiatives to improve schools. Often, to us, these plans feel disconnected and removed from the needs of students and teachers. To keep teacher professional growth and development focused on what matters most, the state should require Q Comp-funded professional development to align with school improvement plans or improvement plans developed by MDE's Regional Centers of Excellence. Although most professional development should be individualized as described above, school-wide development opportunities should be offered through ongoing workshops and PLCs, and should focus on larger trends identified in evaluations and student data.

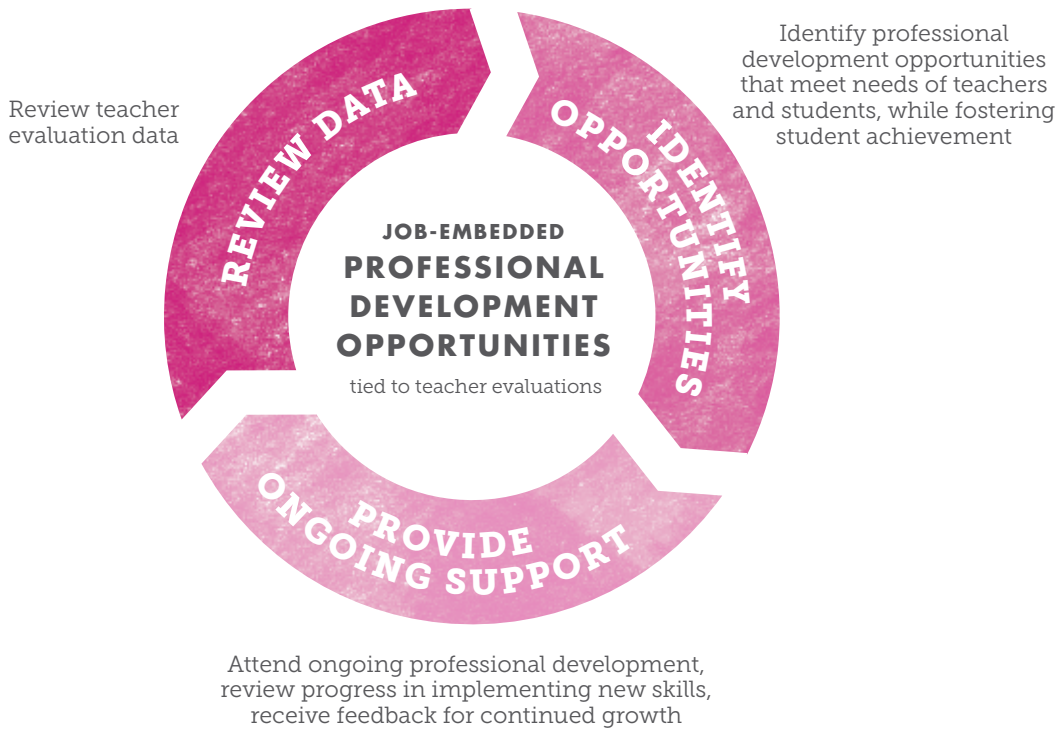
STATE RECOMMENDATION #3: ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LIBRARIES

The state should create or contract with an outside provider to develop a library of resources that include multimedia professional development opportunities. The library could offer resources such as recorded lessons for a variety of grade levels and subject areas, aligned lesson plans, short clips of successful teaching techniques, social networks where teachers can collaborate, and more. The library resources would facilitate learning, and create opportunities to share a variety of training materials and professional development sessions across districts. In addition, rural and other small districts would have

"My best professional development—the kind that truly changed my practice and mind-set—has been personalized, job-embedded, with lots of feedback. This kind of PD should be the norm in our schools, not the exception."

Holly Kragthorpe, *Seventh-grade social studies teacher at Ramsey Middle School*

A HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CYCLE



access to materials and professional development that they don't have the capacity to create on their own. Teachers who are in unique roles would be able to work with colleagues across the state in similar positions to receive more targeted professional development.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #1: DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TIED TO TEACHER EVALUATIONS

Student data and observation feedback from teacher evaluations should inform professional development opportunities and individual growth plans. For example, a first-grade teacher who receives low marks in student participation and engagement should set a goal in his individual growth plan to work on this area. With the help of his principal, he would then create a plan of action to achieve the goal. He would receive support from his PLC in executing the plan. Throughout the evaluation and observation process, he can revisit the growth plan to monitor growth and make changes as necessary.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #2: ONGOING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES WITH FEEDBACK LOOPS

We recommend that districts not spend Q Comp money on one-time professional development sessions. Studies have found little evidence that onetime professional development increases student achievement. Instead, districts should concentrate Q Comp money on PLCs and training teacher observers and mentor teachers to help support ongoing professional growth. Mentor and observer teachers can help their colleagues implement and perfect new skills learned in PLCs.

WHY IT MATTERS

Research shows that the classroom teacher is the most important in-school factor impacting student achievement.⁹ Therefore, our ability to improve our practice is integral to ensuring all children reach their full potential. To increase our ability to reach all learners, we need targeted and effective professional development that is connected to our needs as identified through a meaningful, multiple-measure teacher evaluation system. We believe that when relevant professional development is delivered through an ongoing cycle with continuous feedback, our practice improves, and, as a result, so does student achievement.

CAREER
LADDER

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

TEACHER
EVALUATIONS

PERFORMANCE
PAY
+
ALTERNATIVE
SALARY
SCHEDULES

COMPONENT 3

Teacher Evaluation and Development System

HOW TEACHER EVALUATIONS UNDER Q COMP CURRENTLY WORK

Previously, Q Comp districts set the frequency of their summative evaluation cycles, but to comply with the new statewide teacher evaluation law, they must implement three-year summative cycles. A summative evaluation is a formal, end-of-term review of a teacher's effectiveness based on information from observations, student achievement data, and other measures. In addition to the formal summative evaluation cycles, the new law requires that probationary teachers are reviewed three times a year, and tenured teachers are reviewed once a year. Districts' teacher evaluation systems must be based on multiple criteria, including student growth and observations.¹⁰

MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

Currently, after earning tenure, many of us are observed infrequently. As a result, we are often left wondering how we can continue to improve, how we can move from good to great, and how to fine-tune our craft to drive achievement for all students. We welcome differentiated ratings and meaningful, frequent feedback that recognizes what we do well, and helps us to focus on our areas for growth.

Additionally, teacher evaluation data is rarely collected, examined, or used in a way that helps drive student achievement. Sometimes, teachers are not familiar with the evaluation methods and systems; observers are not always properly trained or certified; and processes are not consistent or transparent. We want a system that is fair, reliable, and includes multiple measures.

OUR VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHER EVALUATION

Well-designed and well-implemented evaluation systems ensure that teachers receive thorough, timely, and evidence-based feedback on their practice so they can improve their instruction. In these systems, principals and administrators are also evaluated and are transparent about their own personal growth goals. Additionally, principals have been trained to not only evaluate but also support teachers in their areas for improvement.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

THE STATE SHOULD

- Recommend that districts implement holistic, multi-measure evaluation systems by using research-based, reliable evaluation tools.
- Gather and use teacher and principal evaluation data strategically.

DISTRICTS SHOULD

- Implement multiple formal and informal observations.
- Prioritize funding for trained observers and quality measurement tools.
- Utilize teacher evaluation data as a human capital lever to recruit and retain top teacher talent.

RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

STATE RECOMMENDATION #1: MULTIPLE MEASURES USING RELIABLE TOOLS

A fair and effective evaluation system includes multiple measures of teacher practice that are valid, reliable, and understood by all stakeholders. As required in the new teacher evaluation law, the multiple measures should at least include observations (both formal and informal), student data, and measures of student engagement.

Teacher evaluations based on multiple measures help protect against subjectivity and bias, but only if those measures are valid and reliable. The state should recommend districts use evaluation tools that have been proven to be effective. They should advise districts against haphazardly creating their own tools to comply with the new teacher evaluation law. We recommend a variety of proven measures be included:

- Classroom observations should be focused on and document the effectiveness of instruction using an easy-to-understand, evidence-based rubric.
- Student surveys are an important measure of teacher effectiveness and have been proven to be reliable. Surveys are important because they are one way to measure student engagement, which correlates strongly with learning.¹¹

STARTING IN 2014, teacher evaluations must be implemented in schools statewide. Districts can leverage Q Comp funding to help implement teacher evaluation systems. More importantly, Q Comp also provides opportunities to make these evaluations more meaningful by coupling them with teacher-leadership positions, professional development, and alternative compensation opportunities.

However, because the funding cap was reached in 2013, no additional districts will benefit from Q Comp unless the cap is raised by the legislature.

“If a district has an effective teacher evaluation system, it can pinpoint areas of growth and tailor professional development to meet the needs of the staff. An effective teacher evaluation system also informs performance-based pay and alternative salary schedules, and is the glue that holds the other components together.”

Taylor Rub, *Special education teacher at Bright Water Montessori School*

- Value-added data is a way to use student achievement data over time to measure a teacher’s contribution to student growth, controlling for other factors. While there is more work to be done in this area,¹² there are reputable value-added systems in use around the country.¹³ The state should encourage districts to adopt one of these models and adapt as needed.

While some tools for measuring student learning and student surveys have been proven to be valid and reliable,¹⁴ observations are only as reliable as those who are conducting them and giving feedback. For this reason, it is critical to thoroughly train observers on a clear rubric and observation model, and regularly check their accuracy on a normed assessment to ensure inter-rater reliability. When observations are done well, they can be the best professional development and lead to significant growth in our teaching skills.¹⁵

High-quality teacher evaluation tools and models recognize that no single method of measurement is a perfect measure of teacher performance. However, multiple measures that are evidence-based, valid, and reliable can help create an evaluation system that accurately reflects teacher effectiveness, and identifies strengths and areas for improvement. As teachers, we believe in the power of performance reviews. We want a system that tells us how we are impacting student growth, what we’re doing well, and where we need to grow.

STATE RECOMMENDATION #2:
USE DATA STRATEGICALLY

MDE should collect aggregate teacher evaluation data from all the districts in the state. It should be used strategically to understand and influence statewide teacher recruitment and retention. Teacher effectiveness data

should be tied to student achievement data to create a longitudinal data system that helps improve our ability to learn which teaching practices work best with certain subsets of students. Another strategic use of the data would be for the state to connect teacher evaluation data to teacher preparation programs. This could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of preparation programs and study what makes them successful.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #1:
MULTIPLE AND FREQUENT OBSERVATIONS

Even with the new statewide teacher evaluation law being implemented, it is possible that some teachers may only be formally observed once every three years.¹⁶ We believe frequent observations by trained and certified observers are critical to our practice and our growth. In order for all teachers to be regularly observed, districts should train peer observers in addition to administrators to use a normed rubric to provide feedback. In addition to producing additional trained observers, this would create a shared language around what high-quality instructional practice looks like, and foster a culture of openness, where teachers are encouraged and given time to observe colleagues informally.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #2:
TRAINED OBSERVERS AND QUALITY
MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Teachers must be able to trust that evaluation data is accurate and not just the subjective opinion of an administrator. Valid tools and transparent processes are important in building that trust. To ensure validity and reliability of observation data, districts should allocate sufficient funding for trained and certified primary and secondary observers (see state recommendation #1).



“I want my students to succeed—I want a classroom in which every student is engaged and improving—but I need help. I need support to grow through observations that are coupled with actionable feedback that leads to professional development opportunities.”

Carlos León, *Math specialist teacher at Green Central Park Elementary*

Student engagement and academic growth data should drive our practice as teachers, and should be at the center of teacher, administrator, and district-level decision-making. However, the data is only useful if the measurement and assessment tools yield valid, reliable, and easily interpretable results. Districts should prioritize investing in reliable tools for measuring teacher contributions to student growth, such as externally created, research-backed student surveys and assessments.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #3: HUMAN CAPITAL LEVERS

Once districts have valid and reliable evaluation systems that are understood by administrators, teacher-leaders, and teachers, they should use their teacher evaluation data strategically to:

- Identify highly effective teachers and incentivize them to move to or stay in hard-to-staff or priority schools.
- Select teachers for career advancement opportunities.

- Determine, in part, which teachers deserve additional compensation for performance.
- Measure, in part, the effectiveness of principals and administrators.

WHY IT MATTERS

Quality teacher evaluation systems are the foundation for an effective Q Comp program that increases teacher skill while raising student achievement. Establishing a valid and reliable multiple-measure evaluation system that promotes shared understanding and buy-in is critical for school success.

CAREER
LADDER

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

TEACHER
EVALUATIONS

PERFORMANCE
PAY
+
ALTERNATIVE
SALARY
SCHEDULE

COMPONENTS 4 AND 5

Performance-Based Pay and Alternative Salary Schedules

HOW Q COMP PERFORMANCE-BASED PAY AND ALTERNATIVE SALARY SCHEDULES WORK

The Q Comp law requires districts to provide performance-based bonuses and reform the traditional “step and lane” salary schedule to include measures of teacher quality as a factor in salary adjustment decisions.¹⁷ In our research, we found that some Q Comp districts recognized and rewarded teachers for positive results by providing bonuses of up to \$2,000.¹⁸ Other districts made minimal tweaks to their traditional salary systems, such as providing one-dollar bonuses for meeting performance goals.¹⁹ Some districts also offer opportunities for additional compensation by completing professional coursework, which was facilitated by the district.²⁰

MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

Traditional “step and lane” pay scales were established decades ago, and only provide increases in salary for graduate coursework and number of years teaching—and don’t reflect our work with or impact on our students.²¹ In addition to not recognizing performance, these

antiquated systems have back-end salary increases, meaning it takes many years within a school district to reach competitive salary levels. In sum, “step and lane” systems do not recognize or reward high-quality teaching, teachers who take on leadership roles, or teachers who excel in our most challenging schools and positions.

“Alternative salary schedules and performance-based pay are important because they tell effective teachers they are valued, and their work is recognized. Rewarding high-quality teaching tells society that teaching is a profession where you need to keep improving and innovating to do well.”

Lisa Putz, *Kindergarten teacher at Higher Ground Academy*

OUR VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR AN ALTERNATIVE COMPENSATION SYSTEM

We spend money on what we value. Rewarding successful teachers with higher compensation sends the message that we value and recognize quality teaching. How we pay our teachers should reflect the significant social and economic value they provide to our society. While much broader work must be done to change teacher compensation models to recruit and retain top talent, Q Comp provides an immediate opportunity to recognize performance and incentivize the retention of highly effective teachers.

The Denver ProComp system is one inspiring differentiated compensation example we reviewed.

(For more details on the ProComp salary schedule, see page 21.)

Because our vision for teacher compensation encompasses both onetime bonuses (performance-based pay) and a permanent increase (alternative salary schedule), we included recommendations for both Q Comp components in this section.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that there should be alignment between performance-based pay bonuses and alternative salary schedules. Both should be centered on recognizing and rewarding effective teachers who produce superior growth in student achievement, take on leadership roles, and work in hard-to-staff schools.

THE STATE SHOULD

- Require alignment between alternative salary schedules and performance pay measures.
- Include a category for working in hard-to-staff schools in bonus and salary schedule allotments.

DISTRICTS SHOULD

- Provide additional compensation for effective and highly effective teachers, teacher-leaders, and administrators.
- Provide additional compensation for effective and highly effective teachers, teacher-leaders, and administrators and teams who teach in hard-to-staff schools.

DENVER'S PROCOMP COMPENSATION PLAN

AREA OF FOCUS	INCENTIVE	YOU EARN...	AMOUNT*	
STUDENT GROWTH: HELPING YOUR STUDENTS AND YOUR SCHOOL	Top Performing Schools	A bonus for working in a Top Performing school, based on overall points earned on the DPS School Performance Framework (SPF).	\$2,439.55	
	High Growth Schools	A bonus for working in a High Growth School, based on the DPS SPF.	\$2,439.55	
	Exceeds Expectations	A bonus if at least 50% of your students (grades 4-10) are in the 55th percentile or higher for statewide student growth in Math and Language Arts on the Colorado state assessment.	\$2,439.55	
	Student Growth Objectives (SGOs)	A salary increase if you meet two approved SGOs. A bonus if you meet one of the approved SGOs.	\$381.18	
MARKET INCENTIVES: TEACH WHERE YOU'RE NEEDED MOST	Hard to Staff Assignment	A bonus for working in a Hard to Staff assignment based on local and national data.	\$2,439.55 per assignment	
	High Needs School	A bonus for working in a High Needs school.	\$2,439.55	
KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS: DEVELOPING IN YOUR PROFESSION	Professional Development Units (PDUs)	A salary increase for completion of approved PDUs, if you have 14 or fewer years of credited service. A bonus for completion if you have 15 or more years of credited service.	\$762.36	
	Tuition and Student Loan Reimbursement	Reimbursement for satisfactory completion of approved coursework or outstanding student loan.	Up to \$1,000 per year/ \$4,000 per lifetime	
	Advanced Degrees, Licenses and Certificates	A salary increase for earning a new advanced degree, license or certificate.	\$3,430.62 increase, payable once every three year	
COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL EVALUATION: AIM FOR EFFECTIVENESS	Comprehensive Professional Evaluation (CPE)	A salary increase if you have 14 or fewer years of credited service and receive a satisfactory evaluation.	Probationary Teachers	\$381.18
			Non-Probationary Teachers*	\$1,144.00 payable once every 3 years

*Incentives are determined based on a percentage of an index, currently set at \$38,118.

**Certain non-probationary teachers evaluated annually may receive a \$381.18 salary increase for a satisfactory evaluation each year.

Taken from <http://static.dpsk12.org/gems/newprocomp/DPSProcomp20139x104pg202.pdf>

“Salary schemes reflect the values of an institution. Compensation focused on incentivizing whatever practice increases equity sends a message that teachers’ professional objectives must be geared toward increasing achievement for all students.”

Kaitlin Lindsey, *English Language Learner (ELL) teacher at Anne Sullivan Elementary*

RECOMMENDATION DETAILS

STATE RECOMMENDATION #1:
ALIGN MEASURES FOR PERFORMANCE-BASED PAY AND ALTERNATIVE SALARY SCHEDULE

The state should require districts to align measures used to determine performance-based pay bonuses with those used to determine alternative salary schedules. The district should determine: 1) what will be recognized and rewarded financially, 2) which measurements will determine eligibility, and 3) how many short-term bonuses someone must consecutively receive in order to be eligible for a permanent salary increase in each category.

For example, a teacher could be recognized for achieving high student growth based on a state language assessment by receiving a bonus each year. After three consecutive years of receiving the bonus, he or she then receives a correlated permanent salary increase.

STATE RECOMMENDATION #2:
INCENTIVIZE TEACHING AT HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS

The state should acknowledge the importance of getting our best teachers and administrators in front of the students who need them the most. Despite being a state with a rich history of excellent public education, Minnesota also

WHAT ALIGNING PERFORMANCE-BASED PAY AND ALTERNATIVE SALARY SCHEDULES CAN LOOK LIKE

Teachers who receive bonuses for “effective” ratings and working in hard-to-staff schools for three years in a row can receive a permanent salary increase in their fourth year.



Fourth-year teacher with a master’s degree. HTSS = Hard-to-staff schools.

has some of the largest racial and socioeconomic opportunity gaps in the nation.²³ It is a wise investment for the state to prioritize getting the most skilled teachers in hard-to-staff schools—ones that are low-performing, in high-poverty areas, geographically isolated, or that have other targeted needs.

Specifically, the state should create a category within the performance-based pay and alternative salary schedule components to allow schools/districts to incentivize and reward teachers and leaders for excelling in hard-to-staff school settings.

Currently, the legislature provides Q Comp districts with up to \$260 per pupil to implement their Q Comp plans. We believe the legislature should allocate additional funds to increase districts' ability to meaningfully incentivize and reward teacher-leaders working in these schools. Research shows that few teachers will move to a hard-to-staff school for an additional \$1,000 or \$2,000.²² They are even less likely to stay in these schools long term without greater supports and incentives. However, districts such as Washington, D.C., and Denver have found that strong teacher-leaders will be incentivized to stay in hard-to-staff schools with bonuses of \$10,000 and greater.^{24,25}

We know that financial incentives are necessary, but not sufficient to ensure that great teachers are recruited and retained in hard-to-staff schools. Districts should pair their compensation packages, funded in part by Q Comp, with other strategies to recruit, support, develop, and retain highly effective teachers.

“As a teacher in a Q Comp school, I see the enormous value in performance-based pay. It rewards teachers who are doing outstanding things with their scholars. And in a profession with a very high rate of burnout, we need to do everything we can to retain the talented teachers we have.”

Maggie Borman, *Third-grade teacher at Best Academy*

AS TEACHERS

who are serious about closing the opportunity gap, we ask our state’s policymakers to fund sizable incentives to attract high-quality teachers to hard-to-staff schools. It is critical to do this within the context of Q Comp, because money alone is not enough. We need targeted support—like professional development, PLCs, and mentorship—which Q Comp can provide.

“Teaching is not easy. It is especially not easy in hard-to-staff schools—that’s why they are ‘hard’ to staff. Q Comp can level the playing field by giving hard-to-staff schools the opportunity to provide meaningful professional development and the ability to attract the quality staff they need to succeed.”

Maya Kruger, *Middle school science teacher at Loveworks Academy*

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #1:
COMPENSATE EFFECTIVENESS

Q Comp’s performance-based pay and alternative salary schedules should reward effective teaching practices. Effective teaching practices should be measured by student outcomes—growth and achievement—as well as other measures such as observations, student surveys, and possibly others. Quality and improvement should be at the core of compensation structures, not just years of experience or degrees that do not always correspond with increased student achievement.²⁶

We believe that a meaningful compensation structure should reflect the following:

Bonuses:

- All teachers evaluated as effective receive a bonus to recognize and reward them for meeting their goals.
- Highly effective teachers receive significantly higher than average bonuses to reward excellence.
- Teachers in leadership roles who are evaluated as effective on their teacher evaluations—and on an additional evaluations by peers whom they lead—receive a bonus for taking on additional responsibility.
- Administrators receive bonuses for measures such as supporting a high percentage of teachers in meeting student achievement growth goals, achieving effective evaluation scores, or retaining highly effective teachers.
- School teams receive bonuses for collaboration resulting in increased student achievement.

Salary increases:

- All teachers evaluated as effective or highly effective receive additional compensation through bonuses to recognize and reward them for meeting their goals.
- Teachers and administrators who demonstrate effectiveness—as defined in the bonus categories above—for three consecutive years receive a permanent salary increase. For example, a teacher rated highly effective on his evaluation for three years in a row receives a salary increase.

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION #2:
COMPENSATE HIGH-QUALITY WORK
WITHIN HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS

Districts should reward highly effective teachers and administrators who are excelling in hard-to-staff schools with bonuses and salary increases at various yearly increments, as outlined in State Recommendation #2.

WHY IT MATTERS

Meeting the needs of our students is what motivates us. We want a compensation system that is aligned to that motivation by rewarding our impact on our students. Providing financial incentives along with quality support has shown promising results for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers, even in hard-to-staff schools. For the benefit of our students, it is time that courageous teachers take the lead in having rational conversations about differentiated compensation that rewards excellence in driving student outcomes.



"My hope is that Minnesota will implement a stronger and more widespread Q Comp program to support student achievement and to elevate the teaching profession. We have a responsibility to support educators who are working hard to raise student achievement and narrow inequitable learning gaps. Q Comp provides a platform to do this."

HOLLY KRAGTHORPE,

Seventh-grade social studies at Ramsey Middle School

Conclusion

Our top priority as educators is to meet the needs of our diverse learners. To accomplish this, we need every opportunity to improve our practice. Our professional growth and development require a system that builds on our areas of excellence, and identifies and develops our areas for growth. Q Comp can and should serve as a vehicle for accomplishing this. Through Q Comp, districts can create fair, reliable and multi-measure evaluation systems, and meaningful, effective professional development.

Q Comp's five components constitute a holistic program that has had a positive impact on student achievement and teacher development in the districts that have used it. We believe that Q Comp is an important initiative that can be coupled with other research-backed, sustainable investments in our educational system that can improve outcomes for students.

By implementing these recommendations, the impact of Q Comp can be maximized. It can evolve into an even more effective system that recognizes and rewards improving student achievement, and facilitates excellence in teaching.

Teacher Policy Team Process and Methodology

IDENTIFYING E4E'S POLICY FOCUS

E4E held focus groups with diverse groups of teachers who work in districts and public charter schools, and polled hundreds of E4E members across Minnesota to identify the most important policy issues.

REVIEWING RESEARCH

We met over the course of eight weeks to review research on compensation, teacher evaluation, and career ladder programs across the nation. We discussed the benefits and pitfalls of various programs, and looked at corresponding student achievement data. Finally, we looked comprehensively at performance data, and coupled the findings with our experiences as classroom teachers to craft our recommendations to the state and districts.

CONDUCTING LOCAL RESEARCH

We conducted interviews with district leaders, colleagues, and MDE staff to gather critical information about current practices and stakeholder feedback. Following the creation of the recommendations, Teacher Policy Team members conducted to conducted focus groups and surveyed colleagues to develop the team's final recommendations.

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THE EDUCATORS 4 EXCELLENCE-MINNESOTA 2014 TEACHER POLICY TEAM ON Q COMP

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This report, graphics and figures were designed by Kristin Girvin Redman and Tracy Harris at Cricket Design Works in Madison, Wisconsin.

The text face is Bembo Regular, designed by Stanley Morison in 1929. The typefaces used for headers, subheaders and pull quotes are Futura Bold, designed by Paul Renner, and Museo Slab, designed by Jos Buivenga. Figure labels are set in Futura Regular, and figure callouts are set in Museo Slab.

For far too long, education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table—the voice of classroom teachers.

Educators 4 Excellence (E4E), a teacher-led organization, is changing this dynamic by placing the voices of teachers at the forefront of the conversations that shape our classrooms and careers.

E4E has a quickly growing national network of educators united by our Declaration of Teachers' Principles and Beliefs. E4E members can learn about education policy and research, network with like-minded peers and policymakers, and take action by advocating for teacher-created policies that lift student achievement and the teaching profession.

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