



June 29, 2011

Via E-Mail Delivery and First-Class Mail

Paul Durand, Superintendent
Colleen Peterson, President of the Exclusive Representative of the Teachers
Rockford Area School District
6051 Ash Street
Rockford, MN 55373

Dear Mr. Durand and Ms. Peterson:

Thank you for submitting an application and for working to develop an alternative teacher compensation system.

This letter is notification that the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has approved the Q Comp application for Rockford Area School District. Therefore, Rockford Area School District may proceed forward with its Q Comp program and plan for the 2011-12 school year under the conditions outlined in this letter.

Component 1: Career Ladder/Advancement Options—Provide career ladders or career advancement opportunities for teachers.

The career ladder includes five positions with various duties and compensations:

Q Comp Core Committee Member

Qualifications:

- Current Minnesota teaching license with a full-time contract.
- Minimum of five years teaching experience within the district.
- Served as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) Leader, Observation Coach or as a key building or district leader (faculty senate or staff development).
- Experience with and knowledge of the district Q Comp application, process and procedures in accordance with MDE.
- Understanding of student data and the Specific/Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Results-based and Time-bound (SMART) goal-setting process.
- Ability to remain impartial and objective.
- Ability to collaborate with various teams and staff to design and improve professional development for increased student achievement.
- Proficient skills in communication, organization and leadership.

Responsibilities:

- Use release time to write the Q Comp plan.
- Oversee monitoring, evaluating and making changes to the Q Comp process.
- Re-evaluate the Q Comp program, modify the Q Comp plan, and conduct the Program Review.
- Monitor and adjust the Q Comp budget as needed.
- Hear and decide on observation appeals.
- Meet for a half day each quarter throughout the school year and for a full day at the end of the school year.

Hiring Process:

- Current committee membership was made available to all teaching staff, and the Education Minnesota–Rockford Executive Committee accepted to the committee all teachers who expressed interest.
- In the future, open positions will be posted in the spring following district hiring guidelines.
- Interested parties will submit a letter of interest within five days of posting.
- The current Q Comp Advisor and an administrator will screen letters and choose applicants using the qualifications for the Q Comp Core Committee Member position.
- One-hour interviews will be scheduled within two weeks after the posting closes.
- A representative from the current Q Comp Core Committee, the Q Comp Advisor and an administrator will conduct a group interview with prospective candidates.
- At the conclusion of the interview process, the interview team will make a hiring recommendation to the superintendent who will make the final decision to be approved by the school board.

Evaluation:

- The committee process will be evaluated via annual committee self-evaluation audits.
- As a committee, the members must function successfully, based on the scoring rubric, in order to adequately guide the direction of the Q Comp program.
- The results of the evaluations will be shared with the curriculum director, the superintendent, and the executive committee of the exclusive representative of the teachers for any needed action.
- Individual members will be evaluated using the Q Comp Core Committee Member Evaluation Rubric.
- Members must score a minimum of four out of the five elements on the rubric and attend a minimum of 16 out of the 20 hours of meeting time to receive full compensation.

Compensation:

- \$200 annual salary augmentation.
- Three half days and one full day of release time annually.

Teacher Ratio:

- One member for every 17 licensed staff members.
- Six members for all 102 licensed staff members.

Q Comp Advisor

Qualifications:

- Current Minnesota teaching license with a full-time contract.
- Minimum of five years' experience teaching in the district.
- Experience with and knowledge of the district Q Comp application, process and procedures in accordance with MDE.
- Proficient in best practices, research-based instructional strategies, differentiation and observation methods.
- Ability to remain professional, impartial and objective.
- Ability to collaborate with various teams and staff to design and improve professional development.
- Proficient skills in communication, organization and leadership.
- Knowledgeable in procedures and practices related to the district mentoring program.

Responsibilities:

- Provide assistance and answers to questions from district staff regarding Q Comp.
- Attend, plan or facilitate Q Comp meetings and trainings as required.
- Oversee researching and field-testing of best practice instructional strategies.
- Determine necessary staff development offerings for instructional strategies and observation/evaluation training.
- Attend and help plan data retreats.
- Collect, evaluate, interpret and act upon teacher observations and observation documentation.
- Communicate with PLC Leaders to monitor PLC attendance and progress toward goals.
- Collect, record, write and file Q Comp related paperwork in accordance with MDE requirements.
- Collaborate with the Q Comp Core Committee, PLC Leaders and Observation Coaches to set goals.
- Conduct two days of mentor and new staff trainings prior to the school year.
- Oversee the mentor program throughout the school year, including answering questions, advocating for new staff, collecting mentor program assignments, and supporting new teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship.
- Fulfill a 0.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching requirement within the district.
- Report to the district curriculum director.

Hiring Process:

- The position will be posted in the spring following the district hiring guidelines.
- Interested parties will submit a letter of interest within five days of the posting.
- A member of the Q Comp Committee and an administrator will screen letters and choose applicants using the qualifications for the Q Comp Advisor.
- One-hour interviews will be scheduled within two weeks after the posting closes.
- Group interviews will be conducted by a representative from the current Q Comp Core Committee, the president of the exclusive representative of the teachers and an administrator.

- At the conclusion of the interview process, the interview team will make a hiring recommendation to the superintendent who will make the final decision to be approved by the school board.

Evaluation:

- The Q Comp Core Committee will evaluate the Q Comp Advisor in January and May using the Q Comp Advisor Evaluation Rubric.
 - The rubric is based on fulfillment of the position responsibilities.
- To receive the full \$5,000 compensation, the Q Comp Advisor must score at least Proficient in eight of the ten rubric elements with no Unsatisfactory ratings.
 - If the January rubric scores show that more than two elements are below Proficient or there are any Unsatisfactory ratings, the January payment will be delayed and the Q Comp Advisor will work through an improvement plan until the problem is remediated.

Compensation:

- \$5,000 annual salary augmentation of which half will be paid in January and half will be paid in June.
- 25% of salary with benefits.
- Earn a quarter-day compensation time during the school year according to quarter-day increments worked outside of contract hours during the summer.
- 10.5 days of release time.

Teacher Ratio:

- One Q Comp Advisor for all 102 licensed staff in the district.

PLC Leader

Qualifications:

- Current Minnesota teaching license.
- Full- or part-time contracted employee with the district.
- Employee in good standing with the district.
- Trained or willing to be trained on the District 883 Observation Rubric and observation/evaluation methods.
- Understanding of or willingness to learn and use current, best-practice instructional strategies, including differentiation, to promote student learning by coaching PLCs.
- Understanding of or willingness to learn about SMART goals and the process of setting goals.

Responsibilities:

- Participate in all district trainings related to observations and PLC leadership.
- Develop agendas and facilitate meetings to improve instruction in order to meet PLC goals that increase student achievement.
- Prepare for and document attendance and outcomes at PLC meetings.
- Participate in nine morning districtwide PLC Leader meetings.
- Participate in researching and field-testing of best practice instructional strategies.
- Responsible for scheduling and conducting one observation with each PLC team member, including the Observation Coach, using the District 883 Observation Rubric.

- Participate in the entire observation cycle with each PLC member for each observation (pre-observation conference, observation and post-observation conference).
- Report on the progress of the PLC to the Q Comp Advisor and Q Comp Core Committee.
- Distribute and explain data or test results given to PLC members from the curriculum director.
- Complete and submit all observation documentation according to district Q Comp guidelines.
- Maintain confidentiality of observation information related to specific teachers.
- Facilitate goal-setting within the PLC.
- Offer feedback to the Q Comp Core Committee regarding evaluation and modification of the Q Comp plan.

Hiring Process:

- For the initial program year, this hiring process will be followed:
 - The position will be posted following the district hiring guidelines.
 - Interested parties will submit a letter of interest within five days of posting.
 - The current Q Comp Advisor and an administrator will screen letters and choose applicants using the qualifications outlined for the position.
 - One-hour interviews will be scheduled within two weeks after the posting closes.
 - Group interviews will be conducted by a representative from the current Q Comp Core Committee, the Q Comp Advisor and an administrator.
 - At the conclusion of the interview process, the interview teams will make a hiring recommendation to the superintendent who will make the final decision to be approved by the school board.
- For all subsequent years, this hiring process will be followed:
 - The position will be annually rotated within the PLC for members who meet the qualifications for the position.
 - The current PLC Leader will screen PLC group members based on the qualifications and identify which leaders have served as PLC Leader in prior years.
 - At the last meeting of the school year, the current PLC Leader will announce all qualified group members who have not yet served and ask for interested parties out of that group.
 - A vote will be conducted, and a new PLC Leader will be identified and recommended for hiring.
 - An individual cannot serve as PLC Leader for more than one term until all qualified members in the PLC have had an opportunity to serve in the role or pass on the opportunity.
 - If no determination can be made within a PLC, the principal and the Q Comp Advisor will appoint a PLC Leader.
 - Any appeals from this process will be made to the superintendent.

Evaluation:

- The Q Comp Core Committee will facilitate the evaluation of the PLC Leaders in January and May using the PLC Leader Checklist.

- To receive full compensation, the PLC Leader must score Proficient in six out of the seven checklist elements with no Unsatisfactory ratings.
 - If the January rubric scores show that more than one element is below Proficient or there are any Unsatisfactory ratings, the January payment will be delayed and the Q Comp Advisor will work through an improvement plan until the problem is remediated.

Compensation:

- \$400 annual salary augmentation
- One hour of release time per observation.

Teacher Ratio:

- One PLC Leaders for approximately every six licensed staff members.
- Eighteen (18) PLC Leaders for all 102 licensed staff members in the district.

Observation Coach (Peer Evaluator)

Qualifications:

- Current Minnesota teaching license.
- Ability to remain impartial and objective.
- Trained or willing to be trained on the District 883 Observation Rubric and observation/evaluation methods.
- Understanding of or willingness to learn and use current, best-practice instructional strategies, including differentiation, to promote student learning by coaching PLCs.
- Proficiency in communicating instructional strategies and skills to other teachers.
- Excellent organizational, collaborative, communication and leadership skills.

Responsibilities:

- Participate in all district trainings related to observations.
- Schedule and conduct two observations with each PLC team member using the District 883 Observation Rubric.
- Participate in the entire observation cycle with each PLC member for each observation (pre-observation conference, observation and post-observation conference).
- Complete and submit all observation documentation according to district Q Comp guidelines.
- Maintain confidentiality with observation information.
- Participate in nine morning districtwide PLC Leader meetings.
- Work in partnership with the PLC Leader to provide information and support for PLC members related to observation/evaluation cycles and improved instruction and student achievement.

Hiring Process:

- The position will be posted in the spring following the district hiring guidelines.
- Interested parties will submit a letter of interest within five days of the posting.
- The current Q Comp Advisor and an administrator will screen letters and choose applicants using the qualifications for the position.
- One-hour interviews will be scheduled within two weeks after the posting closes.
- A group interview will be conducted by a representative from the Q Comp Core Committee, the Q Comp Advisor and an administrator.

- At the conclusion of the interview process, the interview team will make a hiring recommendation to the superintendent who will make the final decision to be approved by the school board.

Evaluation:

- The Q Comp Advisor will evaluate each Observation Coach's documentation after each observation cycle.
 - The Q Comp Advisor will offer feedback for improvement individually or generally at the next training session.
 - If the Observation Coach has not been fulfilling job requirements or has not been evaluating appropriately in observations, the curriculum director and Q Comp Advisor will place the Observation Coach on an improvement plan.
 - If an Observation Coach fails to complete all observations in a given window, the Q Comp Advisor will determine how observations will be completed and the Observation Coach will lose a percentage of pay equal to the percent of observations that were not fulfilled.
- The Q Comp Advisor will also evaluate each Observation Coach in May using the Observation Coach Evaluation Checklist in order to determine position compensation.

Compensation:

- \$400 annual salary augmentation.
- One hour of release time per observation.

Teacher Ratio:

- One Observation Coach for approximately every six licensed staff members.
- Eighteen (18) Observation Coaches for all 102 licensed staff members in the district.

Mentor

Qualifications:

- Current Minnesota teaching license.
- Teach in a similar content area or grade level of new staff.
- Ability to remain impartial and objective.
- Understanding of building and district processes, the framework of district curriculum and Minnesota graduation standards.
- Excellent organizational, collaborative and communication skills.

Responsibilities:

- Participate in two days of training in August.
- Meet with the mentee for one formal, one-hour, meeting per month to complete discussion requirements and ensure documentation is sent to the Q Comp Advisor.
- Oversee the mentee's observation requirement completion.
- Work with mentee in the goal process.
- Report any concerns or advocacy issues to the Q Comp Advisor promptly.

Hiring Process:

- Principals will contact teachers with skills matching the new licensed staff member's needs to notify them of the position availability.

- Interested parties will submit a letter of interest within five days of notification by the principal.
- The building principal will screen letters and choose applicants using the position qualifications and conduct a group interview with qualified candidates.
- At the conclusion of the interview process, the principal will make a recommendation to the superintendent who will make the final decision to be approved by the school board.

Evaluation:

- The Q Comp Advisor will conference with mentees in October, January and March of the school year to ensure that each is feeling supported and is getting time with the assigned Mentor in order to complete the discussion questions.
- After each mentee meeting, the Q Comp Advisor will fill out the Mentor Evaluation Checklist, documenting the performance of each Mentor.
- If the Mentor is not following through on the requirements of the position, the Q Comp Advisor and the curriculum director will conference with the Mentor to determine if that person can successfully continue in the position.
- Mentors must score five out of the six elements on the final evaluation checklist in order to earn the position compensation.
- If a Mentor is replaced midyear because of poor performance, that person will not earn the compensation.

Compensation:

- \$400 annual salary augmentation.

Teacher Ratio:

- One Mentor for every new staff member.

Component 2: Job-embedded Professional Development—Provide integrated, job-embedded, ongoing, site-based and teacher-led professional development activities to improve instructional skills and learning that are aligned with student needs under section 122A.413 and 122A.60 and led during the day by trained teacher leaders.

As the focus for the Q Comp plan, the district has selected the following student achievement goal from the Educational Improvement Plan (EIP): Rockford Area Schools will move from a 75.15% proficiency level to a 77.15% proficiency level in reading using the Reading Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) administered in the spring of 2012. In alignment with this, each site has chosen the following goals from the site EIP as the focus for student achievement:

- The percentage of students in grades 3-5 at Rockford Elementary Arts Magnet School who earn achievement levels of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on the Reading MCA (all accountability tests) will increase from 77.49% in 2010 to 79.49% in 2011.
- The percentage of students in grades 6-8 at Rockford Middle School who earn achievement levels of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on the Reading MCA (all accountability tests) will increase from 74.11% in 2010 to 76.11% in 2011.
- The percentage of students in grade 10 at Rockford High School who earn achievement levels of Meets the Standards or Exceeds the Standards on the

Reading MCA (all accountability tests) will increase from 71.42% in 2010 to 73.42% in 2011.

Each site will be divided into grade level or department teams to create PLCs of four to nine members depending on the size of the department or grade level. These teams will be led by PLC Leaders at PLC meetings and at additional meetings scheduled during staff development days. Teams will meet weekly for an average of 60 minutes before school and during staff development days. Part-time licensed staff members will be required to attend PLC meetings equal to the amount of time in their district contract. Licensed staff members will also attend bimonthly site staff meetings where PLC and observation tasks will be addressed. Furthermore, reading and math teachers will participate in data retreats, and all licensed staff will participate in data analysis and data-based instructional modification alone or with peers during their individual or common planning time.

Component 3: Teacher Observation/Evaluation—Create an objective and comprehensive teacher evaluation system based on the educational improvement plan, the staff development plan, and multiple evaluations of a teacher’s performance conducted by a locally selected and trained evaluation team that includes classroom observations of instructional practice.

Each tenured teacher in Rockford Area School District will be observed and receive formative evaluations three times per year. The evaluation team that will complete these evaluations for each tenured teacher will consist of the Observation Coaches and PLC Leaders. The Observation Coach will complete the first and third observation, while the PLC Lead will conduct the second. All formative evaluations will be based on direct classroom observations and will be scored using the District 883 Observation Rubric. Teachers will be expected to achieve a score Proficient of higher on five out of six elements by the end of the year with no Unsatisfactory ratings on the final observation.

Probationary teachers will be observed three times per year by building administrators, which will serve as their three Q Comp observations. Compatible with tenured teachers on the final observation of the year, probationary teachers must score Proficient in five out of six elements with no Unsatisfactory ratings in order to receive the observation/evaluation performance pay.

All staff will not be evaluated on the same evaluation rubric. Professional staff, including the counselors, social worker, and nurse, will be in a PLC together and will be responsible for evaluating one another using the evaluation rubric for each particular position. Also, the media specialist will have a separate rubric specific to the position responsibilities. Special observation training will occur with the Observation Coaches and PLC Leaders who will be observing these positions, with individual attention being given to this group from the professional trainer. Ongoing trainings will be differentiated for the needs of this group.

All teachers will receive training on the evaluation/observation rubric and process on September 1, the initial staff development day prior to classes beginning in the fall. Follow-up instruction will happen in PLC groups as the October observation cycle begins

and prior to observations in January and March in order to review the criteria. The District 883 Observation Rubric is based on the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching. It includes fewer components than Danielson's Framework, but it focuses in on elements that Rockford Area School District wishes to examine and improve upon at this time.

Teachers will be required to conduct a pre- and post-observation conference with their Observation Coach (in October and March) or both the PLC Leader and Observation Coach (in January). The pre-observation conference must be completed by the morning of the scheduled date of the observation and include discussion on the completed pre-observation report. The post-observation conference must be completed within a week after the observation has been performed (preferably within one or two days) and must include the completed observation rubric and the post-observation report. This conference will provide critical feedback and coaching to ensure that each teacher will improve in the observation element areas during the school year.

The Q Comp Core Committee, the Q Comp Advisor, the 18 Observation Coaches, and the 18 PLC Leaders will be trained in observation and evaluation techniques during the summer of 2011. This group will serve as experts in the area of observation/evaluation and will offer support and guidance to teachers to aid in their understanding of the process. This comprehensive initial training will take place prior to the September 1 staff development day. Inter-rater reliability training and reviews of the observation process will happen after each observation cycle as well as at monthly district PLC Leader and Observation Coach meetings, ensuring that Observation Coaches and PLC Leaders are providing a rigorous, equitable, valid, and transparent observation program for Rockford teachers.

As part of ensuring inter-rater reliability, Observation Coaches will conduct two observations of each PLC member, and PLC Leaders will conduct one observation of each member. Observation review discussions will take place between Observation Coaches and PLC Leaders prior to and after observations conducted during the January observation cycle, which will lead to heightened reliability. If the Observation Coach and PLC Leader determine that the team would benefit from another partner observation, they can request that the building principal find coverage to coordinate that observation.

Districtwide inter-rater reliability will be addressed when the Q-Comp Advisor participates in one partner observation with each Observation Coach during the year. The Advisor will meet with Observation Coaches after the observation to compare results. Also, the Advisor will encourage reliability by addressing patterns in ratings at district PLC Leader meetings

A teacher who disagrees with the PLC Leader or Observation Coach scoring of an evaluation may file an appeal to the Q Comp Core Committee within one week of the post-observation conference. The written appeal should include an assessment of the observed teacher's concerns regarding the reliability or accuracy of the evaluation. The Q Comp Core Committee will review the appeal and determine whether the observation should stand or a replacement observation should be granted.

Component 4: Performance Pay—Describe how teacher performance measures of student academic achievement and progress under section 122A.414, subdivision 2, clause 3 align with at least 60 percent of increases in teacher compensation within the performance pay system.

A teacher's compensation will be based on the following factors:

- \$210/15% for schoolwide gains will be awarded to teachers at each site if the schoolwide goals are met.
- \$210/15% for measures of student achievement will be awarded to each teacher who demonstrates that a selected individual classroom student achievement goal has been met.
- \$490/35% for teacher observation/evaluation will be awarded to each licensed staff member who achieves a score of Proficient or higher on five out of six elements by the end of the year with no Unsatisfactory ratings on the final observation.
- \$490/35% for job-embedded staff development will be awarded to each teacher who demonstrates all of the following:
 - Attends and participates in at least 95% of the PLC meetings.
 - Implements in the classroom all five instructional strategies studied by the PLC and brings back anecdotal evidence or student work samples demonstrating implementation.
 - Sets SMART goals related to each instructional strategy and reports results related to those goals at PLC meetings.
 - Evaluates the success of each of the five implemented instructional strategies using pre- and post-implementation student data.
 - Self-evaluates and reflects on instructional growth as related to observations and the instructional strategy implementation process as directed by the PLC Leader.
 - Identifies the two lowest performing students each trimester who are not identified as special education and conducts progress monitoring of the students through implemented instructional strategies or Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies.
 - Each trimester, teachers will present data to the PLC as a case study.
 - In order to be successful earning performance pay, both students need to show documented growth or have been referred to the Student Assistance Team for Tier 2 or 3 supports.
 - If Tier 2 or 3 supports will not meet the needs of the student, special education evaluation recommendations will be made.

Component 5: Alternative Salary Schedule—Reform the *steps and lanes* salary schedule in order to tie pay to teacher performance and student achievement.

The district has reformed the salary schedule by renaming vertical levels as career ladders and linking movement through these levels to earning at least two of the four performance pay awards outlined in Component 4. A teacher who does not earn at least two performance pay awards will not make vertical movement on the salary schedule for the following year.

As a condition of approval, the goals for each site will need to be updated based on year-end standardized data prior to October 1 of each year and resubmitted to MDE.

Also as a condition of approval, a final ratified master agreement including the salary schedule will need to be submitted to MDE along with a copy of the official school board resolution and a copy of the teachers union vote certification.

The appropriate documentation for these conditions must be sent to Kristie Anderson. As part of the program, MDE will be working with the Rockford Area School District to conduct an annual program review as part of the report requirement in Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.414.

Again, thank you for your application and participation in the Q Comp program. MDE looks forward to working with Rockford Area School District over the next school year. If there are any questions, please contact Kristie Anderson at (651)582-8860 or kristie.anderson@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,



Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Commissioner

cc: Jessie Montano
Steve Dibb
Kristie Anderson
Ave Beaupre
Traci Moore