

**The Student  
Performance  
Improvement Program:  
A Collaborative Approach  
to Professional  
Development and  
Alternative Compensation**

**A Joint Project of St. Francis Independent  
School District #15 and Education Minnesota  
St. Francis**

**St. Francis, Minnesota**

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## Contact Information

**If you have questions regarding any of the information in this booklet or other questions related to the St. Francis Program, please contact:**

Randy Keillor  
E-mail: [rdeank@aol.com](mailto:rdeank@aol.com)  
Phone: 763 689-5303  
Cell: 763 267-4537

# Student Performance Improvement Program Description

*The St. Francis Student Performance Improvement Program is an outgrowth of collaborative staff development practices that began in 1995 between the school district and the union. The result of this collaborative effort is a 'Teacher Academy' which offers professional development classes to staff. The majority of these classes come out of the American Federation of Teachers' (AFT) Education Research and Dissemination (ER&D) program. It is the dramatic student achievement results from students in classes where teachers have been active in the Teacher Academy that led to the development of the St. Francis Student Performance Improvement Program. The Program was designed by a Joint Standing Committee originally made up of eight voting members, with four appointed by the school district and four appointed by the union. Later, the committee was expanded to include additional teacher and district representatives. The School Board was invited to provide committee slots to community members; however, that was not acted upon.*

*The Student Performance Improvement Program model rewards effective classroom performance and contribution to improving student performance throughout the district. Salary enhancement hinges primarily on demonstration of teaching competence. Once a base of competence is demonstrated, teachers have opportunities to accept increased responsibilities for leader roles. An advanced degree (Master's) provides a much lesser salary increase. However, such an advanced degree acts as a requirement for participation in leadership roles within the district.*

*The annual Performance Review Process is an integral part of the Student Performance Improvement Program. A teacher's Performance Review Team must determine that a teacher's Student Performance Improvement Process (SPIP) models 'effective' use as observed by others in the teaching environment for enhanced salary increases. Teachers who are struggling may request additional support through a Teacher Intervention System which guarantees that no permanent record of the intervention will be made.*

*Annual site awards will be given to sites that have reached their goal to be used as one-time revenue to improve the educational program at the site.*

## **EIP Components in the Student Performance Improvement Program:**

1. Assessment/evaluation tools to measure student performance
  - a. Part of each teacher's Student Performance Improvement Program (SPIP) must show evidence of improved student performance in area(s) related to their individual goal to attain a rating necessary for enhanced salary increases.
2. Performance goals and benchmarks for improvement (district, site & teacher)
  - a. Each site formulates annual site student achievement goals which are measurable, have baseline data which support value-added assessment and an action plan to support the goal. Sites that reach their goals receive annual site awards, to be used as one-time revenue to improve the educational program at the site.
3. Measures of student, family and community involvement & satisfaction
  - a. Annual site student achievement goals may specify parental and student involvement.
4. Data system about students and their academic improvement
5. Teacher induction and mentoring

- a. Mentoring is an integral part of the Student Performance Improvement Program model, with all teachers new to the district participating in the mentor program and all teachers in the district provided an opportunity of participating in mentor training.
- b. 'Peer Leader' is one of the leadership tracks available to teachers, with responsibilities that include leading Performance Review Teams and site team leadership.

**Professional Pay System Components in the *Professional Compensation Program*:**

1. Career advancement & additional compensation
  - a. Additional professional development, successful teacher performance review and additional responsibilities are necessary for career advancement and additional compensation. There are 4 Teacher levels: Emerging Professional Teacher with 2 stages, Professional Teacher with 2 stages, Career Teacher with 3 stages and Career Ladder in Teacher Leadership with 3 stages. There are two education lanes consisting of Bachelor's degree and Master's degree.
2. Career options that facilitate site-focused professional development
  - a. Career advancement after approximately the first six years in the district is within the level of Career Ladder in Teacher Leadership. The career options are Peer Leader, Curriculum Specialist or Instructional Specialist. Each category has extended days during the school year and may have release time, as required.
  - b. Two additional leadership categories receive one-time or annual stipends. These are for Study Group Facilitators and Site Peer Leader Chairs.
3. Compensation increase with at least 60% based on teacher performance
  - a. Teachers must receive an 'established' rating on their annual performance review to be eligible for continuous compensation increases. Each teacher's performance review must be aligned with formal observations linked to teacher performance and teacher demonstration of impact on student growth.
4. Site-based professional development aligned with student needs led by teacher leaders during the school day
  - a. Each site has professional development organized around teams of teachers and led by Peer Leaders on a weekly basis with target goals based on student data.
5. Open to all teachers
  - a. All teachers are included in the program.
6. Collaboration among teachers is encouraged
  - a. Teacher evaluation is built upon a structure of trained teams of teachers with administrators who participate in individualized teacher annual goal setting as well as annual review.
  - b. Site professional development is organized around teams of teachers.
  - c. Site goals must provide involvement of all staff.

## **Timeline, 1995 - 2005: St. Francis & Minnesota**

- 1995 - Minnesota begins 2% set aside for professional development
- 1997 - St. Francis negotiates teacher teams, leaders, 20 hours of individual professional time
- 2000 - Chief negotiator, union vice president attend ER&D training, write what becomes Teacher Academy policy
- 2001 - District starts Teacher Academy, Gov. Ventura provides \$\$ for five model alternative compensation programs
- 2002 - Tim Pawlenty elected governor
- 2003 - Minnesota provides no increase in education funding for two year period, state senate (controlled by Democrats) propose an increase all tied to performance-based pay

## **Timeline, 1995 - 2005: St. Francis & Minnesota**

- 2004 - St. Francis union executive council endorses a plan to pursue performance-based pay as "most likely means to significantly increase teacher pay," 54% of teacher leaders endorse the concept
- 2005 - (March) 70% of St. Francis teachers endorse plan for negotiations
- 2005 - (July) State legislature approves Q Comp, Governor signs law
- 2005 - (September) 85% of St. Francis teachers vote "yes" for performance-base pay plan
- 2005 - (October) St. Francis Plan accepted by State, goes into effect

# Minnesota's Quality Compensation (Q Comp) Law

- Passes legislature in July 2005, goes into effect August, 2005
- Voluntary program - districts, schools, and chart schools apply to get in
- Provides \$260 per pupil for designated purposes (about 7% increase in money available for teacher salaries)
- Five components -
  - Career ladder for teachers
  - Job embedded staff development
  - Teacher evaluation system
    - Multiple observations
    - Application of measures of student performance
  - Performance pay (standardized test bonus)
  - Reformed steps & lanes

# Four-Member Performance Review Team

Assigned to each professional covered by the teacher contract

## Membership

1. Teacher
2. Peer Leader
3. Specialist (peer)
4. Administrator  
(Assigned by program coordinator)

### Fall Meeting

Reviews Annual Goal & Plan

Sets observation schedule

Sets Up Planning for  
"Evidence of Student Growth"

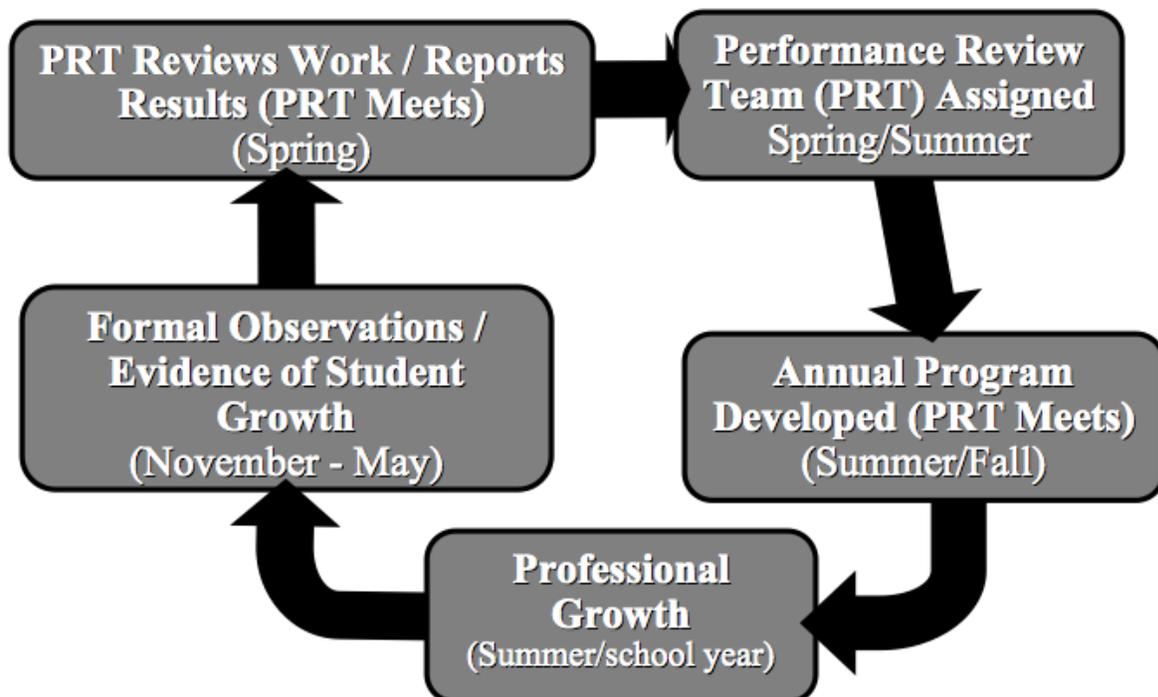
### Spring Meeting

Determines Plan Completion

Provides Annual Rating

Approves Teacher's Plan  
for the following year

## Annual Review Process for Individual Teachers



# Alternative Salary Schedule Explanation

In 2005, the district negotiated an entirely new salary schedule, based on prior work it had done. The alternative salary schedule hinges all advancement on teachers' demonstrating their efficacy in their work with students. There are no "automatic" increases, other than future negotiated cost of living adjustments. Each teacher has the burden to prove to his/her assigned Performance Review Team that he/she has completed professional development in a growth area, has implemented that learning in his/her teaching environment, and students have been impacted by this learning.

The critical issue was how to transition from the traditional pay system to the new one. In discussions with the Deputy Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education in December of 2004 (prior to final passage of Q Comp), the district posed the question, "Would we be able to have time to complete a transition to an alternative salary schedule?" We were informed that transition time would be available. In the final version of the subsequent law, the state permitted a four-year contract, an exception to the state's Public Employee Labor Relations Act, which mandates two-year teacher contracts. The district took advantage of this provision and negotiated a four-year Memorandum of Understanding, which governs the transition process.

The critical components of that transition are –

1. All new staff, hired beginning with the fall of 2005, are automatically placed in the new system. Other staff can transition, based on a negotiated process, understanding that the transition is one-way.
2. By the end of the four years, all staff will have been provided the opportunity to transition.

Underlying the entire salary schedule transition is the recognition that the teaching staff is largely made of "baby-boom" generation teachers. This, of course, represents challenges – an unusually large percentage of teachers at the high point of career earnings, a rapid turnover in staff as these teachers retire, and the loss of a significant number of highly trained and experienced teachers and teacher-leaders in very short order. But those very challenges also represent opportunities. If the district –

- Couples the Q Comp money with savings from teacher retirements over a number of years, it can make the financial commitment to move to the new schedule. By improving our starting salary by approximately 20% as part of the new schedule, the district becomes more competitive in recruiting new staff.
- Incentivizes teachers to make a retirement decision early in the year, it has an advantage in making staffing and hiring decisions. By limiting access to the retirement incentive to a negotiated number of teachers, the district not only limits its financial obligation. It also will tend to spread the retirements out over a number of years rather than allowing them to hit in just one or two years.
- Provides highly trained and experienced teachers a new career ladder. To the extent that senior teachers take on these roles, they also significantly increase their pension benefits.

# 2009-2011 Comparative Salary Schedules

## Student Performance Improvement Program Salary Schedule

Teacher Level	Bachelor's	Bachelor's Mentor	Master's	Master's Mentor	Number of Annual Reviews Required for the cell
1	\$39,120		\$40,750		None
2	\$45,641		\$47,814		3
3	\$52,160	+\$1,087	\$55,420	+\$1,087	6
Career 1			\$59,767	+\$1,087	10 (7 at Established Level)
Career 2			\$64,114	+\$1,087	13 (10 at Established Level)
Career 3			\$71,542	+\$1,087	16 (13 at Established Level)
Career Ladder 1				\$60,854	7 (4 at Established Level)
Career Ladder 2				\$65,201	7 (4 at Established Level)
Career Ladder 3				\$72,629	7 (4 at Established Level)

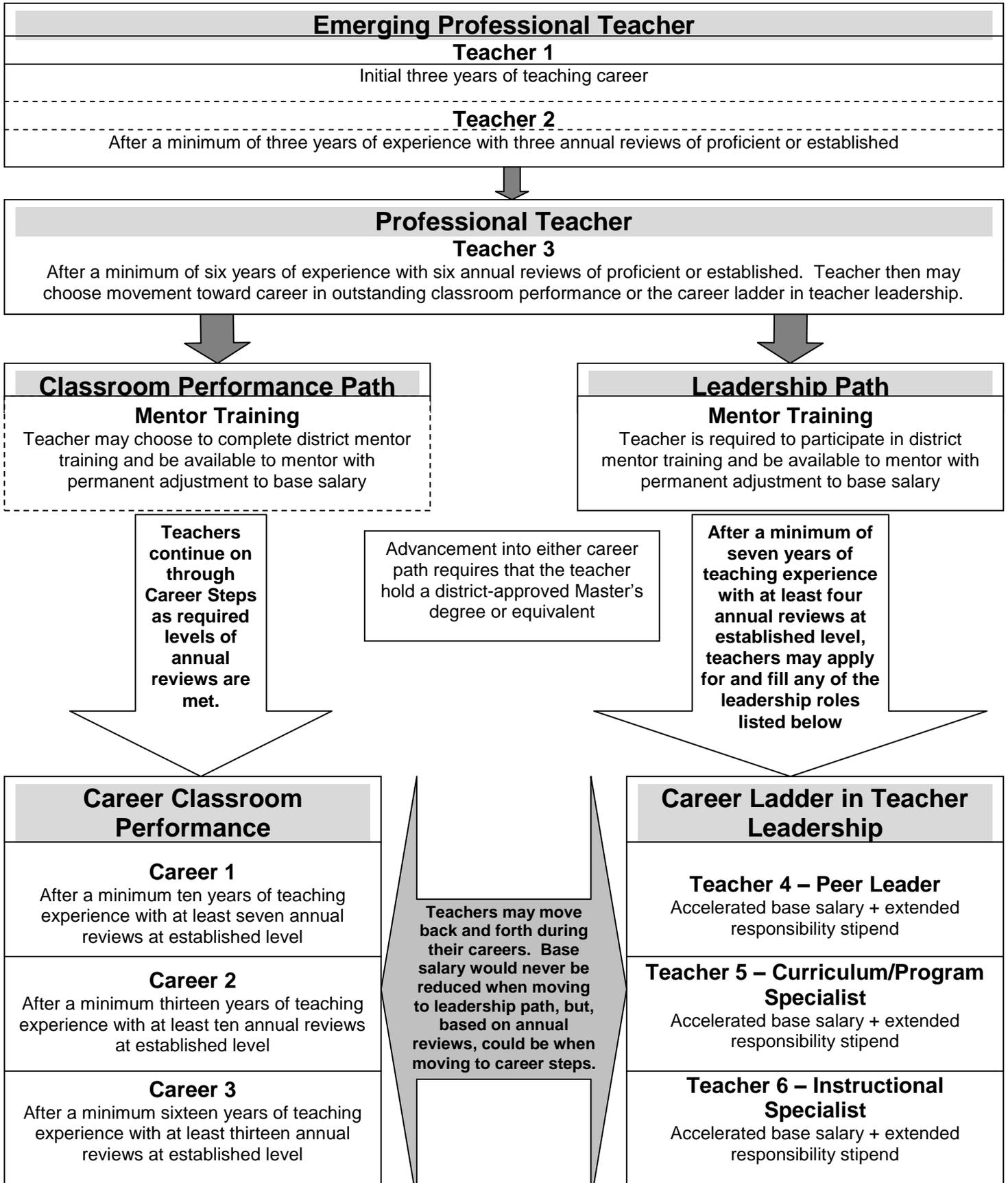
<b>Extended Responsibility Stipend</b>	<b>Peer Leader \$4,162</b>	<b>Curriculum/Program Specialist \$8,323</b>	<b>Instructional Specialist \$10,404</b>
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Career Teacher Incentive \$1,700 in 2009-2010 / \$2,420 in 2010-2011

## Traditional Schedule

2009-2011	BA	BA15	BA30	BA45	BA60 /MA*	MA15	MA30	MA45	MA60
Step 1	32832	33850	34882	36283	37543	38769	40063	41574	43016
Step 2	33473	34511	35445	36759	38254	39494	40808	42338	43798
Step 3	34158	35197	36390	37706	39388	40924	41992	43921	45383
Step 4	34689	35817	37141	38729	40390	41910	43356	44873	46679
Step 5	35297	36602	38058	39632	41281	42786	44504	46222	47800
Step 6	35834	37115	38543	40093	41851	43331	45161	46990	48692
Step 7	36818	38085	39639	41174	43404	45476	46893	48705	50516
Step 8	38130	39663	41510	43323	45555	47228	48971	50854	52807
Step 9	39170	40968	43005	45009	47360	49016	50676	52610	54546
Step 10	40356	42555	44788	46852	49327	50977	52559	54691	56753
Step 11	41122	43539	45653	48000	50214	52054	53919	55507	57931
Step 12	43105	45509	47412	49985	52200	54047	55917	57854	59925
<b>Career Increments</b>									
Step 15	2825	2825	2825	2825	2825	2825	2825	2825	2825
Step 18	2282	2282	2282	2282	2282	2282	2282	2282	2282
Step 21	2364	2364	2364	2364	2364	2364	2364	2364	2364
Step 26	2407	2407	2407	2407	2407	2407	2407	2407	2407

# Teacher Career Paths



# St. Francis Student Achievement, Compared to the State Average...

Increased by an average of

**–12.81 point average gain in  
mathematics**

**–10.15 point average gain in  
reading**

(Comparing the base years 1998-2000 to full implementation years 2002-2005)

## St. Francis Graduates Increasing College Access

Grad Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Total Respondents	218	201	241	278	280	207	237	1662
Graduates	264	249	290	360	391	269	355	2178
Technical/Career College	19.3%	15.9%	14.9%	14.4%	11.4%	11.6%	14.3%	14.4%
Community College	11.0%	10.4%	24.1%	19.1%	23.9%	21.3%	28.3%	20.1%
4 year College/University	29.4%	35.3%	30.7%	31.7%	34.6%	38.2%	33.8%	33.3%
Total Continuing Education	59.6%	61.7%	69.7%	65.1%	70.0%	71.0%	76.4%	67.8%

Baseline (2000) - 59.6% of graduates go on to college.

Average of full implementation years (2002-2006) - 70.4%  
of graduates go on to college.

# Student Performance Improvement Program, 2007-2008

## Highlights of the Final Evaluation Report

Center for Applied Research & Educational Improvement  
University of Minnesota

### NEWLY HIRED TEACHERS

When asked to rank-order reasons they accepted a teaching position in St. Francis, just over one-third of respondents selected teacher support in the district as the most important factor in choosing St. Francis. Thirty-two percent named the improved salary schedule as most important and 24% chose earlier hiring as the most important factor. The remaining respondents provided reasons such as location or school atmosphere as the most important reasons for signing on with St. Francis.

The most common responses from teachers, in reference to what was done well, was they appreciated the quick turnaround time, liked the fact that they received the interview questions ahead of time put them at ease, and the staff was very welcoming. Teachers also commented on how well organized the interviews were and that they liked the fact that several staff members were involved in the interviews.

### RECRUITING AND RETAINING

The second survey, the *2007 Recruiting and Retaining Survey*, was administered to teachers and administrators at a district-wide training in August 2007. The purpose of the survey was to assess how well the district was doing regarding their hiring process. Respondents were asked to think about their involvement in the hiring process over the last two years when answering the following five questions.

1. *From my experience in hiring over the past two years, I believe that the quantity of candidates has increased.*  
**On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Strongly disagree and 5= Strongly agree, nearly 70% of respondents responded with a 4 or 5.**
2. *From my experience in hiring over the past two years, I believe that the quantity of candidates has increased.*  
**On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1= Strongly disagree and 5= Strongly agree, nearly 70% of respondents responded with a 4 or 5.**
3. *From my experience in hiring over the past two years, I believe that the quantity of candidates increased.*  
**Approximately 70% of respondents responded with a 4 or 5.**
4. *From my experience this year, I believe that newer staff members were more interested in staying in ISD #15 than in the past.*  
**88% of respondents responded with a 4 or 5.**

### STUDENT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM SURVEY

The SPIP Survey was administered to all school district staff just after school began in September 2007. Its purpose was to collect perceptions of SPIP from all staff and school board members and note common themes among those perceptions. The survey is similar to others that have been administered to staff in the preceding three years.

#### General findings

- Respondents were fairly equally divided across four age/experience groups.
- **88.9 percent** of respondents reported a high level of agreement with the statement, *"I support the district's Student Performance Improvement Program."*
- **79 percent** believed that teacher compensation should – at least in part – be connected to observable gains in academic achievement.

- **82.0 percent** of the respondents believed that SPIP would result in “*greater academic gains for students.*”

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

*“When you give time to teachers to learn and work together and reflect they can do truly remarkable things for students.”*

*- School administrator*

The Student Performance Improvement Program, now in the third year of implementation, is having substantial and positive effects on the district’s approach to professional development, the culture of the district, and the evaluative role staff and teachers play in Saint Francis. The program is benefiting from support at all levels including the School Board, superintendent, teachers’ union, school administrators, and teachers, according to the majority of interview and survey respondents. The majority of staff members said that this support means that SPIP is and will remain the professional development model for the district.

The most significant change since the implementation of SPIP is explicitly linking professional development to positive, observable changes in the classroom and other work settings. In doing so, all professional staff members are challenged to set goals for themselves that are grounded in research on best practices. Teachers must demonstrate proficiency in attaining these goals through observations by peers and administrators during the four classroom visits. This intentional link between professional development and professional behavior is providing the catalyst for permanent and positive change, according to most stakeholders interviewed.

*“I think we will be doing this work regardless of the money. I think we are well on our way to transforming the culture of both teaching and learning in the district.”*

*- School administrator*

SPIP has redefined the professional development model, which has resulted in several positive outcomes, according to the individual interviews and survey responses.

- Teachers (and all staff) who participated in SPIP said they were more likely to reflect on their roles as teachers and facilitators of learning;
- Teachers are creating professional objectives that can be observed and assessed by administrators and peers;
- Teachers stated that they have increased their understanding of the roles of others in the district as a result of combined Teacher Academy classes and meetings; and,
- While the process is clear, staff says the process is not overly rigid or prescriptive according to SPIP participants.

SPIP has also played a role in changing the professional culture of the district.

- SPIP participants stated that the program has resulted in a common language for district staff as well as increased opportunities for collaboration;
- Teachers said that they are more likely to take risks in their work because they view observations as a support structure rather than a punitive act;
- Observations have been rewarding and helpful whether one was observing or being observed; and
- The strong professional development program and perceived financial benefits are an important factor in attracting and retaining high quality staff.

SPIP has strengthened the evaluation process by expanding the evaluation duties of staff, according to most district staff.

- Observations (and the pre- and post-observation meetings that accompany them) provide multiple opportunities for teachers to develop new skills, work on challenges, and adjust behaviors in a timely manner;
- Extending the duties of evaluation is increasing the leadership capacities of young teachers who will be “catalysts for continued momentum and change”; and,
- By focusing on improved instructional practice, SPIP expects that student performance will follow. Student performance on standardized tests in both reading and math has improved every year for the last five years for nearly all grades.