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## **St. Louis Park Public Schools applies for Q-Comp**

by Dr. Debra Bowers, Superintendent

The greatest effect on student achievement (aside from home) is effective instruction. By the year 2010, the nation will face a shortage of one million teachers. Teacher recruitment and retention will be crucial for Minnesota. Data indicates 44 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years.

These facts were highlighted in a recent training given by the Minnesota Department of Education on the new Quality Compensation for Teachers, or Q-Comp, program approved by the legislature this session.

Dan Walker, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Human Resources, is leading a team of teachers and administrators working through the application process to bring Q-Comp to St. Louis Park Public Schools. They will spend the next several months hammering out details, explaining the program and seeking input from staff and community members as they come to consensus about how Q-Comp could work in St. Louis Park.

Implementing Q-comp is one way we can work proactively and collaboratively to give the best possible education to our students.

“Everyone benefits from Q-Comp,” said Sarabeth deNeui, a teacher at Peter Hobart Primary Center participating on the district’s Q-Comp committee. “ It will help increase student achievement and also aid our district in teacher recruitment, retention and staff development.”

So what exactly is Q-comp, and how does it work?

There are five principles of Q-Comp:

1. Multiple career paths
2. Evaluation system
3. Revamped salary schedule
4. Performance based compensation
5. Ongoing, applied professional growth

Each district must apply for Q-Comp. Using the principles and other state guidelines, the district forms a detailed plan defining specific components.

The specific quality compensation components that St. Louis Park is proposing include developing mentor and master teachers who help other teachers implement strategies in their classroom.

The evaluation system we are developing is standards based. Student performance will be based on measured student growth, including scores on standardized test as well as other achievement indicators. Q-Comp committee members are in the process of researching various models for teacher pay and are working collaboratively to bring forward a plan all can agree on.

The plan must be approved by the teachers' union and ratified by the school board. The Department of Education then either approves the plan, denies the plan or identifies issues and allows the district 30 days to re-vamp the plan.

The Minnesota State Legislature has approved over \$75 million in categorical funding for Q-Comp to be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Once the \$75 million is disbursed, districts will not be approved regardless of the merits of their application.

Three Minnesota school districts have already been approved for Q-Comp. St. Louis Park is one of many districts working on an application this year.

Approved districts receive \$260 per student, which must be used for teacher compensation. Of the \$260, \$190 per student comes in the form of State aid and \$70 per student comes in the form of local levy dollars.

“The timeline is aggressive and we’ll work as quickly as we can through the paperwork process,” said Walker. “We need to have broad-based support and collaboration to be successful.”

If approved, our goal is to implement Q-Comp in the 2006-2007 school year. The program will be available to all Park teachers in all Park schools. More effective teaching will help all of our students as we challenge them to achieve great things.