
Saint Paul Public Schools

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence

Evaluation Report
2005

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Acknowledgments

This evaluation and the preparation of this report were authorized by the Saint Paul Public Schools. This report was written by Dr. Carol Freeman, Research Associate at the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota. CAREI is a collaborative organization that brings the resources of the College of Education and Human Development and the University of Minnesota to bear on educational issues in Minnesota and across the nation.

In preparation of this report, Dr. Freeman worked closely with the Office of Instructional Services staff, Saint Paul Public Schools, to design the evaluation and to gather extensive material about *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence*, Saint Paul's comprehensive reform model.

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Background of the Project

Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey and the Board of Education have set the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) on a course to provide a “world-class” education for all students. As the district’s senior instructional leader, the Superintendent leads an ongoing effort to define what students will need to know and be able to do in order to become productive, ethical adult citizens. Guided by this understanding, the Superintendent works with educators throughout the district to identify the research-based educational practices that will help all Saint Paul students achieve these high standards.

Patricia A. Harvey arrived in Saint Paul in 1999 after successes in Chicago, where she was Chief Accountability Officer of the public school system, and Washington, DC, where she worked for the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) as a senior fellow and director of the center’s proprietary instructional model, America’s Choice. Through her previous work, Harvey had the opportunity to spend time in school districts all across the country to see what was working and what the challenges were. In designing the America’s Choice model, Harvey and the NCEE sought out whatever expertise they needed in order to identify the best educational practices. Drawing on this background, Superintendent Harvey brought to Saint Paul a vision of the essential elements that schools need for all students to meet high standards.

Since her arrival, Superintendent Harvey has begun each year in Saint Paul with a theme that captures the central challenge of the year ahead. Taken together, that collection of themes paints a good picture of the “the journey” that has been taken in the Saint Paul Public Schools as the district works to prepare every student to succeed in the Information Age.

The theme for 1999-2000, “Raising Expectations,” showed community determination that all children can and must achieve at higher levels. The district took steps to establish an accountability framework, for staff and students, for school reform efforts and to convert to site-based management. The district held community conversations around the elimination of social promotion, helped schools develop Schoolwide Continuous Improvement Plans, and launched Saint Paul Reads—which has resulted in students reading more than six million books since it began. The Achievement Plus initiative—an existing partnership of the SPPS, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, the City of Saint Paul, and Ramsey County—moved to the next phase. Maria J. Lamb joined the district as the executive director of this initiative.

In 2000-2001, the annual theme was “Leadership for Change.” The two Achievement Plus schools adopted the standards-based instructional model, America’s Choice, and a third site, John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School, adopted the same model when it opened in fall 2000.

Additionally, John A. Johnson was designated as a demonstration school to provide a model for replication in the district. The district laid the groundwork for reinventing high schools through the Blueprint for Better High Schools. The district empowered school and program sites by creating and strengthening site councils, instituting lump sum budgeting, and giving sites a stronger voice in the hiring process. In 2000-2001, the district began investing in a new generation of school principals through the Leadership Institute and began exploring an expanded concept of instructional leadership by introducing district senior management to the work of the Institute for Learning (IFL), a think tank and design center providing resources and training for educators in the best of current knowledge and research about learning and instructional leadership.

During 2001-2002, the theme, “Focus on Student Work” concentrated the district on what students do inside the classroom and how to align the entire district to support student learning at all levels. To support the goal expressed in this theme, the district developed the 2002-2005 Action Plan consisting of seven Essential Effort areas supporting standards-based site reform. *Saint Paul’s Project for Academic Excellence* (PAE), a comprehensive reform model evolving out of several ongoing district initiatives, was launched with funds from the Robins, Kaplan, Miller, and Ciresi Foundation and a State of Minnesota Goals 2000 grant. A districtwide focus began on three teaching approaches—Balanced Literacy, Integrated Math, and Inquiry-Based Science—that have been identified as the most promising for raising student achievement. The first Writing Institute, in summer 2001, provided professional development for teachers implementing Writer’s Workshop in the three Achievement Plus schools and in four additional schools. The Writing Institute expanded from these seven schools to an additional eleven district schools during 2001-2002. Simultaneously, principals and teacher leaders of these eighteen schools began PAE instructional leadership work, in partnership with IFL. The seven high schools began planning at the site level for the development of small learning communities.

The 2002-2003 year theme, “Challenging Every Child,” focused the district on academic rigor. Throughout the district, leaders began to challenge old assumptions about student aptitude. The new assumptions about student learning are based on the belief that effort can create ability and improve individual student achievement, and that all students can achieve at high standards. To further this work, the Center for Academic Excellence (Center) opened in the summer of 2002 under the Office of Instructional Service with Maria J. Lamb as Chief Education Officer. The Center represented a merger of six programs and departments—Curriculum, Staff Development, Gifted and Talented, Excel, Title I, and Career in Education—into one comprehensive training and support center. District professional development personnel, including administrators and content coaches, were now housed under one roof. The Center’s mission was to provide principals, teachers, and other district personnel with in-depth,

sustained, professional development and to act as the district's clearinghouse for programs and services closely tied to the daily work of students, such as instructional materials and curriculum guides. The Center expanded *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* during 2002-2003 to work with twenty-two (twenty elementary and two junior high) schools. All Project schools participated in the instructional leadership and Writing Institute professional development.

To support the 2003-2004 theme, "Knowing with Precision," the district focused on ensuring that classroom teachers, school and program administrators, central office staff, and equally important, parents and students themselves have a clear idea of the knowledge and skills that students have mastered and what they have yet to learn. The *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* expanded further to fifty-one schools, including all junior high schools, helping schools develop curriculum, instruction, and ongoing assessment in support of "Knowing with Precision." Schools continued their work with the Institute for Learning—adopting Learning Walks to focus curriculum and instruction.

The 2004-2005 concentration on "Working Together: Growth, Partnerships and Momentum" focused the district on working with partners to maintain the momentum of continuous improvement for every student in the Saint Paul Public Schools. In response to a tightening budget, the district worked with partners to enhance resources, particularly from the Minnesota legislature, and relaunched the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation. The Project expanded to all elementary schools, and the district firmed up the work of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* by expanding the capacity of the Writing Institutes, launching comprehensive Reading Institutes, and implementing a K-6 literacy standards framework. The district expanded the math reform initiative and embarked on a comprehensive science reform initiative for K-12 students. Middle and junior high school staff participated in professional development in core content areas using the Disciplinary Literacy Framework.

The theme for the final year, 2005-2006, of the action plan and of Patricia A. Harvey's tenure in Saint Paul will be "Doing What Works." Student achievement gains over the past six years prove that what Saint Paul has been doing is working. Harvey feels these results will change perceptions about urban education—"you can get the finest education in an urban setting." The focus will be on telling the story about what works and making sure every classroom across the district is as highly skilled as possible—leaving no classroom behind. The work of training K-8 teachers in instructional practices will move to scale, and the focus of the work with high schools will transition from structural changes to training in instructional practices. District strengths and challenges will be identified in a transition document to be left on the desk of the next superintendent.

Overview of the Comprehensive Reform Model

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence (PAE) reflects the Saint Paul Public School's deep commitment to standards-based education and systemic professional development opportunities at all levels of the organization as vehicles for improving achievement for all students. In doing so, the Project unifies some of the most significant work that district administrators, principals, and teachers have undertaken in the last few years and utilizes on-going reform initiatives such as the district's Leadership Institutes, Elementary and Secondary Literacy Initiatives, Achievement Plus, Interagency Education Research Initiatives, and collaboration with the Institute for Learning (IFL).

The district believes that the organizational context in which educators work deeply affects what happens in classrooms. Schools cannot go far without a unified direction at the district level because conflicting agendas consistently pull them back to conventional practices. Likewise, teachers and professional developers cannot go very far with an instructional idea unless the whole school is on a compatible course. The Project addressed the need for unified direction for reform from the district to the classroom level. Additionally, a unified approach to literacy was established in order to minimize the transition-associated disruptions for the many students who move within the district during the course of their academic careers.

Comprehensive Reform Model Components

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence is a comprehensive reform model that is being implemented in phases throughout Saint Paul Public Schools. The scope of the Project is necessarily ambitious since substantial gains in student achievement require acceleration that will capture all the various elements associated with schooling. The model is designed to meet two overriding goals: (1) wholly transform the way the core skills of reading, writing, mathematics, and science are taught in Saint Paul Public Schools; and (2) effectively and efficiently provide in-depth, on-going training to teachers and administrators. The comprehensive reform model focuses on twelve nationally-researched, proven education reform practices described below and recognizes the importance of expert knowledge and technical assistance.

The design of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* comprehensive reform model grew out of the district's partnership with the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning (IFL).¹ The Project has

¹ Since its inception in 1995, the Institute for Learning has served as a liaison between its parent institution, the Learning Research and Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh, and working educators in school systems nationwide. IFL serves as a think tank, a design center for innovative professional development systems in the schools, and an educator of core groups of school professionals. Institute for Learning staff have extensive

partnered with the Institute for Learning throughout planning, design, and implementation of the reform model to gain expert assistance in the effort to create a standards-based educational system that educates all children to high levels of academic achievement. The work of the partnership is built around IFL's Nine Principles of Learning and the standards-based educational model of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). Technical assistance from IFL brings current knowledge and research about learning processes and principles of instruction to the district.

The model of technical assistance provided through the Institute for Learning addresses five design principles:

1. A commitment to an effort-based concept of intelligence and education;
2. A focus on classroom instruction throughout the district;
3. A culture emphasizing continuous learning and a two-way accountability—the core elements of nested learning communities—throughout the system;
4. Continuing professional development for all staff, based in schools and linked to the instructional program for students; and
5. Coherence in standards, curriculum, assessment, and professional development.

IFL provides research, guidance, and professional development needed to implement *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence*. IFL works with the district to create different learning structures, including professional development sessions and Learning Walks grounded in schools.

I. *Shared Instructional Leadership at the School*

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence is built on a foundation of shared leadership and responsibility. Teamwork and collaboration are at the heart of the model. A key aspect of PAE is a series of IFL-led Instructional Leadership Seminars with a designated group of principals, teacher leaders, and central office staff, including coaches, curriculum specialists, and area superintendents. These seminars focus on the development of instructional leadership for all these role groups, with a particular emphasis on principals. They focus on principals sharing leadership with teachers to turn their schools into high functioning learning environments.

Seminar participants study the Principles of Learning to support standards-based reading, writing, mathematics, and science instruction. Over the course of Leadership Development Seminars, participants

education and experience in the science of learning and instruction at the K-12 level and with school-wide reform. Under the leadership of its director, Lauren B. Resnick, IFL is uniquely qualified to provide resources and training for promoting standards-based reform.

read and analyze a set of core articles on effort-based education, standards-based reform, and the school learning community organizational design, reflecting on the implications of these ideas for their own practice. Participants learn to use a set of tools, including Learning Walks, to assist school teams in leading reform efforts at their own schools. Participants gain a common language and a common understanding of the Principles of Learning by studying features and indicators of principles such as Accountable Talk, Clear Expectations, and Academic Rigor. Through these seminars, principals and lead teachers learn how to share responsibility for instructional leadership within the school. Learning Walks provide the opportunity for staff at all levels to participate in assessment and planning.

In addition, each PAE school establishes study groups across grade levels, comprised of both teachers who have received the training and those who have not, to discuss professional books, instructional strategies, and implementation of a standards-based education, including ways to meet the needs of special populations, such as English Language Learners (ELL), Special Education, and Gifted and Talented. The study groups provide all staff a forum for input and feedback into the instructional design of the school.

Site-based leadership through Site Councils, which include teachers, parents, and families, is another way that the district is ensuring shared leadership, broadening the scope of shared leadership and involving a wider range of participants at all levels. By empowering both the Site Councils and the entire school staff, schools create a system of leadership that can be sustained even if there is staff turnover at any level.

II. Principals as Instructional Leaders

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence model expects and supports strong principal instructional leadership. Through PAE, the school principal becomes an instructional leader who focuses on student achievement and the connection to standards, assessment, curriculum, and instruction. PAE principals are in classrooms each day, reviewing student work and discussing it with students. The principal oversees the school-wide literacy, mathematics, and science programs as they are implemented. The principal works directly with the school Leadership Team to keep the school focused on PAE implementation as everyone works to improve student achievement.

As instructional leaders, principals must know: content and how to use content resource specialists effectively; the district's standards and curriculum; the district's instructional program and materials; the content of the district's assessments; and the quality level of instructional practices. To support continuous improvement in their schools, principals have implemented strategies for on-going learning by

the staff, including on-going assessment of teaching and learning (via the Learning Walk), formal meeting time for conversations about instruction, internal sharing of expertise within a school, and on-going professional development.

III. District-level Instructional Leadership

The model of shared leadership based on IFL's Principles of Learning is enacted district-wide. All leadership groups in the district are made aware of instructional practices and the Principles of Learning so that schools will have a stronger level of support for comprehensive school reform. All district staff share a common language and common understanding about instructional practices and how they relate to leadership.

The superintendent and senior staff in Saint Paul Public Schools are committed to initial and continued engagement in instructional improvement in order to convey vividly to all district staff the importance of this endeavor. Profound reform can occur only if these top district officials provide leadership in instructional design and changes in operations consistent with that design. The senior staff must translate the district message to the schools, provide support for them, and hold them accountable. Senior staff members are key players in aligning the work with district goals and coming together to develop coherent messages for the schools.

Area superintendents are heavily involved in instructional leadership as leaders of the principals. They demonstrate to principals that instruction is important by being involved in the district's instructional effort and by incorporating this into the work they do with principals. They are involved in supporting the continued learning of principals and also in holding them accountable for taking that learning to their schools. This accountability piece is built into regular conversations with principals about instruction, some of which arise out of Learning Walks through their schools.

IV. Standards-Based Curriculum and Instruction as the Foundation

A central element of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* is its adoption of standards-based curriculum and instruction. When properly implemented, standards-based curriculum and instruction provide an authentic way of teaching students to demonstrate understanding of the skills and concepts they are learning, to apply what they are learning to real-life situations, and to embrace their own educational experiences as a fulfilling part of their development.

The curriculum and instruction strand of PAE is designed to help students achieve competence in the core subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, and science as measured by district, state, and national content

standards. To do so, teachers and staff are provided with the skills and knowledge needed to meet students' instructional needs.

National Center on Education and the Economy Standards: Lauren Resnick, at the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning (IFL), and Mark Tucker, at the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), jointly developed the New Standards (a set of internationally benchmarked performance standards in English language arts, mathematics, science, and applied learning). All aspects of PAE support the New Standards, which meet or exceed Minnesota Graduation Standards and the district's academic achievement standards. The New Standards describe what students need to know, suggest ways students can demonstrate knowledge and skills, and offer numerous samples of student work that meet standards.

Principles of Learning: IFL's nine Principles of Learning guide the work of PAE with IFL. The four Principles of Learning on which PAE has focused relate directly to standards-based curriculum and instruction. Exploration and application of these principles are the content of IFL Leadership Development Seminars, Learning Walks, and Cluster Meetings. The principles are defined by the Institute for Learning as follows:

Organizing for Effort: An effort-based school replaces the assumption that aptitude determines what and how much students learn with the assumption that sustained and directed effort can yield high achievement for all students. Everything is organized to send the message that effort is expected and that tough problems yield to sustained work. High minimum standards are set and assessments are geared to the standards. All students are taught a rigorous curriculum, matched to the standards, along with as much time and expert instruction as they need to meet or exceed expectations

Clear Expectations: High expectations are communicated clearly in ways that become embedded in the thinking of school professionals, parents, the community, and, above all, students themselves. Descriptive criteria and models of work that meet standards are publicly displayed, and students refer to these displays to analyze and discuss their work.

Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum: Knowledge and thinking are intimately joined. This implies a curriculum organized around major concepts that students are expected to thoroughly understand. Teaching engages students in active reasoning about these concepts. In every subject, at every grade level, instruction and learning must include commitment to a knowledge core, high-level thinking on demand, and active use of knowledge.

Accountable Talk: For classroom talk to promote learning, it must be accountable to the learning community, to accurate and appropriate knowledge, and to rigorous thinking. Accountable talk seriously responds to and further develops what others in the group have said. It puts forth and demands knowledge that is accurate and relevant to the issue under discussion. Accountable talk uses evidence that is appropriate to the discipline (e.g., proofs in mathematics, data investigation in science, textual details in literature, or documentary sources in history) and follows established norms of good reasoning.

Curriculum and Instruction: SPPS Office of Instructional Services supports district-wide consistency as schools align their curricula to support academic achievement. The curriculum incorporates a standards-based focus on the core academic areas of literacy, mathematics, and science and is mapped across all grades from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade and across all subject areas. In developing the curriculum, district staff uses the Minnesota standards and the New Standards as building blocks in every academic area at every grade level.

Literacy: The district document, Standards-Based Frameworks K-6 for Reading and Writing (Literacy Frameworks), provides clarity regarding State of Minnesota standards and National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) standards and how they complement each other. The document provides information on what teachers and students need to do to reach these standards, ways to assess the students' work, and available professional development and support within the district. The binder also provides supporting information, such as overviews of the Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop, a glossary, and a reading list.

The overriding goal of the Literacy Initiative is to increase student achievement by implementing proven practices in literacy; it focuses on a strong standards-based curriculum taught by well-trained teachers. Implementation of the Literacy Initiative occurs through a progressive series of Literacy Institutes, a variety of extended professional development activities, and substantial on-the-job coaching and material support. Literacy Institutes, comprised of Reading Institutes and Writing Institutes, give teachers training and ongoing assistance by literacy coaches for implementing all the components of Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop to support classroom instruction and student achievement.

Mathematics: Math content coaches provide curriculum support, instructional support, resources support, and professional development to teachers and school sites. Coaches working with classroom teachers align the Minnesota State Math Standards and National Council of

Teachers of Mathematics Standards with the integrated math curriculums in Standards-Based Frameworks in Mathematics (Mathematics Frameworks), a district curriculum framework to support classroom instruction and student achievement.

The core curricula in elementary mathematics are *Everyday Mathematics* and *Connected Math*. *Everyday Mathematics* is a comprehensive, research-based, standards-based, pre-K to sixth-grade integrated mathematics curriculum developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project. *Connected Mathematics*, developed by Michigan State University, is a complete mathematics curriculum for grades six through eight that helps students develop understanding of important concepts, skills, procedures, and ways of thinking and reasoning in numbers, geometry, measurement, algebra, probability, and statistics.

Science: Science content coaches provide curriculum support, instructional support, resources support, and professional development to teachers and school sites. Coaches working with school staff align the Minnesota State Science Standards with national standards (American Association for the Advancement of Science and National Research Council), district standards, and district curriculums—leading to a district document to support classroom instruction and prepare for state testing in science.

The core curriculum in elementary science is the *Full Option Science System (FOSS)*, developed at the University of California-Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science. FOSS program materials provide meaningful science education for all students, incorporating time-honored methodologies such as hands-on inquiry and interdisciplinary projects with contemporary methodologies of multi-sensory observation and collaborative learning groups.

V. Standards-Based Assessment to Monitor Progress

In a standards-based classroom, expectations are clear to students because the standards and the rubrics for assessing students' progress toward standards are integral to instruction and creating assignments. The display of high quality student work—together with the standards and criteria the work meets—is a critical element of standards-based assessment, and students are encouraged to assess their own work as a method of helping them think critically and independently.

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence uses teachers' assessments to identify student needs and helps ensure that teaching and learning activities and strategies in every classroom are differentiated for individual students according to these assessed needs. PAE helps classroom teachers continually analyze student work to inform classroom instruction.

Teacher collaboration is also an important aspect of monitoring progress. Each school sets aside blocks of uninterrupted time daily to teach reading, writing, and mathematics and weekly for other core subject areas. The schools schedule teacher preparation times to help ensure that classroom teachers are able to collaborate with Special Education teachers, Title I staff, and other staff who work directly with students to analyze student work, exchange information, and plan for instruction.

PAE requires schools to use formative and summative assessments to plan for instruction and resource allocation. Formative, embedded assessments include running records and comprehension questions for reading, rubrics for writing and reading, and problems to solve for mathematics. Portfolios are used in language arts and mathematics to measure student progress and to make sure that students who need help receive it in a timely manner. Standards-based rubrics continually inform students, parents, and teachers of students' levels of achievement toward standards. The process of scoring standards-based work is coordinated with the district's assessment system and the Minnesota Graduation Standards Scoring Criteria. Summative assessments include annual tests such as the Stanford Achievement Test, version 10 (SAT10), Minnesota Basic Skills Test (BST), and Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA).

A school's leadership team participates in Learning Walks that use diagnostic tools to evaluate the implementation of the PAE model. Learning Walks help school staff members learn where the school is in relation to the program model and where instruction, curriculum, leadership, and professional development need to be by the end of the school year.

VI. Professional Development Based on District, State, and National Standards

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence provides a comprehensive, focused approach to teaching and learning that includes professional development for administrators, principals, and teachers. In PAE, professional development is focused on building staff capacity to implement school-wide reform and sustain the reform efforts.

Professional Development Model: PAE professional development components are consistent with national standards for effective professional development. PAE offers schools and teachers:

- Continuous, accessible support by a strong team of trainers and coaches who build the capacity of the school to permanently sustain positive gains in student achievement;
- Professional development focused on helping teachers learn how to implement standards-based curricula and instructional strategies in their classrooms, with a strong focus on literacy as well as a focus on mathematics and science; and

- Help in learning how the curriculum aligns with the district's standards, concepts that drive sets of lessons, and key instructional strategies.

PAE is based on a professional development model that incorporates three levels of training in each of the three core academic areas of literacy, mathematics, and science. Nationally recognized trainers provide this training during the Summer Institutes and throughout the year. In the first year of implementation, the PAE model calls for training a core group of administrators, lead teachers, and staff in the beginning level of the appropriate core academic areas (literacy, mathematics, or science). The goal is that by the end of year three, all staff will have been trained, and a core group from Level I will have completed Level III.

Provision of Tools and Protocols: PAE uses the following tools with its professional development offerings: Nested Learning Communities and Learning Walks.

Nested Learning Communities: In Nested Learning Communities, all members of the district are learners – students, teachers, and administrators. Schools become the place where learning is the work of both students and professional educators and where continuous learning in pursuit of educational improvement is the norm. Because children's learning depends heavily on how well adults learn how to teach them, every adult is responsible for his or her on-going professional growth. The district is responsible for providing learning opportunities for the adults.

The cohesion that holds the learning community together is the concept of two-way accountability between the different layers of learners. Thus, for example, a principal may not hold a teacher accountable for knowledge of a particular practice or content unless professional development about that given topic has been offered. The superintendent is held accountable for providing learning opportunities for the area superintendents, area superintendents for providing learning opportunities for principals, principals for providing learning opportunities for teachers, and teachers for students.

Learning Walks: A Learning Walk is an organized visit through a school's learning areas used as a tool to help schools become more effective in teaching and learning. Learning Walks are linked to professional development in the content areas. Participants move in and out of several classrooms looking at student work and classroom artifacts and talking with students and teachers. Between classroom visits, participants gather to discuss what they have learned in the classroom by making factual statements and generating questions about what they observed, which stimulates teachers to think more deeply about practice. At the end of the Learning Walk,

participants work with the principal to refine observations and questions, to look for patterns within the school, to provide feedback to the staff, and to plan future professional development.

VII. *Sustained On-the-Job Coaching*

Content-Focused Coaching (CFC) is a component of high-quality professional development that follows initial teacher exposure to content and instructional strategies and helps teachers apply and deepen content knowledge and pedagogical practice.

Coaches: Content-Focused Coaching requires individuals with broad content knowledge about the skills necessary for students to be able to meet high standards as well as instructional strategies and materials that effectively teach those skills. In addition, coaches have the interpersonal skills to work collaboratively with teachers toward successful student learning. The coaches in Saint Paul schools are former teachers who possess extensive knowledge about a range of issues central to lesson design and delivery in their content area, including theories of teaching and learning, standards, instructional practices, assessments, and curriculum resources.

Goals of Coaching: The goals of the coaching are: (1) apply and deepen teacher content knowledge and pedagogical practice, (2) initiate flexible dialogues about the core issues of lesson design in order to construct rigorous lessons with clear, standards-based learning goals, and (3) establish coach and teacher co-accountability for student learning. Coaching sessions enable teachers to independently design rigorous lessons with clear, standard-based learning goals relevant to the needs of their students. This requires teachers to understand the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind required by the standards; be able to recognize standard-meeting student work; gather authentic data about student knowledge, skills, and habits; focus lesson goals on student needs; and examine student work for evidence of learning and further instructional need.

Content-Focused Coaching not only improves the practice of the teachers with whom the coaches work, but it develops those teachers as resources and models for other teachers in the building. In order to capitalize on this potential for expanding the professional development capacity of a school staff, it is important to offer Content-Focused Coaching to those teachers who see themselves as learners and who are eager to advance their practice in this way. It is not meant to rehabilitate resistant, weak teachers who might view a relationship with a coach as a punishment or a stigma. Coaches work with teachers who are on the cusp of becoming professional developers in their school and who want to refine their knowledge and practice.

The Coaching Process: Content-Focused Coaching pairs trained coaches with individual classroom teachers in a regular cycle of planning (pre-conference), teaching the lesson, and reflection (post-conference). During the pre-conference, the coach respectfully encourages the teacher to describe their thinking about the lesson plans and then offers information to the teacher as the lesson plan is more fully developed. During the lesson, the coach may model for the teacher, co-teach with the teacher, or observe as the teacher enacts the lesson they planned together. During the post-conference, the coach and teacher analyze and reflect on the students' learning and use the information to design subsequent lessons. The content of the coach's collaboration with each teacher will be highly focused on the needs of the students in each classroom in relation to the content standards. Content-Focused Coaching neither evaluates teacher performance nor reports on teacher performance to the school principal. The coach and the teacher establish a collegial relationship in which they hold themselves co-accountable for the learning outcomes of the lessons on which they collaborate.

In addition to the individual work with teachers, the coach connects teachers with each other and with other professional learning opportunities. The coach's role is to support and extend a teacher's learning rather than be a sole source of this learning. It is also designed to facilitate the application of teacher learning to classroom practice.

The coach has a cooperative working relationship with the school principal, who has a common understanding of the coach's role, communicates to the staff about the coach's role, and establishes a joint problem-solving process. In addition, there must be a comprehensive professional development plan in place in the school to provide the teachers with on-going learning about content, instructional approaches, and other information they need to be able to benefit from a coaching relationship.

VIII. Demonstration Sites to Promote Replication

Demonstration sites and demonstration classes provide models for replication. Teachers come from other schools to learn new teaching strategies. They benefit from real-time opportunities to observe and work with teachers who model the strategies. Demonstration lessons are a key component of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* for teachers at all schools in the Project.

IX. A Multi-Level Network of Teachers for Peer Support

To support implementation of a professional development program, communities of learning are formed among practitioners to address concerns and to receive additional support and resources. *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* has built a multi-level structure to provide teachers easy access to support when implementing a new program.

Classroom Lead Teachers: Elementary schools have classroom lead teachers who take part in Project professional development and serve as a liaison between the Project and teachers. Classroom lead teachers from the participating schools come together periodically with the elementary literacy coaches to build their capacity to support teachers in their schools. Classroom lead teachers participate in training and networking that will enable them to model best practices in their classrooms and to coach colleagues. They may demonstrate lessons, watch teachers teach, give feedback, and meet with teachers by grade levels. Classroom lead teachers also work with district and school literacy coaches in their schools.

Study Groups: In the district and within schools, teachers come together in study groups to talk about various aspects of their work. For example, a Writer’s Workshop study group may meet regularly to share ideas about what is working and what is not working. Study groups might read and discuss professional books and articles, or they may have teachers with formal training share what they have learned with other members of the group. Study groups may be organized by grade level and across grade levels in order to coordinate horizontal and vertical curriculum scope, sequence, and pacing.

X. Focus on a Small Number of Core Academic Skills

In order for elementary schools to fully develop and implement standards-based curriculum and instruction, *Saint Paul’s Project for Academic Excellence* focuses a school on one or two core subject areas at a time. The district’s plan for elementary schools begins with a focus on literacy, adds a focus on mathematics, and later adds a focus on science—envisioning a three-phase implementation schedule.

XI. Provision of Essential Materials and Support

The *Saint Paul’s Project for Academic Excellence* provides significant support to schools for developing their classroom libraries and obtaining other necessary instructional materials. PAE provides support in the form of substitutes for teachers attending professional development events during the school year and stipends for teachers attending Summer Institutes.

XII. A Strategy for Going to Scale Across the District

Saint Paul’s Project for Academic Excellence has a district-wide implementation plan for rolling out the PAE comprehensive reform model. The strategy starts by going broadly across the district while going deeply into selected schools. When a concept is launched across the district as a whole, it begins at a surface level and is only an inch deep. For example, first steps toward improving literacy in the district were to launch Saint Paul Reads districtwide, focusing students on reading 25 books or more, and to use the district’s cadre of Reading Recovery teachers to train teachers in leveling books and doing reading

running records. These two concepts were important to the Balanced Literacy Framework launched in the third year. Also, by the third year, Saint Paul Public Schools began a districtwide focus on Integrated Math and Inquiry-Based Science. Each year, the district goes deeper and deeper with districtwide initiatives, offering professional development opportunities for all teachers—giving people as much as they can absorb and then adding to it.

In the first phase of implementation—simultaneous to the district-wide initiatives—the PAE comprehensive reform model calls for choosing a cohort of schools to go deeply into the reform. They become learning sites for the rest of the district. The administrators and teachers from these schools begin Level I training with nationally recognized professional development experts in the academic area of literacy. Each year, professional development continues in literacy, expanding Level I training to all teachers in the original schools while the first group of teachers goes deeper to Level II and Level III.

In the second phase of implementation, similar Levels I, II, and III training are rolled out for math, and then, in the third phase, Levels I, II, and III for science within these schools. Each year, additional schools begin implementation of the reform model until all kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) schools are part of the Project. Work with these schools deepens as the district builds capacity to meet all the training needs.

Simultaneous with the training in core academic areas, school principals and teacher leaders are involved in the PAE Instructional Leadership Seminars, and they become effective instructional leaders in moving the comprehensive reform model forward in their schools. District-level administrators assume their instructional leadership roles in support of schools. Saint Paul Public Schools' professionals work in partnership with national experts to build their capacity to assume the professional development responsibilities as coaches and trainers.

A key element of the Saint Paul Public Schools' theory of action since 1999 has been that in order to go to scale across the district and make the reform sustainable, the insiders “have to own it.” Earlier adopters, a group that “has to want to do it,” take the comprehensive reform deep and prove that it increases student achievement. At the same time, the remaining schools are introduced to the reform. They join the reform in waves as they see what the first teachers and schools have been able to accomplish. SPPS educators call the reform the “un-mandated mandate,” because when they see the results, they want to do the right thing for students, and they join the Project.

Instructional Leadership

The Saint Paul Public Schools has a deep belief in the power of shared decision-making in creating schools that promote achievement for all students. Shared leadership involves teachers, principals, central office administrators, and the public participating in groups such as site-based councils. “Across the district or across a building, we are going to have people who have very, very different skills, and together, we have the leadership we need to have,” comments Superintendent Harvey.

The district organized two strands of work to build strong shared leadership. One strand, directed by the Office of Leadership Development (OoLD), prepares individuals for significant positional leadership roles within the district. OoLD provides support for site-based management throughout the district as well as a catalog of professional development offerings in support of the district’s leadership model including: Core Leadership Curriculum, 360-Degree Feedback, Executive Coaching, Principal Mentoring, and two annual institutes: the Leadership Institute for Aspiring Principals and the Leadership Conference for Shared Decision Making. These offerings were designed to prepare principal candidates for Saint Paul schools and to provide ongoing professional development for strengthening, even revamping, skills of existing administrators. Through the Leadership Institute and ongoing professional development, principals and administrators develop a deeper understanding of the chosen reform strategies of the Saint Paul Public Schools. Through the Leadership Conference for Shared Decision Making, site-based leadership teams strengthen their skills in making decisions at the school site.

A second strand, *Saint Paul’s Project for Academic Excellence*, is turning teachers and principals into instructional leaders who are engaged in implementing the PAE comprehensive reform model in phases throughout the Saint Paul Public Schools. With the assistance of the Institute for Learning (IFL), PAE has built a foundation of shared leadership and responsibility, teamwork, and collaboration as the heart of the comprehensive reform model.

Since its founding in 1995, IFL has met with individuals from up to a dozen school districts across the country to reflect on the Principles of Learning and on how to develop and sustain effective school leaders. Superintendent Harvey was involved early with IFL in articulating a program for advancing instructional leadership in schools, and, as of fall 2001, Saint Paul Public Schools was one of nine urban school districts that were full working partners with IFL. Saint Paul leaders from all levels, including the Superintendent, Chief Education Officer, intermediaries (directors and area superintendents), principals, and teachers continue to be involved in IFL “think tanks” and professional development, both nationally and within the district.

National Instructional Leadership Seminars

Superintendent and Chief Education Officer (CEO) IFL National Seminars: Each year, Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey and Chief Education Officer Maria J. Lamb were connected to Superintendents' meetings for the nine IFL member districts. Through participation in IFL national activities, the district's top leaders focused on building capacity within the school district, having the Superintendency look at systems changes and national trends. For example, the participants engaged in benchmarking activities, using a core set of principles, found within high-performing districts, developed by the National Center for Education Accountability (NCEA). Saint Paul benchmarked district practices against the NCEA delineated practices and identified areas to strengthen. They also explored what principals needed to know and be able to do to use data effectively and what the district needed to do to get timely and appropriate data to the schools. These national seminars were a forum for exchanging ideas and experiences and giving feedback across districts. The superintendents' meetings identified common concerns across the member districts and guided the work of the national seminars for the other role groups.

Intermediaries' IFL National Seminars: Selected Saint Paul directors and area superintendents attended national IFL seminars for intermediaries to learn how the district can support schools. They engaged in the same benchmarking activities and review of high-performing schools as the superintendents but through a different lens. They saw how important benchmarks were to reaching the end goal and how important it was to consistently provide data to schools. They focused on district alignment, coherence, and accountability. Saint Paul intermediaries gained a heightened awareness of the importance of district offices sending consistent messages to the schools. Intermediaries realized that leaders must come together to talk about particular office responsibilities in relationship to the district's goals. They realized that once clear responsibilities for supporting schools were understood, they needed to hold people accountable.

IFL National Principals' Think Tank: The Principals' Think Tank, with funding to IFL from the Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, invited five Saint Paul principals to participate each of the past four years, joining principals from other IFL districts to assist in creating tools for developing principals as instructional leaders. The tool development has centered on the Learning Walk and on the Principles for Professional Learning Communities (PPLC), a set of features and indicators of the Principles of Learning applied to the professionals in the organization. One year, Saint Paul principals helped IFL develop case studies to capture the theories of action and strategies that principals used in working through "thorny problems." Another tool developed was a rubric containing the elements of effective leadership.

The Principals' Think Tank provided opportunity for principals to support district leadership, to create networks within the district, and to have support systems at a national level. Participating Saint Paul principals, for example, have formed their own small learning community, visiting each other's schools and reading and discussing articles together.

IFL Annual Retreat: Each year during a weekend in May, participants in national IFL seminars and think tank attended a retreat in teams from the nine IFL partner districts. Continuing the themes developed during the national seminars and think tank, participants met by professional role to exchange ideas across districts and as district teams to identify strengths and remaining work. For spring 2005, the Retreat had three strands—curriculum and instruction, professional development, and assessment—with which member districts shared their strategies, successes, and next steps, and the IFL shared their expertise and latest research.

District Instructional Leadership Initiative

During 2000-2001, the district brought Institute for Learning staff to Saint Paul to provide introductory seminars for a group of key central administrative leaders. These sessions focused on articulating a vision of effort-based education and provided an overview of IFL's Principles of Learning. The seminars were designed to provide functional knowledge of IFL's philosophy and tools and to help district-level administrators begin to understand their role as instructional leaders.

Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey understood that having district-level instructional leaders and principals who are instructional leaders was important to successful implementation of the PAE comprehensive reform model. She reflected,

Superintendents used to be managers, but it's important for me to have a strong understanding of curriculum and instruction. The same is true for the principalship. What we've done is change roles from being manager to being manager and instructional leader with the instructional leader hat first. All of us have to do that. We don't have to teach science to know the best practices in science or any other subject. But we should know good curriculum and instructional practices.

Since 2001-2002, the IFL partnered with the district to move all district administrators and principals toward the superintendent's vision of effective instructional leadership. The collaboration focused on district systems alignment and on providing professional development for school-level leaders including the principal. District-level administrators were strongly encouraged to participate in PAE professional development whenever possible to enhance their instructional leadership skills and to demonstrate commitment to the reform. The 2004-2005 goals of the IFL partnership with the district were to work collaboratively with the district's leadership team to:

- Build organizational capacity to implement the IFL's Design Principles and the Principles of Learning district-wide;
- Enhance systems alignment to more effectively monitor and support effective teaching and learning in district schools;
- Promote a district-wide focus on the Principles of Academic Rigor in a Thinking Curriculum, Clear Expectations, and Accountable Talk in support of implementing a standards-based reading and writing instructional program;
- Assess the implementation of the IFL/district initiative using the District Learning Profile and/or co-designed benchmarks for each cohort;
- Integrate the Learning Walks into regular practice for school and district staff; and,
- Create professional learning communities within and across school sites.

Principal and Shared Instructional Leadership at the School: Each year since 2001-2002, PAE organized a series of Instructional Leadership Seminars involving the principal and a teacher leader from each project school. The seminars were conducted by experienced and nationally recognized IFL consultants.² Area superintendents, curriculum specialists, and other key district administrators also attended. All district literacy, math, and science coaches participated each year, providing support to IFL staff where needed.

By 2004-2005, all Saint Paul Public Schools' elementary, middle, and junior high schools participated in the Project. Cohort I consisted of fourteen elementary schools that joined the Project the first year—now in their fourth year. Cohort II consisted of thirty-six elementary schools—eight joined in the first year, twenty-two in the second year, three in the third year, and three in the fourth year of the Project. Cohort III consisted of nine middle and junior high schools—seven were in their second year, one in their third year and one their fourth year of the Project.

Through PAE seminars, principals reflected on the district's vision of principals becoming strong instructional leaders. During seminars, participants read articles together, analyzed videos of teaching and leadership practices, examined student work, and planned for taking the work back to their schools. Principals learned that they were vital to successful implementation of the comprehensive reform model. Through instructional leadership, the principal facilitated the school's enactment of the district's

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instructional program. The role of the principal, as the instructional leader, included: learning about the Principles of Learning grounded in academic content, learning about curriculum areas sufficiently to have conversations with teachers, spending considerable time visiting classrooms and conferring with teachers, organizing and allocating resources to meet program needs, creating formal school structures to support ongoing teacher collaboration and learning, and assessing instruction and progress regularly.

Besides seminars, principals and teacher leaders met in small area cluster groups to engage in Learning Walks. Schools were introduced to Learning Walks during the seminars through simulations and videos and then practiced Learning Walks in schools with their cluster group. The cluster groups have often become ongoing collaborative learning communities. With experience, schools have become more and more proficient in using Learning Walks to assess progress and to plan for professional development and next steps.

Additionally, the schools' teacher leaders attended Literacy Institutes and, along with the district literacy coaches, served as a bridge between the Principles of Learning and the content of the Literacy Institutes. Principals also may have attended some of the Literacy Institutes or learned from the district literacy coaches or on-site literacy coaches what they needed to know about Writer's and Reader's Workshop in order to provide instructional leadership and support to move the implementation forward. In 2004-2005, the writing consultant conducted two half-day Writer's Workshop sessions designed to help principals identify characteristics of an effective Writer's Workshop classroom, suggesting strategies for principals to help teachers become more successful. A similar overview of Reader's Workshop will be available to principals in 2005-2006.

During 2004-2005, IFL worked closely with the district planning team and with planning teams established for each of the three cohorts. The cohort planning teams developed a range of learning opportunities including Instructional Leadership Seminars, Learning Walks, and Area Cluster Meetings. Additionally, the district and cohort planning teams engaged in regularly scheduled planning meetings designed to plan next steps, assess progress, and establish a set of mutually agreed upon actions and benchmarks/indicators of progress. IFL staff and planning team members (district administrators, district coaches, and principals) collaborated in conducting the components of the seminars and cluster meetings. Principals and others in each cohort took on significant roles and evolved as leaders among their colleagues—evidence of increased organizational capacity for sustaining the work.

Cohort I: During 2004-2005, Cohort I principal/teacher leader teams participated in a series of Area Cluster Meetings and Learning Walks designed to strengthen schools' professional learning

communities focused on the district's instructional improvement initiatives. The goals were to use the Learning Walk as a routine part of a principal's practice, to look at student assignments and the resulting student work, and to look at structures and practices principals can put in place to support quality work in classrooms. Common expectations for all school teams included: conduct monthly Learning Walks, provide/participate in professional development linked to goals, collect samples of student work, principals follow one student over the course of the year, teachers submit samples of student work to principals, and principals share feedback on actions.

Cohort I has participated in the Project the longest, and the planning team sought to move the work closer into the schools. They met in schools in smaller groups looking at the work that is actually occurring in classrooms and thinking about what it takes to support comprehensive reform. They focused on the structures and practices principals had in place and whether these structures and practices supported every classroom in the school. Cohort I schools were successful this year in deepening their implementation of PAE by becoming more proficient in using Learning Walks. They also built learning into regular staff meetings, built structures to facilitate study groups among teachers, and became more proficient in analyzing student assignments and the resulting student work to identify areas on which to focus instruction.

Cohort I planning team members felt that Cohort I schools had made "tremendous growth" and reached the stage of asking the right questions for moving the Project forward to scale. Cohort I schools were asking for the district to support them by: sharing models of school structures that were successful, expanding models for effective use of coaches in schools with differing needs, providing more clarity of expectations across role groups, using the administrative academy differently to support the work, and developing a plan and structures for going to scale in every classroom in the district—helping to move along reluctant and struggling teachers.

Cohort II: During 2004-2005, Cohort II school leadership teams participated in a series of Instructional Leadership Seminars, Learning Walks, and Area Cluster Meetings designed to develop professional learning communities focused on the district's instructional improvement initiatives. Because of the relatively large number of schools in Cohort II, they were divided into two groups for the all-day seminars and into even smaller groups for Cluster Meetings and Learning Walks.

The goals for Cohort II schools were to: participate in coaching and networking opportunities provided in seminars and cluster meetings, develop a school plan for Learning Walks to

determine progress in their schools, establish study group opportunities in their schools around the Principles of Learning, and develop a school plan to review with area superintendents for integrating the Principles of Learning with implementation of the Literacy Initiative.

The Instructional Leadership Seminars focused on implementing IFL's district design principles, particularly the effort-based concept of intelligence, and on understanding and applying three Principles of Learning—Clear Expectations, Academic Rigor, and Accountable Talk—to support the implementation of the district's Literacy Initiative. The full-day seminars provided opportunities for participants to read, analyze, and discuss current research about teaching and learning and to use the IFL tools—including videos, the Principles of Learning CD, and the Learning Walk. Built into each seminar were tasks for participants to do in their schools before the next seminar in order to facilitate application of new learnings. At each successive seminar, participants engaged in reflective conversations and received feedback from colleagues on the successes and challenges of practice.

Cohort II schools also met by the district's three areas to participate in Learning Walks in host schools. In addition, they met in even smaller collaborative groups to do Learning Walks in additional buildings. Literacy coaches, who had all experienced Learning Walks, often helped schools prepare for their first Learning Walk.

Because of the widely varied length of time in the Project—one to four years—outcomes varied. For example, some schools conducted weekly Learning Walks while others did only one or two during the year. Several schools started with a virtual Learning Walk using videotapes of teachers' classrooms. Some schools made extensive use of teacher study groups to further the PAE implementation. One, for example, moved staff meetings away from administrative purposes to a workshop format complete with mini-lesson, work time, and sharing. Teachers led, or co-led with their principals, staff meetings to introduce the Principles of Learning. Schools used the Project for Academic Excellence as their roadmap for building capacity and going to scale.

Principals observed—through classroom observation, conversations with students, and Learning Walks—the impact of Writer's Workshop on student achievement. They saw rising student performance in their schools and connected it to “talking the same language.” Schools saw the power of collaboration of ELL teachers with regular education teachers in implementing the literacy initiatives.

Several schools worked on integrating their comprehensive reform model or magnet theme (e.g., America's Choice, Successful for All, or Spanish Immersion) with the Project for Academic Excellence. They established forums or study groups to answer questions such as: Where do I get the Touchstone books in Spanish? How do the Principles of Learning and the Success for All components align? How will the Success for All facilitator and PAE literacy coach work collaboratively? How does America's Choice connect with the Project for Academic Excellence so that teachers do not feel like this is the flavor of the month?

Schools reached a deeper understanding of the purpose of the Learning Walk—to help the school identify implementation progress and future plans. At one elementary school, for example, one question asked by the walkers was, “Where are the rubrics?” As a result, that school focused some of their professional development and implementation on student-developed rubrics, taking teachers beyond the criteria charts they had been using to move student work toward meeting the standards.

The type of continuing support that Cohort II schools have requested from the district for the coming year varied by their length of time in the Project and by the progress they have made. Their needs included: district capacity for training all of their teachers in Writer’s Workshop and Reader’s Workshop, examples of successful formats and topics for study groups, deeper instruction in the protocols and uses of Learning Walks, continued support from district literacy coaches, support for motivating teachers to engage in the Project, modules related to the Principles of Learning to use with staff, more help in building teachers’ capacity to examine student work, and multiple opportunities to meet with colleagues and partner with other schools.

Cohort III: School leadership teams from the nine middle and junior high schools participated in a series of Instructional Leadership Seminars, Area Cluster Meetings, and Learning Walks designed to focus on implementing the IFL’s district design principles, particularly effort-based education. They concentrated on understanding and applying the Principles of Learning, specifically Academic Rigor in the core content areas of English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. The sessions supported the district’s instructional efforts, with an emphasis on organizing and supporting the implementation of Disciplinary Literacy. Participants deepened their understanding of the Learning Walk as a tool for observing teaching and learning and for planning for professional development.

Most Cohort III schools were at beginning levels in their understanding and use of Learning Walks and of studying classroom artifacts, including student work, to measure academic rigor. All Cohort III schools were in their first year of work with Disciplinary Literacy, each having some teachers who completed Level I training. Teachers in four of the schools experienced sustained on-the-job coaching in Disciplinary Literacy following their training, having four district core content coaches work with a team of four core content teachers to develop model classrooms in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in each school.

By the end of the 2004-2005 school year, Cohort III principals and lead teachers reached a greater common understanding of a direction for middle and junior high schools in Saint Paul on which the district and schools should focus their resources. By the end of the year, the secondary content coaches felt confident about their process of working with teachers to build model classrooms in the schools. Principals and teachers saw the power of Disciplinary Literacy and of having the direct job-embedded support from the coaches and wanted more of it.

Cohort III schools were asking for support from the district with: having a common vision across the district, having clear curriculum standards and maps, having a plan for buildings going to scale, and providing the resources to support the plan.

District-Level Instructional Leadership: The three area superintendents and other district office administrators participated in PAE Instructional Leadership Seminars, Literacy Institutes, and Learning Walks to enhance their instructional leadership skills. They learned about the Principles of Learning and subject area content side-by-side with principals and teachers whose efforts they support. Area superintendents worked one-on-one with principals in Project schools within their sub-districts to support PAE reform efforts.

Area Superintendents: The three area superintendents' roles centered on being bridges between the Board and Superintendent and the principals in order to implement the district's instructional program. Area superintendents clarified the program to principals and their schools' staffs and encouraged full involvement. During their monthly meetings with all principals in their areas, particular principals shared successful PAE instructional practices with their colleagues and PAE staff presented various aspects of the Project.

Area superintendents expected principals to reinforce the professional development and coaching that teachers were experiencing. Additionally, the area superintendents were accountable for

ensuring that all principals received the training and support they needed to understand their instructional leadership role.

Area superintendents were a bridge from principals to the district office, bringing their perceptions of resources needed and next steps needed in professional development to district planners. On Learning Walks, they found common confusions, for example, over the use of rubrics or criteria charts or posting of student work. They heard suggestions from teachers who wanted the opportunity to participate in training and suggested the district find a way to increase capacity.

Special Education and English Language Learners (ELL) staff involvement: Directors of both the Special Education and the English Language Learner Departments were involved in the initial 2000-2001 district-level Institute for Learning training and have continued their engagement. Among the directors, assistant directors, and teachers on special assignment (TOSAs), there were Special Education and ELL staff members who participated in PAE Instructional Leadership Seminars each year and have completed all levels of the Writing Institutes and Reading Institutes. The participation, of the two directors and the staff members from each department, enabled them to support the work of principals and teachers in the schools. They participated in Learning Walks and helped the Special Education and ELL teachers play their role in implementation. Given the importance of involvement of these members of the school community in comprehensive reform efforts, more detailed findings are presented in the next section of this report.

Other Intermediaries: During the 2004-2005 national IFL intermediary meetings, Saint Paul intermediaries identified a focus for the year and agreed to meet monthly to strategize ways to bring leadership to scale for all elementary and middle school principals. They saw different levels of growth in principals who were participating in PAE seminars. They also identified other intermediaries in the district who had not been included in district Instructional Leadership Seminars. For example, Human Resources needed to know the fundamentals of the initiative so they could align their procedures. Through monthly meetings, six intermediaries began to address the need for all leadership in the district to have a common understanding of the Institute for Learning, the Principles of Learning, being an instructional leader, and of the district's instructional program—*Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence*. They searched for strategies to provide specific professional development and concrete documents that would guide principals and administrators to a stronger understanding of “how it should look.”

One example of work across departments related to the requirements for teachers achieving tenure. The Director of the Center for Academic Excellence worked through the Career in Education Board, a partnership of district officials and teachers from the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, to align the process for teachers achieving tenure with the requirements of PAE. The new procedure, for teachers starting in Saint Paul in 2005-2006, requires training and implementation of specific components of the district's instructional program.

Office of Leadership Development: Staff members from the Office of Leadership Development (OoLD) have served as intermediary representatives each year at the Institute for Learning's National Seminars and collaborated regularly with staff members from the Office of Instructional Services to plan and co-facilitate Instructional Leadership training. In addition, two OoLD staff participated in the monthly meetings of the district intermediary "nested learning community" described above.

Each year, OoLD's Leadership Institute for Aspiring Principals consisted of three weeks of intensive training in the summer and once-a-month meetings during the school year. Over the past three years, the connections between the Leadership Institute and the IFL-led Instructional Leadership Seminars have become stronger as the Principles of Learning and the effort-based concept have become an integral part of the Leadership Institute curriculum. The instructional leadership component of the Leadership Institutes was strengthened as the OoLD staff understanding of the leadership component of the Project for Academic Excellence deepened. One OoLD staff member said, "We are both going in the same direction."

Nested Learning Communities: Within the district, a unifying belief has been that all members are continuous learners—including students, teachers, and administrators—who should build "nested learning communities" within and across role groups, within and across schools. There are many examples of teachers learning from each other, principals learning from each other, and adults learning across role groups. One elementary principal, for example, learned from his school's design and literacy coaches, and the three of them worked closely together. He called the working area of these coaches a "think tank" because it has space for the two coaches to learn together and for teachers and the coaches to learn together.

An example of learning across schools involved a kindergarten teacher visiting a kindergarten classroom during Writing Institute Level II to see for herself what children that age can do. The principal of her school said, "An asset of PAE is that nested learning community aspect that takes people out of their own

isolated environments and lets them scan what is going on in the larger environment.” Many schools have created learning communities by grade levels and across grade levels to help each other implement Writer’s and Reader’s Workshop and to map the writing curriculum across grades. The district has created various think tanks and working groups across role groups to learn about, for example, the status of the district’s reading program, the needs of the mathematics program, and strategies for going to scale with leadership initiatives.

End-of-Year Celebration: The final activity of each of the past three years for all PAE schools has been the End-of-Year Celebration. The purpose of the Celebration for the first two years was for each school to display artifacts that demonstrated evidence of their accomplishments. They focused on standards, Principles of Learning, and content that had been addressed in PAE sessions during the previous year. Artifacts presented included: videos, photos, samples of student work, criteria charts, rubrics, and curriculum maps. By the time of the Celebration, first year schools had begun to see the intersection of the Writing Institute and the instructional leadership work. When they gathered the materials for their display at the Celebration and saw all the other displays, they “got it.” After the 2003-2004 Celebration, Maria J. Lamb, Chief Education Officer of the district, stated:

The schools took it to a level beyond what I expected. They created beautiful, authentic displays of the work that went on in their schools, and it was totally focused on the students’ work. I didn’t expect to see so much evidence throughout the district. It’s all about the students producing the work and the teachers valuing the work.

The 2004-2005 celebration was designed to assess the understanding of the Project for Academic Excellence comprehensive reform model and look deeper into where schools were with implementation. Each school was challenged to examine the impact of the Project on their school and classrooms. The planning teams for each cohort gathered this information and prepared a video to present the highlights of the year’s growth. Cohort I focused on the Learning Walk and prepared a video showing and explaining the important features of all the steps of the Learning Walk process.

Cohort II selected ten of their schools that represented those beginning their implementation of PAE and those with several years experience. Each principal was interviewed about the structures in place in their schools to move PAE forward, how they had brought the Principles of Learning back to their building, the leadership role of the lead teacher in bringing back the work, how the Principles of Learning and the content areas were coming together, and their plans for next year. Principals’ voices and scenes from their schools were integrated into their video.

The Cohort III presentation summarized their year's experiences with awareness building and implementation activities, including professional development and study groups, and the direct job-embedded district support to teachers. The presentation gave an introduction to Disciplinary Literacy and what it has meant for middle and junior high schools. The video showed teachers trying new strategies and giving students clearer and more rigorous expectations. Principals demonstrated increased involvement as instructional leaders.

After seeing the presentations, Superintendent Harvey said,

Each of you needs to be commended for a vision that we have now made a reality. . . . We have raised the level of expectations from our kids. . . . We have created this together. . . . I heard ownership in the voices. I heard the elementary principals and teachers say 'this is just the way we do business.' And then I heard the middle school people say, 'Don't worry, elementary schools, we're ready for [your students], ' and from [the high schools], 'We're getting ready for them.' [There is] much, much, much to be proud of.

Special Education and English Language Learners

During spring 2003, the Special Education and English Language Learner (ELL) departments were brought under the Office of Instructional Services (OIS), under the leadership of the Chief Education Officer, Maria J. Lamb. Both the Special Education and ELL departments were very supportive of their move to the OIS and of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence*. The two directors commented:

Writer's Workshop is the best thing that has happened to Saint Paul schools. For the first time Saint Paul is organized in a way that we are starting to talk the same language.

It's a very good road we are going down. I see continuity between regular and Special Education training—a consistent, unified district approach.

To help guide the alignment of services and programs, the district prepared a document, *Project for Academic Excellence Instructional Plan, Elementary Schools*, offering recommendations for the integration and interaction of PAE within a school and with the other district academic programs, including English Language Learner (ELL), Excel, Gifted Services, and Special Education. Schools use the document to examine their school's programs and to prepare their School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP).

Professional Development: The Special Education and ELL departments and school-level Special Education and ELL teachers have been included in PAE professional development from the beginning of the Project. District-level Special Education and ELL staff members attend IFL Instructional Leadership Seminars and Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop training. Schools include ELL and Special Education teachers in all PAE trainings and on-site coaching opportunities.

Teachers of English Language Learners find Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop work very well for their students when teachers pay attention to ELL students' prior knowledge and need for building vocabulary. Special Education teachers find workshops serve their students very well when instruction and materials are accommodated to students' needs.

District ELL TOSAs (Teachers on Special Assignment) and district Special Education resource teachers have worked together within their departments to identify additional tools for teachers to include in Writer's Workshop to meet the needs of ELL and Special Education students. These district staff visited schools to assist teachers in adapting Writer's Workshop, and they offered related professional development for ELL and Special Education teachers. There were ELL and Special Education teachers, who were trained early in the Project, that were collaborating with classroom teachers. At times, they have been some of the strongest implementers on the team.

The training of all ELL and Special Education teachers in Writer's Workshop Level I will be completed during 2005-2006—ELL teachers during September 2005 and Special Education teachers in groups throughout the year. The sessions for ELL teachers will be planned and conducted by a partnership of PAE literacy coaches and ELL TOSAs, and the sessions for Special Education teachers by PAE literacy coaches and district Special Education resource staff. The content of these Writer's Workshop Level I sessions will be the same as for regular education teachers with additional tools for working with ELL and Special Education students. Specific models are being planned for follow-up to the training, having ELL TOSAs and district Special Education resource staff collaborate with district literacy coaches within the schools. These partnerships are providing increased opportunity for staff from PAE, ELL, and Special Education to work collaboratively—each sharing their expertise.

Inclusion and Collaboration: All services for Special Education and ELL students are to be embedded in an academic program that aligns with and supports the PAE initiative of Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, Integrated Math, and Inquiry Science. English Language Learners are expected to meet district standards, and students with disabilities are to participate and make progress in the general curriculum to the extent feasible. Inclusion of ELL in mainstream classrooms is expected, and inclusion of Special Education students is expected whenever possible. Collaboration between ELL and general education teachers is the expected model in Saint Paul, and opportunities for collaboration between Special Education and general education teachers is to be sufficient to meet the needs of the students.

English Language Learners: The District Instructional Plan clarified that the ELL instructional program in SPPS centers on teaching language through content using core district mainstream curriculum supported by second language acquisition strategies.

Collaboration between ELL or Special Education and classroom teachers involves joint planning and reflection, co-teaching, and joint assessment and reporting of student progress. The collaborating teachers need time during the school day for planning and reflection, equivalent training in Writer's and Reader's Workshop, space for the ELL teacher outside the classroom, and clustering of students to limit the number of classrooms the ELL teacher must serve.

There are many ways to co-teach and divide up the pieces of the Writer's or Reader's Workshop. The ELL department has developed training materials that graphically show varying roles of the ELL and classroom teacher during the three parts of the workshops: mini-lesson, work time, and sharing time. Either teacher may present the mini-lesson or they might do it together. During work time, the two teachers will work with different individuals or groups for the same or

different purposes to meet the needs of students. During sharing time, one or both teachers will lead the activity. The ELL department has trained principals in the variety of models for ELL/regular education collaboration so that they will be able to support the collaborations. The ELL department also provides training on collaboration for teams of ELL and mainstream teachers to prepare the teams to plan together, bring resources together, teach together, assess and evaluate students together, and reflect together. In the classroom where it is working really well, someone may walk in the room and ask, “Who is the teacher?”

ELL department staff—director and resource teachers—have identified a number of elements of Writer's Workshop that work well for ELL students. One is the consistency of instructional language that students will get within and across schools. Second, there is consistency of the training and materials that all teachers are receiving so that ELL and regular education teachers have common language with which to converse. Third, the elements of Writer's Workshop draw on the lives of students. ELL students come from a background rich in oral language and that is where Writer's Workshop starts. Fourth, it is important to ELL and other children to have a predictable structure such as the workshops provide. Fifth, interactive charting is a tool that helps ELL students when charts are developed from the ideas of the students and are present in the room for writing support. One coach said, “Once teachers start to see how these strategies work with second language learners, they'll never be able to teach the way they used to.”

The workshop structure works for Spanish and Hmong students who are involved in native language programs. Spanish-speaking students with limited English skills are offered instruction in Spanish. Hmong students are learning to read and write in Hmong. During workshops, students read and write in the language with which they are most comfortable and can easily alternate between their native language and English.

ELL department staff have worked on tools to help teachers use Writer's and Reader's Workshop structures to benefit ELL students. Graphic depictions of the role of the ELL teacher during Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop are included in the Literacy Frameworks document. Teachers might use the conferencing setting to develop vocabulary that helps the students tell their story. Teachers are encouraged to use writing response groups, writing buddies, cross-table conversations, and even conferring where other students can hear so that students will learn from others.

An Example of ELL / Mainstream Teacher Collaboration

An ELL teacher at one elementary school serves kindergarten and first grade. She attributes what she does to the training she received during the Literacy Institutes and through professional development offered by the ELL department.

The kindergarten program is using Kindergarten Language Development (KLD). The ELL teacher takes the level 1 students for an hour and a half, providing content-based instruction that allows the children to acquire English as they are acquiring the content. The first year, she had the language arts time, the second year, the math instruction part of their day, and this year, which, she says has worked the best for all of them, she does the prep hour plus a little extra time. She does their art, music, and science—topics she said are particularly easy to integrate and to use to teach language. She follows the district curriculum for those areas while addressing language and vocabulary used in the mainstream classroom. She said, *"This has been my favorite year. It is the year that has shown the best progress on the end-of-the-year scores with the children."*

Also, for the kindergarten skills block of forty-five minutes, the three kindergarten teachers divided all the children into groups—high, medium, and low—and the ELL teacher co-taught with one teacher, dividing the low group of seventeen children again so that they were served at their level. She reflected:

This has worked exceptionally well. We've seen progress we've never seen before. Now, the low group is pretty small. I work with four children, and my team member has seven. I think we are more successful in kindergarten this year because we are giving the children instruction targeted to where they are. That is one major change. Also, perhaps doing KLD during prep was good for language development. I take the vocabulary and teach it in the science lesson and then integrate that same vocabulary into art and into music. That approach allows the acquisition of language and vocabulary to be boosted quite a bit. It is really important for the child that what the ELL teacher is doing is an extension of what's happening in the mainstream classroom – unlike the old pullout when you took them, designed instruction completely different from the mainstream.

For first grade, the mainstream teachers and the ELL teacher kept in close contact. At the beginning of the year, many children needed extra support in reading. The first grade team decided the ELL teacher would work with one or two children from each of the three first grade classrooms for guided reading. Periodically, they examined the reading levels of the children and adjusted the groups. The ELL teacher reflected: *It works very, very well. At the beginning of the year, I had maybe sixteen children, and the neediest I saw three times a week and the not-so-needy two times a week. But near the end of the year, enough children were at standard that the teachers requested that I work with some of their other children who were not having reading difficulties but were having problems with oral language development, pronunciation, grammatical—classic ELL work. The whole thing is based on the communication with the team.*

Special Education: Although Special Education services represent specially designed instruction for an individual student, the District Instructional Plan states that it is critical that Special Education teachers align their knowledge of Special Education instruction with PAE

initiatives. Several initiatives are ongoing, within the Special Education department and in collaboration with others in the district, to develop and document for wider distribution adaptations that scaffold Special Education students during Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop. They see it as their job, as experts in the disability areas, to bring awareness to the district of the specialized strategies, materials, and alternative ways that Special Education can support the district initiatives.

In 1999-2000, the department, through a partnership with Dr. David Koppenhaver of Gustavus Adolphus College (now University of North Carolina), began an initiative to expand literacy development among students with special needs, including those with the most severe disabilities. They developed the "Special Education Balanced Literacy: The Four Blocks" model and "Literacy Benchmarks" from emergent to proficient. They have been exploring special materials for students—more books on tape, more e-books and other software, programming for communication boards, and other specialized instructional materials. At this time, their work is focused on exploring strategies, materials, and technology that align with Writer's and Reader's Workshop activities.

Special Education teachers who were trained in the first Writing Institutes and were early implementers came together in work groups with district Special Education resource teachers to create models fitting workshop strategies with Special Education service models—pullout and variations on the inclusion continuum. In schools, Special Education teachers are in study groups with regular education teachers; they are learning about each other's world and discussing modifications and accommodations for special needs students.

Through observation of classrooms and examination of student work, district Special Education resource staff members saw that Writer's Workshop techniques worked for special needs students, including severely mentally retarded students. They observed Special Education teachers creatively applying and adapting Writer's Workshop techniques, and they convened study groups to look at student writing. One district resource teacher heard an audible groan when the teacher said to finish up their editing so they could go to gym. In the past, these students would have complained that they cannot write and did not want to try. She said, "*You wouldn't believe the writing that's coming from our handicapped students—they believe they are writers.*"

There are also initiatives focused on secondary-level students. In 2003-2004, Special Education teachers were key volunteers in the early workshops for "struggling readers" in junior high

schools. The Special Education department pulled these teachers together to see how they are implementing literacy initiatives in their buildings. During 2004-2005, district Special Education resource staff worked with district coaches to build the district junior and senior high school language arts and mathematics scope and sequence, with pacing guide, aligned to Minnesota standards. The Special Education department also collaborated with PAE coaches to prepare and present language arts and math MCA test prep workshops.

Example of Special Education Teacher and the Project for Academic Excellence

One Special Education teacher taught special needs grades four, five, and six students, who were performing at kindergarten and grade one and two levels. They have a mainstream education teacher for morning meeting, prep class, lunch, structured play, and a close-of-the-day meeting, and come to the Special Education teacher for math, reading, and writing instruction.

The Special Education teacher's room looks like the mainstream teachers' classrooms—everything needed for Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Whenever the school is working on a particular genre, her students do too. When it's time for the whole fourth grade team to do their book celebration, the Special Education students take their books and share them with their mainstream class. *"They're authors, too, and everybody can come and see their books in our library."*

This Special Education teacher appreciates the support she receives in her school. She does a lot with author studies and has a resource room available where she can get author studies baskets. She said, *"I just can't believe that they have their door wide open for me with materials and with ideas."*

She feels she has been brought out of the "dark ages" of "old special ed things." She commented:

Now when we are studying a particular author, we're doing noticing charts and comparing books. And believe it or not, it works with these students. Actually, they notice higher than their reading level. I may be reading a book that is at the third grade level, and a lot of my students can understand that book and pull things out of it, which surprises me. . . . They make more progress, plus they're happier, and I'm happier, and everything seems to be at a higher level. I'm happier because they are not doing the same old thing over and over again. They don't study the same author or write the same particular personal narrative. It's always something a little bit new.

During a recent non-fiction unit, students chose an animal to write about and were also studying beautiful language. The Special Education teacher reflected:

We love beautiful language—some of my kids are talented in that area. We wrote a book about our class field trip to Belwin Nature Center. We were thinking of a title for our book—our mentor text was Did you Hear the Wind Sing your Name? One of my girls said, "How about if we call it Did you Smell the Snow Passing by Your Nose?" It was lightly snowing on the day we went to the nature center. I couldn't believe she really said that. I wrote it on the chart paper and that was their choice for the title.

Literacy Initiative

Since 1999, the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has made literacy a primary focus of school reform. Superintendent Harvey immediately focused the district on developing balanced literacy programs for every student, beginning with providing districtwide professional development. Early districtwide professional development in reading instruction was provided by Saint Paul teachers who were certified in Reading Recovery, a nationally recognized program. With Saint Paul community partners, Saint Paul Reads was launched to challenge all staff, students, and citizens to read at least 25 books annually.

Early into literacy reform, the district assisted low-performing schools in selecting research-based reform models that encompassed balanced literacy. For example, important pioneering work on literacy, using the America's Choice reform model, was undertaken in 2000-2001 in the three Achievement Plus schools, laying the foundation for a unified effort across all Saint Paul Public Schools.

Since summer 2002, *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* (PAE) has led the district effort to adopt and implement standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the core academic subjects (Essential Effort 1-A of the District Action Plan), beginning with literacy. The Literacy Initiative, through Writing Institutes and Reading Institutes, employed all the comprehensive reform model components. The Institutes provided teachers in participating schools with the necessary training, leadership support, and resources needed to establish standards-based instruction in reading and writing in their classrooms.

Standards-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: PAE selected the workshop model for the district's literacy program because they felt it met the definition of a standards-based literacy program, addressing district, state, and national standards. The literacy program is built on the interaction between reading and writing. The writing program is organized around a daily Writer's Workshop and the reading program around a daily Reader's Workshop. The PAE goal is to bring writing and reading closer together than it has been in practice. Students are immersed in literature in order to learn about the techniques that authors use to make writing effective. Students' writing supports their development in reading, and genre studies in reading support students' writing. A book used by teachers to work on writing beautiful language might be used to teach a reading strategy or skill.

A district comprehensive grade-by-grade guide, *Reading and Writing Standards-Based Frameworks K-6* (Literacy Frameworks), aligns State of Minnesota standards and National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) standards, and provides a clear guide for teachers to establish successful Reader's Workshops and Writer's Workshops in their classrooms. The pilot version of the Literacy Frameworks

was used and revised during 2004-2005, and the revised Literacy Frameworks document was distributed to all teachers in September 2005.

Professional Development Model: In the past, many teachers experienced a passive kind of professional development where they sat and listened to the professional developer, got a packet, and then went back to their classroom to work in isolation. With the development of PAE Writing and Reading Institutes, teachers were involved in doing the exercises they would be having their students do, watched other teachers do the exercises with students, and worked with coaches who came into their classrooms. One coach likened this professional development to being an apprentice—some of it you do yourself, some of it you watch the expert do, and some of it they tell you how to do.

The district's professional development model outlines three levels of training, each level providing ever deeper knowledge and skills. PAE introduced the three levels with the Writing Institutes, and once professional development in writing was well underway across the district, used their experience to design the three levels of Reading Institutes.

Instructional leadership responsibilities have been shared among district-level administrators, principals, and teacher leaders, all providing support that teachers need to implement Writer's and Reader's Workshops. All levels of instructional leaders participated in Instructional Leadership Seminars, Literacy Institutes, or school-level professional development in order to develop common language and common understanding of PAE instructional practices. Instructional leaders (district, principal, and teachers) participated in Learning Walks in schools, focusing on the implementation of the content in writing and reading with the Principles of Learning.

Principals played the pivotal leadership role in establishing, through teamwork and collaboration, the conditions for successful implementation of Writer's and Reader's Workshop. They clarified expectations for teachers to carve out appropriate daily time for writing and reading. They helped provide the materials teachers needed, including classroom libraries. Principals regularly visited classrooms and reviewed student work. They worked with district and school literacy coaches to create structures—including common preparation time, released time, and study groups—for ongoing professional development, sustained coaching, planning, and reflection. As one coach explained, "I can work really, really hard with one, two or three teachers, but principals have to be instructional leaders and provide the culture in the building for that learning to spread throughout the school. It is crucial."

Principals learned that just being a building manager was no longer enough. Teachers needed to see the principal as somebody knowledgeable in instruction. Teachers appreciated principals who sat with them

and learned right along with them. Principals attended Writing and Reading Institutes, sometimes all of the sessions.

The role of school-level literacy coaches or literacy coordinators varied. In a few buildings, their own well-trained literacy coach performed all the coaching services. These school coaches networked with the district coaches and were available to help provide professional development districtwide. A school literacy coordinator might organize schedules, order the materials teachers need, and communicate what the district coach will be doing. They might sit in when the coach was meeting with groups of teachers. In some schools, the school literacy coach provided modeling and coaching in collaboration with the district coach. For example, one school literacy coach “jump-started” teachers who had not made the shift to the district’s model of Writer’s Workshop. She would work with a teacher intensively for three weeks with a gradual release of responsibility to the teacher, and the district coach would provide follow-up while the school coach worked intensely with another teacher.

Focus on Core Academic Skills: The Literacy Initiative is being implemented in phases, going deep with one major component of literacy at a time. PAE decided to focus first on writing, where little, if any, training was evident in district schools. The first Writing Institute was held summer 2001; the first Reading Institute in summer 2004. The remainder of this section describes the Writing Initiative, the Reading Initiative, and Saint Paul’s Model of Content-Focused Literacy Coaching.

Writing Initiative

By the end of 2003-2004, the design for the Writing Institutes was well established, including content, training, and follow-up coaching by PAE literacy coaches, and in 2004-2005, PAE concentrated on moving the Writing Initiative to scale in every classroom in the district. Since its inception, PAE, under the leadership of Maria J. Lamb, district Chief Education Officer, has worked in partnership with a nationally recognized consultant, Susan Radley, to design the writing program and to build capacity to take the program to scale across the district. The Writing Institutes provided ongoing professional development which included writing content and pedagogy, extensive materials, demonstration classes, and on-site coaching, enabling teachers to implement Writer’s Workshop at a consistent quality across the district.

Standards-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: The Writer’s Workshop model, as fully implemented in the classroom, is described in detail in the district’s Literacy Frameworks. The design of the Writing Institute is based on nationally researched, proven practices for teaching writing and on

writing standards developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) New Standards and the State of Minnesota.

In addition to training in best practices for writing instruction and curriculum, the Writing Institutes emphasized the assessment of student work against the standards. “What we know,” said Superintendent Harvey, “is that in order for students to meet standards, teachers must understand the importance of being clear about what they want kids to know and be able to do.” Teachers learned to co-develop criteria sheets and rubrics with students. Teachers understand the importance of displaying standards, rubrics, and students’ work as visual examples of what is expected. With writing, it was easy to see a student’s product, observe growth over time, and have a dialogue about standards.

To provide ongoing and ever deeper knowledge and skills in implementing Writer's Workshop, the district developed three levels of Writing Institutes. During Writing Institute Level I training, teachers learned to establish the Writer's Workshop in the classroom—launching writer's notebook, genre study, personal narrative/memoir, and analyzing and assessing student work. Teachers learned to use the district standards and to create a learning environment through organization of their classrooms. They did this by becoming students and writers themselves in order to understand the way the instruction is different from what was done before.

In Writing Institute Level II training, teachers observed Writer's Workshop demonstration lessons at collaborative school sites. They debriefed the lessons observed and discussed lesson planning with the demonstration teachers. Teachers learned to launch and “go deep” with each genre unit of study, to analyze student work for instructional purposes, and to confer with students about their work. Additional genre units of study included response to literature, non-fiction, and poetry.

In Writing Institute Level III, teachers received advanced training in designing mini-lessons, conferring with students, and assessing student work. They were introduced to additional units of study in craft/revision, mentor authors, conventions, and genre studies in fiction and personal essay/collage essay.

The PAE professional development model supports comprehensive reform of writing instruction by providing the following additional support:

- **Demonstration sites to promote replication:** Since 2001-2002 summer Writing Institutes have taken place at John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School (Johnson Elementary), a Saint Paul demonstration school. Johnson Elementary, a setting designed for observation and training, has proven to be an invaluable model for replication. As the Project expanded in 2002-2003, two additional schools were designated as demonstration schools for Writing Institute Level II

collaborative site visits: Nokomis Montessori Magnet and Monroe Achievement Plus Community School. For 2004-2005, Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School became a demonstration site for Writing Institute Level II training.

From the beginning of the Project, the demonstration schools also hosted visiting teacher groups, providing an overview of the standards-based literacy initiatives and conducting workshops on specific elements. Teachers had opportunities for classroom observation and time for follow-up questions and discussion. Community leaders, including Minnesota's Governor and the Commissioner of Education, visited these demonstration sites.

In the coming year, 2005-2006, PAE will expand the opportunity for teachers to see fully-functioning Writer's Workshop classrooms. This initiative will involve classroom teachers from kindergarten through grade six (K-6) who are willing to have guests observe Writer's Workshop at work in their classes.

Sustained on-the-job coaching: PAE district literacy coaches provided intensive support to teachers, including demonstration lessons and time for conversation to assure the efficacy of implementation. Since 2001-2002, PAE literacy coaches assisted during training sessions and supported teachers back in their schools. More details on the work and preparation of district literacy coaches follows the Reading Initiative section. In 2004-2005, there were thirteen coaches, each assigned four schools, reaching what the district considers full coaching capacity for literacy.

The district coaches spent an average of one day a week in each Project school working in teachers' classrooms, meeting with small groups of teachers, providing whole-staff professional development, and problem-solving with the principal or teachers. One of the main goals was to establish model classrooms—ideally, two such classrooms per school at different grade levels. A coach worked with the model classrooms over a period of time offering demonstration lessons and facilitating debriefing sessions. During the debriefing, a coach and teacher talked about what happened during the lesson, looked at the students' work resulting from that lesson, and planned the next lessons that the teacher would teach until the coach returned the following week.

Ongoing coaching helped teachers fill in pieces they did not pick up during the training, or the coach identified misconceptions and then helped refine practice in the classroom. For example, a teacher missed the step of having students move out of their writer's notebook to a folder after the students had selected their writing topic. One teacher found the power of coaching in the coach's "ability to see the little things" that make the difference.

Coaches provided professional development sessions to reach more teachers within each school. In one example, all teachers in the school met to look at student work from classrooms implementing Writer's Workshop. The teachers looked at the exemplar, with commentary, of a first grade child who was at standard and compared their school's first grade students' work to the exemplar. They looked at each element or benchmark of the standards to see what their first grade children were doing. A second grade teacher said, "I'd better do something different if you are doing that in first grade."

The national writing consultant did on-site coaching, spending two to four days throughout the year in several schools. On these visits, the consultant observed classrooms and studied artifacts on the walls to determine teachers' progress in implementing a unit of study. The school principal and literacy coaches observed with her, providing another opportunity to learn more about how implementation should look. Teachers were released from their classrooms for discussions with the consultant. They talked about where they were in the unit and what their next steps should be, discussed the Touchstone Books they were using, and conferred about student work. Teachers received feedback on ways to improve their work. One principal said, "You can't think of anything more valuable than having the expert here. There are very, very slight nuances of things that may not be going right, that I might not see, and that even our literacy coach, who's an expert, may not see."

- PAE provided **materials and resources** for each school in the Project. The first year of the Project, coaches and schools scrambled for books that were recommended and used by the writing consultant. In the second and third years, literacy coaches had a budget with which to purchase books for schools and to provide substitute teachers in order to release teachers to observe other teachers. Schools have also reallocated funds within their budgets for purchasing Touchstone Books for Writer's Workshop and for providing substitute teachers. During 2003 and 2004, the district provided substantial resources to every elementary school to build leveled libraries and literature in a variety of genres for school and classroom libraries. The district continued providing substitute teachers. Because of extensive budget cuts, coaches did not have funds available for substitute teachers during 2004-2005, and it was more difficult to set up times for other grade level staff to watch lessons and participate in debriefing. Some schools with Title I or grant money used these funds to support the work that they found valuable, particularly for substitute teachers when the coaches were in the building. Coaches found it more difficult to foster relationships and collaborations among teachers without the resources to bring them together during the school day to observe each other and to reflect together.

- **Multi-level networks** were developed by PAE from the beginning of the Project through which lead teachers could give and receive support from their colleagues, from the writing consultant, and from district literacy coaches. Each year the design has been changed, searching for an effective way to build capacity at the school level. By 2003-2004, the elementary teachers, called classroom leads, were selected to participate because they were successfully implementing Writer's Workshop. During 2004-2005, classroom leads attended three meetings with the writing consultant and district elementary literacy coaches. The classroom leads were to bring what they learned back to colleagues in their schools and be a resource in their buildings. Some classroom leads were unclear about the expectations for them and found it difficult to leave their classrooms for the meetings or find the extra time to carry out the role. Some classroom leads understood their role, and through collaboration with their principal and district coach, they could expand learning to their school.

Study groups within schools have brought teachers together to further Writer's Workshop. Study groups might examine student work and its implications for possible lessons, or share ideas with staff members who have not yet participated in the training. One school set up two study groups to work on Writer's Workshop all year—one for primary teachers and one for intermediate teachers—with each team meeting once a week. Many schools organized grade level study groups and cross-grade study groups to provide ongoing opportunities to learn together.

In the future, literacy coaches anticipate setting up more study groups involving teachers from more than one school or districtwide to help teachers grow in specific skills identified by the teachers. Study groups would help sustain what happened in Level I, II, and III Institutes, and allow teachers to go even deeper than the Institutes. Study groups could address needs identified by teachers or by coaches.

- **Building capacity in the district:** Whenever the writing consultant was in the district, time was set aside for her to meet with the literacy coaches. The coaches found this time absolutely essential for them to build their skills, to ask questions about the pedagogy, and to clarify questions coming from their work in the schools.

Through heavy involvement with the writing consultant, the literacy coaches were well-prepared to conduct Level I Writing Institutes beginning in 2003-2004. To prepare, literacy coaches attended all levels of the Writing Institutes, took extensive notes, applied what they learned to their demonstration lessons in the schools, and spent considerable debriefing time with the writing consultant, using every opportunity to learn from her. She was their teacher, their mentor. In spring and fall 2003, she met in

long sessions with them to go over each of the five days of Level I training, helping the coaches develop an extensive planning notebook. As one coach explained, “Anytime you hang out with Susan while she is doing her work, hear the conversations that come up, and watch her think, you learn something.” Another coach said, “Even coaches need coaching.” She gave one example of having prepared a lesson that she thought students had been prepared for by the teacher, but when she looked at the students’ work from the previous day, she was not sure. The expert happened to be with her that day and helped her adjust her lesson to meet the students’ needs.

The writing consultant also shadowed coaches and observed lessons—one by the coach and one by a teacher being coached. She listened in on the debriefing conversations and also modeled alternative debriefing strategies. She met with the coach afterward for an hour or more to give suggestions and other feedback. One coach commented that this approach was a “hugely valuable experience” and “really powerful.” During 2004-2005, all literacy coaches accompanied the consultant on three shadowing visits so that they could observe the lessons and debriefings, further developing their coaching skills.

- PAE has a plan for *going to scale across the district*. The district began offering Writing Institutes in summer 2001, training teachers from seven elementary schools. The number of schools expanded to eighteen during 2001-2002, then to twenty-three in 2002-2003, and to all kindergarten to eighth grade (K-8) schools in 2004-2005. By the end of 2004-2005, the vast majority of elementary teachers were conducting daily Writer's Workshops, and the district was making plans for going to scale in every classroom in the coming year.

Reading Initiative

Early Work to Improve Reading Instruction: While the Writing Institutes were being rolled out and moving to scale, a number of reading initiatives were undertaken in elementary schools across the district. Beginning in 2000 and 2001, the three Achievement Plus schools began implementing the America's Choice instructional model through which schools received comprehensive professional development, including Reader's and Writer's Workshop training for all staff for three years.

In addition, in 2002, five elementary schools were awarded Local Reading Improvement grants from the Reading Excellence Act (REA) grants, and six elementary schools were awarded Tutorial Assistance Grants to support tutorial assistance programs for students having difficulty in reading. As a result of the REA grant, schools could purchase materials and resources, give stipends for study group participation, and provide intensive professional development for all staff (provided through a contract with the

University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Education). Schools that worked with the REA grants through the University of Minnesota met regularly in study groups. In 2004, five elementary schools received the federal Reading First grants that focused on instructional practices in grades kindergarten to three reading.

In addition to the Achievement Plus schools, elementary schools chose from among national research-based comprehensive reform models, including Success for All and America's Choice. Through these reform models, schools received intensive professional development in reading instruction and were able to purchase materials supporting the training. Each of these schools built the capacity of facilitators and literacy coordinators to train and coach teachers in their school.

Toward a Comprehensive Plan for Improving Reading: To strengthen the district's reading program, the SPPS Office of Instructional Services (OIS) launched a multi-phase effort to improve the reading success of kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) students. The first phase was to assess the district's reading programs and to set priorities for professional development, leadership development, and provision of materials.

In December 2002, members of SPPS were invited by the Chief Education Officer, Maria J. Lamb, to be part of a Reading Think Tank to assist in defining a vision for the district reading program that encompasses reading instruction practices for K-8 students across the district. The Reading Think Tank undertook an assessment of reading programs, reading proven instructional practices, and reading professional development experiences existing in K-8 schools across the district. The goals that framed the work included:

- Close the achievement gaps in reading among all identified groups of K-8 students while increasing the performance in reading of all students;
- Create the necessary "breakthrough" conditions in all schools with K-8 students for achieving extraordinary success in the learning and teaching of reading; and
- Develop the necessary leadership capacity at the district and at the sites serving K-8 students to initiate and sustain continuous improvement in the learning and teaching of reading.

Reading Think Tank Phase: The forty-one members comprising the Reading Think Tank ensured diverse and informed input by representing the many reading programs used in the Saint Paul Public Schools in grades K-8; the various comprehensive school reform models; a balance of K-8 classroom teachers; and staff serving the diverse cultural, economic, and special needs of district students. Members were selected for their backgrounds in reading instruction, professional development, and leadership.

Based on the National Reading Panel report and the five components of reading, the Reading Think Tank developed a self-inventory to measure the degree of implementation of proven reading practices in the schools. The Reading Think Tank studied the findings and shaped recommendations for improving K-8 reading achievement based on these inventory results.

- ***Inventory findings:*** Forty-four schools completed self-inventories of K-8 reading. All grades articulated a need for materials and training in fluency instruction, differentiation, and reading assessment. In primary reading programs, there was wide variation across grades, especially in phonics and fluency instruction. In grades four-six, many teachers indicated that they do not have the curriculum, model lessons, or materials necessary to support the teaching of vocabulary. In grades six-eight, teachers identified a need for professional development in teaching reading across the content areas. There was a need for clear reading standards and expectations for integration of those standards. To obtain a higher use of proven practices, schools needed reading instructional materials and resources and the provision of integrated, school-embedded professional development.

Schools using comprehensive school reform models, including America's Choice and Success for All, generally had a high use of proven reading instructional practices. Schools receiving REA grants also had more comprehensive reading programs.

- ***Think Tank recommendations:*** Infrastructure and leadership should be developed at the district and site level to support integrated, school-embedded professional development in reading instruction. The district should provide clear district-wide standards for reading, based on national and state standards, and guidance on how to align the curriculum and instructional practices with those standards. The district and schools should focus the necessary resources on the development of materials and model lesson plans. The needs of special populations in reading instruction should be a priority for the Literacy Initiative.

Planning and Capacity-Building Phase: The next stage of the reading improvement initiative focused on building district capacity, providing essential books, and piloting introductory Reader's Workshop training. Dorothy Levin, formerly an SPPS principal, was selected to direct the Reading Initiative. During 2003-2004, Levin began identifying literacy coaches with reading expertise. She and the Reading Advisory Committee selected a national reading expert, Adria Klein³, to provide expert training and

³ Adria Klein is a professor emeritus for reading and teacher education at California State University San Bernardino and a Reading Recovery trainer. She has a Ph. D. from the University of New Mexico (Albuquerque) in Curriculum and Instruction: Reading and ESL, 1979.

consultation for the initiative. Since this selection, PAE has worked in partnership with Adria Klein to design the district Reading Initiative and to build capacity to take the program to scale across the district.

- ***Reading advisory committee activities for 2003-2004:*** To respond to the Reading Think Tank findings, a Reading Advisory Committee met during the 2003-2004 school year to guide the Reading Initiative. The committee was composed of twenty members with expertise and experience in reading instruction, including teachers, literacy coaches, literacy coordinators, principals, and ELL and Special Education representatives. The Advisory Committee developed an action plan for providing professional development for both the structure of reading instruction time (Reader's Workshop) and the content of reading instruction (the National Reading Panel's five components of reading). The advisory committee chose which professional development sessions to offer first, who would conduct the sessions, and what materials to provide attendees.
- ***Professional development in 2003-2004:*** The goal for 2003-2004 was to provide limited professional development in (1) Reader's Workshop Framework / Rituals and Routines and (2) Organizing Classroom Libraries. Overall, two hundred fifty-four (254) K-8 teachers and administrators attended the two workshops (nine workshops on the Reader's Workshop Framework and five on Classroom Libraries) and indicated overwhelming satisfaction with the presentations and usefulness of the materials. The workshops were conducted by literacy coaches and teachers at Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School (Dayton's Bluff) and Monroe Achievement Plus Community School (Monroe). Staffs in these schools have had extensive training and experience in using the Reader's Workshop model to teach reading.

Participants in the Reader's Workshop: Rituals and Routines workshops were introduced to the Reader's Workshop model, the structure, and the components. Participants visited classrooms at Dayton's Bluff to see how a classroom should be set up, including artifacts, rubrics, standards, and schedules. They received copies of the NCEE Reading Monographs, NCEE Reader's Workshop Mini-Lessons, and a copy of Taberski's book, *On Solid Ground*.

The Organizing Classroom Libraries workshops introduced participants to the uses of classroom libraries, ways to organize them, and ways to obtain the funding and resources needed to buy books. Participants toured a variety of comprehensive, working classroom libraries in Monroe.

- ***Provision of essential materials:*** The work the district was asking teachers to do required many more materials, including classroom libraries, than were found in most schools. During 2003-2004, the Center for Academic Excellence built a prototype library of leveled books at the Center and

introduced principals to leveled libraries and to the ordering process. To meet the need for leveled libraries, the district took a big step by allocating resources to each school with kindergarten through grade eight students sufficient to purchase approximately two thousand books. In addition, the district chose about three hundred non-fiction titles for grades four through eight for each school, addressing the need for non-fiction books that students read in the content areas and to be better prepared for state tests which are based largely on non-fiction.

A subcommittee of the Reading Advisory Committee undertook an evaluation of phonics and phonemic awareness programs to assist elementary schools interested in selecting a phonics program for use in grades kindergarten to two. The committee used an available evaluation tool to examine nine published, widely-available phonics programs. The recommendations contained in the report released in February 2004 serves as a guide for schools, not a prescription for use.

Implementation Phase: During 2003-2004, the reading consultant worked with the Reading Advisory Committee to design the Reading Institutes, taking into account the greatest needs for professional development identified by the Reading Think Tank. The Reading Institutes provide ongoing professional development which includes reading content and pedagogy, extensive materials, enabling teachers to implement Reader's Workshop at a consistent quality across the district. Specific attention was paid to extensions of the strategies for ELL, Special Education, and gifted and talented students. The Reader's Workshop model, as fully implemented in the classroom, is described in detail in the district's Literacy Frameworks.

The PAE professional development model supports comprehensive reform of reading instruction by providing:

- **Standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment:** The design of the Reading Institute is based on nationally researched, proven practices for teaching reading and on reading standards built into the district document, *Reading and Writing Standards-Based Frameworks K-6* (Literacy Frameworks). The Literacy Frameworks align State of Minnesota standards and National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) standards, delineates instructional and assessment strategies, and identifies materials and resources in the district. The research-based reading practices and standards identified by the National Reading Panel are embedded throughout the components of the Literacy Frameworks.

To provide ongoing and ever deeper knowledge and skills in teaching reading, three levels of Reading Institutes have been outlined. Reading Institute Level I introduced the Literacy Frameworks

and provided an overview of the Reader's Workshop model and its components: read aloud, shared reading, guided oral reading, independent reading, book clubs, independent work time, mini-lessons, and assessment. Teachers gained an understanding of the five elements of reading identified by the National Reading Panel as key to literacy development—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—and how to place them within the Reader's Workshop model. With the knowledge and understanding of these components and a classroom management structure in place, participants can build a standards-based classroom/instructional plan through which children learn the skills and strategies used by good readers. Institute strands accommodated the needs of teachers in kindergarten, grades one to two, grades three to four, and grades five to six. Resources and materials were provided.

The Reading Institute Level II provided more in-depth study of The Reader's Workshop model and its components. There was a more thorough discussion of book clubs and reciprocal teaching as instructional strategies for students. Book clubs—student led literature discussion groups—offer a powerful opportunity for all students to engage with and respond to age-appropriate text. Reciprocal teaching, a well-researched, replicated series of strategies primarily targeting nonfiction materials, is an approach to work with grade level reading materials. With the district's Literacy Frameworks as a guide, participants continued to build on their understanding of standards-based instruction through which children learn the skills and strategies used by good readers. Teachers gained greater understanding of the five elements of reading identified by the National Reading Panel and how to assess students in each area and plan for instruction. Teachers began to make links between Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop through genre study and connections between Reader's Workshop and content areas such as math. The training featured an indepth introduction to teacher study groups. Institute strands accommodated the needs of teachers in kindergarten, grades one to two, grades three to four, and grades five to six. Resources and materials were provided.

The first Reading Institute Level III will be held in summer 2006. The Reading Institute Level III outline includes these possible topics: links between Reader's Workshop and Writer's Workshop with author, genre, and issue study; links between Reader's Workshop and content areas—taking Reader's Workshop elements into the content areas and bringing the content areas into Reader's Workshop; study groups indepth (including videotaping); further work on making and adapting book plans; intervention groups for struggling readers; skills block planning and coordination with Reader's Workshop; test-taking strategies—expanded to focus on MCAs and BSTs plus writing on demand in response to reading; and peer coaching at the school site.

- **Assessment tools:** Beginning in 2003-2004, elementary schools used *Assess2Learn* to monitor student progress, to plan for instruction, and to prepare students for high-stakes tests. *Assess2Learn* is a web-based assessment tool that can monitor student progress toward learning objectives throughout the year. It delivers tests to students based on content standards and objectives in reading and math that are aligned with the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) test specifications. During 2004-2005, schools continued to use *Assess2Learn*, and the district studied ways to improve and expand diagnostic tools available to teachers. Assessments were typically used twice yearly to predict performance on the MCAs.

The introduction of the district Literacy Frameworks led to a demand by classroom teachers for guidance on how to implement the classroom, teacher-directed assessments outlined in the Frameworks. A Task Force on Assessment was created to understand the reading assessments used by Saint Paul teachers and provide resources and support according to the findings. Building on the work of the Reading Think Tank, the Task Force began by collecting information on the number and variety of assessments being used in the district. The Task Force evaluated each assessment in terms of what the test measures, why it is given, for what age range is the test best suited, advantages and reliability, how often it should be used, and how the information helps plan instruction. The next steps for the Task Force will be to provide professional development around assessment and how to use the information to plan instruction for individual students.

- **Sustained, accessible professional development:** In addition to summer Reading Institutes, PAE offered workshops on Reader's Workshop components that were open to all district employees and provided follow up activities during the school year for participants of the summer institutes.

Workshops open to all employees: During 2004-2005, there were three different workshops open to all employees: Using Read Alouds, Using Shared Reading, and Organizing and Using Classroom Libraries. The workshops were designed and conducted by district and school literacy coaches with input from the national reading consultant. Two levels were provided—grades kindergarten to two and grades three to six. These workshops will be offered again during 2005-2006.

Two separate workshops—Using Read Alouds and Using Shared Reading—provided a look at the power of using the Read Alouds or Shared Reading in the Opening Meeting of the Reader's Workshop. Participants learned how Read Alouds and Shared Reading are used to teach important reading and thinking strategies. Participants learned how mini lessons are used to

introduce, review, and reinforce specific skills and strategies. They practiced selecting texts for Read Alouds or Shared Reading that support the needs and interests of their students.

The Organizing and Using Classroom Libraries workshop shared teacher-tested and research-based strategies for organizing and using classroom libraries to support independent reading and increase student achievement in reading. Topics included characteristics of an effective classroom library, getting started establishing your classroom library (choosing books, leveling books, and creating categories). Teachers received books and baskets to get started.

Workshops for Reading Institute Level I participants: Follow up workshops on Guided Oral Reading (GOR) were conducted in 2004-2005 by the national reading consultant, assisted by district literacy coaches. Two levels of workshops—grades kindergarten to two and grades three to six—were open to teachers who had attended the Reading Institute Level I summer training. Participants looked at the research regarding GOR and had the opportunity to ask questions as it pertained to their grade level. Video clips of guided oral reading groups were reviewed, followed by discussion of establishing lesson outlines, selecting groups, and deciding on lesson focus points. These topics were also addressed: what is guided oral reading, how to select materials, how to organize for small group instruction, how to deliver instruction during GOR, and how to make connections to the independent work time. These sessions provided the opportunity for teachers to try things and come back to reflect with other teachers and the reading consultant. These workshops will be conducted again during 2005-2006.

Electronic message board: PAE hopes to make extensive use of an electronic message board to facilitate communication with the reading experts and among teachers. Adria Klein will provide answers to teachers' questions which will be available to all teachers using the message board. The message board will also be the site for PAE to post forms and materials requested by teachers, thereby, reaching more teachers more efficiently. Coaches will also use the message board to send out information.

- ***Sustained on-the-job coaching:*** With the launching of the Reading Institute, five literacy coaches were added to the district staff, many being experts in reading instruction, bringing the contingent to eleven. The new literacy coaches participated in Writing Institute training so that they were prepared to coach in writing as well as reading. The experienced literacy coaches participated in the first Reading Institute to prepare themselves for follow-up coaching in reading. Because some coaches were strong in reading and some in writing, they have been meeting to support one another,

identifying needs and ways to address them. Coaches relied on one another, when the experts were not available, to answer questions about the content of writing or reading or the process of coaching.

During 2004-2005, many elementary schools set the goal of taking their school to scale in Writer's Workshop in every classroom while some teachers added components of Reader's Workshop to their practice. Consequently, the work of the literacy coach emphasized providing intensive support to teachers implementing Writer's Workshop, while beginning to support teachers in implementing Reader's Workshop. In 2005-2006, depending on the school, the work of coaches will focus more on supporting teachers who are implementing Reader's Workshop while continuing to support Writer's Workshop implementation.

The reading consultant did on-site coaching for teachers and coaches through cluster visits. Twelve elementary schools were paired into six clusters for school visits by the reading consultant. The cluster visits were made during 2004-2005 to provide additional support to schools not making AYP. Another purpose of the visits was to gain an understanding of reading instruction as it is in Saint Paul and to begin conversations about reading that can be shared across buildings. Participants included the principals, building literacy coordinators, three classroom teachers, and two district staff. During the clusters visits, the participants observed two classrooms in each school followed by a large group debriefing.

Another important part of the cluster visits was the modeling of effective coaching techniques by the reading consultant for the district and school literacy coaches. She demonstrated how she "feeds back" to the teachers the things she noticed and how she helps identify next steps. Cluster visits are planned for 2005-2006 for teachers who completed Reading Institute Level I training in June 2005.

- ***Provision of essential materials:*** In 2004-2005, the district repeated the provision of leveled books and nonfiction books to schools, and, thereby, has gone a significant distance toward providing the materials essential for teaching students to read. One goal set for 2005-2006 is to develop a list, searchable by grade level, of 2000 favorite Read Alouds from teachers who completed Reading Institute Level I.

PAE created a lesson planning tool for teachers to use when planning a Reader's Workshop lesson. On the form, teachers are guided to identify the standard involved, the benchmark, the Principle of Learning involved, the instructional purpose, ritual/routines involved, additional study areas, and independent reading connections.

PAE created a Study Group Packet to guide schools in organizing study groups and to provide a protocol for conducting study group discussions. The packet was introduced during the August 2005 Reading Institute Level II and will be available to schools upon request.

Test prep support for MCA's and BST's was provided for teachers and principals. One area superintendent said, "What we accomplished this year that I am proud of, in those area meetings, was that we did give the principals full understanding of the test specs—they got their test binders. They had everything that they needed to know about those tests."

- ***Building district capacity:*** The reading consultant advised the PAE to begin building capacity within the district from the beginning of the Reading Initiative. During each visit to the district, she met with district literacy coaches to advance their techniques of coaching and conferring with teachers. Literacy coaches also participated in the Guided Oral Reading workshops, the cluster visits, and district reading initiative planning. There will be six meetings of literacy coaches with the reading consultant during 2005-2006.

In summer 2004, all of the Reading Institute Level I training was provided by Adria Klein and six consultants from outside the district. In summer 2005, the presenters were Adria Klein and two outside consultants joined by ten (district and school) literacy coaches and fourteen Saint Paul classroom teachers. Adria Klein continued to be the main speaker, presenting key opening and closing sessions. She also provided extensive guidance to the coaches and teachers during their preparations. The ten coaches chose teachers in their buildings that they believed were successfully implementing Reader's Workshop, and the coach-teacher pair team-taught the sessions using artifacts from the teachers' classrooms.

Beginning in March 2005, coach-teacher teams selected elements to present, videotaped the elements, and collected photos and artifacts in the partner teacher's classroom. All of the teams prepared outlines of their sessions to be critiqued by the reading consultant. All presentations were based on research in that particular element, tied to the district's Reading Frameworks, and embedded with the Principles of Learning. The PowerPoint presentations were all the same format. PAE technology staff conducted a session for the presenters on how to do PowerPoint presentations, how to do video, how to do digital cameras, and then how to incorporate them all into their presentations. Presenters of specific elements, for example, Read Alouds, met together across grade levels to be sure there was consistency of terminology used. Each team put together a folder with all their

presentation materials including disks with their PowerPoint presentations, so that other coaches could use them for future presentations and not have to “reinvent the wheel.”

The reading consultant coached all the presenters on how to be a presenter—what you do to warm up the audience, how you dress, how you engage your audience, and other helpful tips. Each coach-teacher pair did a dress rehearsal with other coaches as their audience. Coaches, who all need to know how to do presentations, found all these sessions to be profoundly helpful learning experiences.

The teacher part of the teaching teams also benefited. The Elementary Administrator, Dorothy Levin, said, “It built confidence in our teachers to take some leadership roles. When they first came, you could see on their faces, ‘what am I doing here, why did I volunteer for this?’ And then once they did it, they felt really good. It also showed the teachers sitting there they could do it too—so it was very empowering.” The evaluations showed that what teachers liked most about the 2005 Reading Institute Level I were the experiences and artifacts that came from their Saint Paul colleagues.

During August 2005, literacy coaches focused on advancing their understanding of Reader's Workshop components. Coaches went through their Reading Institute Level I presentations for the other coaches so that everyone had an overview of Level I training. During the August 2005 Reading Institute Level II, all coaches sat in on all the sessions which were conducted by Adria Klein and her consultants. The coaches focused on the content—the indepth look at the components of Reader's Workshop—and also the presentation of that content. During summer 2006, the district's literacy coaches will take over much of the Level II training.

PAE has found that with the Reading Institutes, the coaches play a collaborative role with the presenters. The coaches have the pulse of what is going on in Saint Paul, the level of growth and implementation, and the pulse of the group of teachers in the sessions, and they work with the consultants to adjust the content, particularly when it needs to be stepped up a bit because it is too basic for the participants. Coaches know when they can go deeper better than consultants coming from the outside. PAE aims to teach to the highest level participants, to be as rigorous as possible, and then the coaches will scaffold those other people during the year to get to that level.

The district will be working with the reading consultant to develop an action plan for the next steps in reading. The Project is trying to align reading kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12). One question to be explored is what more needs to be done to establish a core elementary reading curriculum and consistency up through middle and high school where reading instruction is needed.

When intervention strategies or basic skills classes or reading classes are needed, there will be research-based materials available that are consistent across K-12. Middle schools agree they need some reading courses. High school teachers will be given some reading strategies to use in their content area, particularly when textbooks are beyond the reading level of many students.

- **Demonstration classrooms:** During 2005-2006, PAE will develop demonstration classrooms and will create videotapes with teachers who completed Reading Institute Level II training in August 2005. Teachers often ask to visit a classroom with a fully functioning Reader's Workshop. Classrooms will be identified and procedures developed to make the visits manageable for the teacher being observed. As well as providing support for teachers who have completed Reading Institutes, these district demonstration classrooms will support teachers without training in setting up the Reader's Workshop framework.
- **Multi-level networks:** Many schools organized grade level study groups and cross-grade study groups to develop learning communities around reading instruction. Study groups might read articles about reading research and practice. They might view videos and give feedback or provide help in assessing students' reading proficiency or developing a lesson plan.

District-level study groups, based on grade level and topic of interest, will be formed by October 2005, open to teachers who have attended the Reading Institute Level II training. This follow-up will be led by the reading consultant and the literacy coaches. Each participant will attend the series of six study group sessions during which they will read "Spotlight on Comprehension" by Linda Hoyt, view videotapes from Saint Paul classrooms, and do other readings. They will have an overview of study group protocols and will discuss study group roles, timelines, and procedures for looking at research articles and student work. Each small group will select topics they wish to study in-depth and can select from these broad categories: Laying the Groundwork for Effective Instruction; Crafting Environments that Foster Comprehension; Comprehending Strategically: Questioning, Inferring, Summarizing; Getting at Language: Words, Writing, and Reading Like a Writer; Comprehension Instruction: Read Alouds, Guided Reading, and Independent Reading; Tackling Texts (and Tests) Across the Curriculum; Understanding Comprehension and the Emergent Reader; Supporting Comprehension for English Language Learners; or Considering Instruction that Works.
- **Going to scale across the district:** The Reading Institute Level I was launched for 245 teachers in June 2004 and another 208 in August 2004. Teachers were extraordinarily positive about the facilitators' knowledge and materials. Teachers were challenged by the reading consultant to change

ten percent of their instructional practices in the coming year. They believed they could implement at least ten percent of what they learned, and they felt the most helpful support would be coaching, observing a Reader's Workshop in process, participating in study groups, and being provided books and materials.

For the summer 2005, 212 teachers completed Reading Institutes Level I, and 184 teachers completed Reader's Workshop Level II. There were over 200 more teachers who were interested but there was not sufficient capacity. As the Writing Institutes move to scale across the district, some resources can be shifted to increasing the capacity of the Reading Institutes to meet the demand for all classroom teachers to be trained. Because the district made a commitment not to take teachers out of their buildings for Reading Institutes during the school year, the Project is considering other strategies for getting teachers started while they wait for access to training. Some components of Reader's Workshop will be offered to all interested teachers in after school sessions, coaches will support these teachers as they set up the framework, demonstration classrooms will be opened to them, and study groups will be formed around areas of need for any teachers.

Saint Paul's Model of Content-Focused Literacy Coaching

The primary task of PAE literacy coaches has been to provide follow-up support to teachers implementing Writer's and Reader's Workshop in their classrooms. Over time, they have evolved a variety of models for working with individuals and teams of teachers. Upon request, literacy coaches have assisted principals and teachers in numerous other ways to move the reform forward. In addition, PAE literacy coaches have district-level responsibilities with the Project for Academic Excellence.

District-level roles: PAE literacy coaches provided key staff support to the Writing Institutes, Reading Institutes, and the IFL Instructional Leadership Seminars. Coaches facilitated arrangements before, during, and after the visits of the writing, reading, and IFL consultants. Coaches prepared the schools and classrooms for the Writing Institute Level II collaborative site visits. Beginning in 2003-2004, coaches conducted the school-year trainings for Writing Institutes Level I, both daytime and nighttime trainings. In 2004-2005, they designed a make-up process for teachers who missed a day of training and had not received the certificate of completion. Coaches also designed and conducted Reading Institute sessions during the past two school years and summer 2005. Coaches rolled out the Literacy Frameworks at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. Coaches prepared and conducted test preparation sessions for principals and teachers the past two years. Coaches were assigned to each of the three IFL Cohorts, were members of the cohort planning team, and were presenters at Instructional Leadership Seminars.

School-level coaching models: There were a variety of coaching models used by literacy coaches in working with teachers to implement Writer's and Reader's Workshops, including:

- Coaches worked each week with individual teachers to develop model classrooms. The teacher observed the coach do a mini-lesson, listened in on the coach conferring with students during work time, and watched how the coach did the closing. Debriefings were done through one-on-one conversations or by email. The coach and teacher planned the lessons that the teacher would conduct before the coach returned the following week. This cycle might continue for one unit of study or all year.
- While the coach worked with an individual teacher to develop a model classroom, the other teachers at that grade level observed the demonstration lesson, took part in the debriefing and planning of next steps, and then did the same lessons in their own classrooms. As an alternative to observing, the coach might videotape the lesson, and the other teachers would observe and discuss it at another time. Email was often used to communicate.
- Most schools in their second and third years in PAE not only developed model classrooms but looked for ways to involve the maximum number of teachers for the maximum amount of time with the coach. Many schools developed a model for indepth study, releasing teams of teachers to watch the coach do a demonstration lesson, participate in debriefing the lesson, look at the student work that came out of the lesson, and make a concrete plan for subsequent lessons. Teachers and coaches have found that fifty-minutes is not enough time to complete a debriefing and planning session. Schools have found that releasing teams by grade level or by primary or intermediate levels for a half-day or even a full-day made it possible for the coach to help teachers plan a full unit of study.
- The coach met with individuals or grade-alike teams of teachers after a unit had been taught by the teachers. The teachers and coach examined the student work and the rubrics and went over the unit and lesson plans. Sometimes just through discussion, the teachers and the coach could identify modifications for the next time the unit would be taught.
- Sometimes after a year of indepth coaching with all teachers at a grade level, the coach worked with them on an on-call basis. In one example, the kindergarten team met on its own every Monday to reflect and tweak; they included the coach one Monday each month. The coach also might observe them teach occasionally, provide materials and resources if needed, and respond to emails.
- Some teachers just needed the coach to answer questions or be sure they have the latest resources or the updated unit. They might approach the coach at school or by email.

- Coaches use email extensively to keep in touch with the entire staff in their schools and to inform them about their work in the building and about available opportunities. They might have a weekly or monthly news email.
- Coaches might check in periodically with all teachers in a building who have been trained, individually or by team, to see how they were doing and determine whether they could provide assistance.

Coaches played other roles within their assigned schools: Principals and teachers went to the literacy coaches for help with other components of PAE, including:

- Coaches helped with—perhaps co-led with the principal—professional development related to the Principles of Learning, the Learning Walk, or using standards to assess student work. Coaches helped schools prepare for Learning Walks led by the principal. Coaches and principals met to identify professional development needs in the building.
- Coaches kept school staffs informed of upcoming events and encouraged teachers to attend.
- Coaches found or gave advice about materials teachers needed. They might help order and organize materials for genre baskets and classroom and school libraries. They might provide or make schools aware of relevant professional materials. They might assist in creating standards-based bulletin boards.
- Coaches did a lot of “4 to 6’s” (meetings from 4:00 to 6:00) to work with after-school study groups around the Principles of Learning or around Writer's or Reader's Workshops. They helped teachers make up portions of Writer's Workshop that they had missed in order to complete certification and go on to the next level.
- Coaches might help develop or review the School Continuous Improvement Plans to be sure that the goals and activities related to writing and reading made sense as next steps.
- Coaches have worked with schools to integrate Writer's and Reader's Workshop with other comprehensive reform models (e.g., Success For All) and magnet themes (e.g., arts integration, science education). For example, one coach met with a school's fourth grade teachers and the Neighborhood Bridges program staff to develop an outline for integration of the Neighborhood Bridges drama and writing curriculum and the district's writing program.
- A coach with ELL expertise met with grade level teams of ELL teachers to help with implementing Writer's Workshop in the collaborative model.

Building capacity of the district coaches: From the beginning of the Project, there has been considerable attention to building the capacity of PAE literacy coaches. Details on how both the writing and reading

consultants worked to build the capacity of coaches are contained above under the Writing Initiative and Reading Initiative sections respectively.

Coaches also rely on one another when the expert is not there. They consult each other and share materials they have developed for teaching Writer's Workshop Level I or components of Reader's Workshop. They work together to prepare additional training sessions that principals and teachers request and make the materials available to the other coaches. There is a file cabinet at the Center where coaches store lesson plans that have worked for them. Coaches call on one another for advice on questions that arise in their work with schools. One specific example occurred when a first year coach worried about modeling best practices including teacher preparedness. She found she was not always able to write up the lesson for the day until she had seen the student work from the day before. Another coach shared the procedure she worked out with the teachers she coached. She asked the teachers to leave a sampling of the student work in a little bin by the classroom door. The coach could arrive early, grab the work, and finish developing her lesson. The first year coach was reassured that she was modeling best practice by looking at student work before finalizing her follow-up lesson.

A challenge for coaches in the coming year will be to support both Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop. There will always be new teachers in their schools who are new to both. There will be teachers who are quite strong and may be beyond the expertise of the coach.

For professional development purposes, the literacy coaches have strengths and areas of expertise. But for coaching purposes, they must see themselves as both reading and writing coaches. They will need to know as much as they can about both in order to feel comfortable coaching teachers even though they might not feel comfortable being the provider of professional development in that area of expertise. With some topics, the coaches have had the same training as the teachers they are coaching.

Coaches will likely do more collaboration, taking advantage of each other's strengths and expertise, and doing some paired coaching when it works out. Coaches might also work together to form study groups across schools when they find teachers with similar topics they would like to explore.

With the growing number of teachers with training in both Writer's Workshop and Reader's Workshop, there will be more requests for assistance as teachers learn to connect the two. Two coaches, one with expertise in writing and one with expertise in reading, helped a teacher who was teaching a poetry unit in reading and writing. The three of them learned more about making strong connections between, for example, the poem used in Reader's Workshop for schema and visualizing and writing a poem in Writer's Workshop that makes pictures with words.

Achievement Plus

In Achievement Plus schools, the mission states “Achievement Plus community schools are the foundation of a comprehensive urban education reform model that integrates the school community, families, and the resources of public and private organizations to ensure academic achievement for all students.”

A Short History of Achievement Plus

In the late 1990s, The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation President Tom Kingston along with Director of Services to Children and Families Claudia Dengler (now Vice President of Programs) were exploring ways to expand Wilder’s efforts to close the achievement gap between low- and middle-income students. They suggested an approach based on the Children’s Aid Society model for full-service community schools. With that model in mind, the Wilder Foundation joined with Saint Paul Public Schools, Ramsey County, and the City of Saint Paul as founding partners of Achievement Plus.

Achievement Plus was launched in Saint Paul schools that represented different types of education challenges so that local partners could see how the model worked in diverse settings before implementing it district-wide. One of the model schools was Dayton’s Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School (Dayton's Bluff), a low-performing school serving economically and culturally diverse students and families in the district. The second was Monroe Achievement Plus Community School (Monroe), a school that needed to improve academically but was not viewed as deeply troubled. The third school would test how the model worked when implemented from day one at a new school in a neighborhood with predispositions for failure. That school, opened in 2000-01, was John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School (Johnson).

The initiative evolved through several informal phases. After initial model designing and soliciting of support, Achievement Plus began in Monroe and Dayton's Bluff in 1997-98. During the first three years, the initiative focused on completing physical expansions in the school buildings and putting the core components of an Extended Learning program, Family Resource Centers, and access to health care and social services in place. In 1999-2000, the new Saint Paul Public School's Superintendent, Patricia A. Harvey, embraced the Achievement Plus initiative and sought to build on it within the district.

When Maria J. Lamb came to Saint Paul as executive director of Achievement Plus in the summer of 2000, she developed a strategic plan for the initiative, focusing on immediate needs for a strong curriculum, encouraging principals and staff to work within the Achievement Plus model, and aligning the Extended Learning program more closely with the curriculum. The three Achievement Plus schools

also became part of the initial cohort of “stellar” schools that were early implementers of *Saint Paul’s Project for Academic Excellence* (PAE), the district’s comprehensive reform model.

The Achievement Plus Components

The Achievement Plus model combines strong educational practices with an array of additional services that help children become physically, emotionally, and socially ready to learn. The model has three strands: Curriculum and Instruction which aligns to standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment; Learning Supports which addresses barriers to learning; and Extended Learning which provides additional learning opportunities for students.

The three strands are integrated into each school site as much as possible. Learning Supports and Extended Learning have representatives on each school’s Design Leadership Team (DLT), along with the school principal and representatives of the academic staff. As well as guiding the school day instructional program, the team considers ways to strengthen the Extended Learning and Learning Supports programs. For example, the Johnson DLT funded a position to increase Extended Learning experiences in math for grades four through six students.

Learning Supports: Achievement Plus schools hope to identify any barriers that may impede students' learning. The purpose of Learning Supports is to provide students with the support that enables them to come to the classroom prepared to learn. This may mean working with the entire family to stabilize housing, access medical services, provide support for children who do not arrive at school on time, or provide opportunities for the parents to learn English and understand how to support their students' learning.

Achievement Plus staff work extensively with community partners to make certain the community schools provide assistance that students and families need and to coordinate and not duplicate services. Some examples at Johnson include the Eastside Family Center and a tutoring program overseen by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Learning Supports staff have been involved with a Johnson community development task force that developed a plan for housing in the immediate area. The development would mean new affordable housing and more stability for families in the school community. Learning Supports' staff at both Dayton's Bluff and Johnson continuously inform the teaching staffs and students about the services available so that everyone works together to head off crisis situations such as immediate evictions, the need for warm winter coats or mittens, or school-appropriate clothing for students.

Students are more able to concentrate on academics if their families have stable living conditions, can be referred to food shelves, or can get help finding jobs from the ground up—writing and typing resumes and consulting a job availability list. The Family Resource Centers’ outreach staffs have built relationships with landlords in order to address struggles of both landlords and families in the community. The Family Resource Center talks with families and landlords to resolve problems that may arise, and sometimes, a landlord may decrease the rent and/or make special provisions for covering a damage deposit. Parents may be referred to other agencies for further housing assistance as necessary. Achievement Plus staff members believe they are not enabling students and families; they are empowering them.

There are many events that bring parents into the schools. Family Resource Centers telephone parents to remind them of events, particularly parent-teacher conferences, resulting, for example, in attendance of ninety percent (90%) of Dayton's Bluff parents. Schools offer workshops for parents, in their native languages, to deal with questions such as: How can I help my child be successful in school? How can I get more involved in school? How can I build a good relationship with the teacher? Dayton's Bluff has a “Cook and Book” course for families to cook, eat, read, and do an activity together. Dayton's Bluff also has a Vista worker who coordinates about one hundred volunteers. At Johnson, there are events for families from the school and community, such as adult ELL classes and a monthly baby shower with games, prizes, and presents.

Because access is often a barrier for kids getting the services they need, there are mental health services available within the school building at Johnson. Mental health services at the other two Achievement Plus schools have been downsized due to a funder financial concern. As well as providing therapy to individual students, teachers at Johnson may contact the mental health staff for ideas on supporting a child in the classroom or ask the psychologist to come into the classroom to work with a whole class on some life skill training. One example is a fifth grade class that was having issues concerning sexual harassment, and the mental health staff provided support for the students in that class. Mental health staff at Johnson provides limited individual therapy for students as requested by the school staff and with parent permission. With regard to physical health needs, the St. Mary’s Health Clinic provides on-site services to John A. Johnson students, their families and to community members one day per week. Beginning in fall, 2005, the Indian Health Board-Saint Paul Clinic will provide on-site services to John A. Johnson students, families and community members and to Saint Paul Native American community members two days per week.

Johnson Elementary piloted the Primary Project, which is an early intervention program for kindergarten to third grade students who are not connecting to school and not doing well academically. One example

is a boy who, for weeks during his half-hour weekly play sessions, chose to play with dinosaurs that battled and killed each other. The child associate reflected back to him what she saw, and finally, one week, he brought toy babies into the play, and they did not die. The child associate reflected back to him again, and he said, “Yes, I protected the babies. You know, my dad was shot and killed.” This disclosure changed everything for him. He had found a safe place, and he started to do better in class at school.

To address a common physical health problem for children, Johnson piloted an asthma management program that will soon expand to almost every district school, through a grant received by the school district. One success story involved several children with significant asthma problems who lived with their grandmother. The housing advocates visited the grandmother and saw that an entire wall in her apartment was black with mold. They worked with the landlord to clean up the mold; however, there were other problems with the apartment. Ultimately, they found her a “wonderful” new apartment and helped her get a grant to pay her back rent so she could move into the new home.

Extended Learning Opportunities: Extended Learning programs provide a safety net of before- and after-school academic assistance and enrichment opportunities for students. Extended Learning builds upon instruction the students receive during the school day. The programs combine additional academic instruction with a wide variety of recreational activities such as art, swimming, dance, nutrition, sports, and various clubs. These activities are carried out in partnership with the YMCA, City of Saint Paul Park and Recreation Department, local colleges, and community organizations.

The goal is to integrate the Extended Learning program closely with the instruction during the school day. Achievement Plus Extended Learning staff members attend professional development with the regular day teachers from the schools, particularly Literacy Workshops presented during one week in August before school starts. As a result, staff members understand the components of the workshop model. They are not all teachers, and they don’t duplicate what the teachers are doing, but everyone shares a common language. For example, the Director of Extended Learning programs has facilitated a literature circle with a group of fifth graders. Through this activity, he expanded his instructional knowledge and became more comfortable with the structure of the classroom and learned some new teaching strategies. Some Extended Learning staff are also trained in Responsive Classroom (school-wide behavior model), so that the after-school program can reinforce and support the school-day program.

Integrating the Extended Learning program with the instruction during the school day requires a great deal of communication. For example, at Dayton’s Bluff, the design and literacy coaches are the go-betweens. They attempt to make sure that Extended Learning staff members receive all the pertinent

information from the school-day teachers. They work with the Extended Learning staff to identify academic themes that the program can focus on during the course of the year. These targets support the schools monthly academic expectations, while guiding the daily instruction of the Extended Learning teaching staff. The Extended Learning Director reflected, “With the adoption of a unified, standards-based reform model, everything is radically changed. We can lay out a skeleton structure of what the instructional focuses will be for the next year, giving us time to digest it, to consult with school staff, and to implement a program that effectively supports instruction.”

Another way to integrate the two curriculums is to have the regular day teachers teach their own students in the Extended Learning Program. A Johnson teacher has seen success with that arrangement:

When I taught this year, I had a group of three to five kids from my own class that I worked with. In that really little group, you can see what is confusing them – you can watch long enough to figure it out. I've noticed that those are the same kids that I've had a combination of attention and behavior problems with. You really form a relationship with them during that after-school time and that carries out through the day. My students are doing great because of the safety nets. [Some] do not need supports any more because they got them when they needed them. Others are still getting support even though they are not very far behind. I'm afraid if we drop the support, they are going to start slipping, so we just keep right at it.

Summer school is also an extension of the school year. Students may have the same teacher and pick up where they left off, or their regular teacher will assess each child in their class and pass on an individual academic profile for each student to the summer school teacher. Throughout the district, students are invited to attend summer school based on their specific educational need. Principals encourage their regular teachers to teach in summer school, although that is not always a possibility.

The Achievement Plus Extended Learning Program has also created a living document, updated periodically, that articulates “successful” program practices over the past six years. It is their “historical toolkit” detailing how they have developed their program and what they learned about (1) quality staffing, (2) recruitment and attendance of students, (3) integration with standards, (4) school collaboration, and (5) community partnerships.

One of their ongoing challenges has been recruiting and retaining licensed teachers from the three schools who can most effectively integrate Extended Learning with the school day instructional program. It is more difficult for licensed staff from outside the district to connect Extended Learning experiences to the school day instruction. Ongoing professional development and teaching is hard work, and teachers are not always able to work longer than their regular contract day. Veteran teachers are less interested in working in the after-school program than are newer teachers. Some of the most stable and consistent staff

members for Extended Learning are the schools' Education Assistants and Teaching Assistants, and they know the students.

In the first years of implementation, Monroe's Extended Learning program was not successful at connecting the instruction during the school day with the Extended Learning sessions or of recruiting school day teachers to teach in the program. Also, students who rode buses to and from school were not taking full advantage of the extra help. A new manager was key to reorganizing the program and resolving these issues. The manager worked with the school's curriculum coordinator to link the Extended Learning curriculum to the curriculum maps that teachers developed for the school day program. In addition, school day teachers volunteered when they were given the opportunity to work with their own students during Extended Learning. These teachers encouraged their students to participate, and they got to know them better. To reassure students, extra vigilance was given to be sure every student was on their bus to go home. During 2004-2005, the Extended Learning program contributed to the gains in achievement for Monroe students.

There are multiple funding sources for Extended Learning. The Achievement Plus schools have worked collaboratively with a Reading Excellence grant, have received 21st Century grants, and utilize Area Learning Center funding. Achievement Plus schools' programming is also dependent on the financial situation of their partners. In previous years, some supportive services have been cut back when the partners funding streams were reduced. The Johnson design coach emphasized the importance of all the services:

We would not be where we are without the Extended Learning program and the Learning Supports. The children are here and they are healthier when they're here. After school they do the academics, and they have the tutoring program. That's very important. It provides support for those kids that need more time to learn. They just need more time because they're coming in with not as much. We've been given the tools to make a difference in the lives of these children. We have the tools. If we can't do it with the support we have, I don't think anyone can.

Instructional Model: Infusing standards-based curriculum and instruction throughout the Achievement Plus schools was a key charge beginning in the 2000-2001 school year. Dayton's Bluff and Johnson began implementing the America's Choice instructional model, a proprietary model of the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), in 2000-01, and Monroe began in 2001-02. When *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* was introduced in the summer of 2001, Achievement Plus schools were early implementers. *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* was designed to bring the district's ambitious instructional reform efforts together around a standards-based model, incorporating some of the important work undertaken in the district in past years, including Achievement Plus.

America's Choice training: As called for by the America's Choice model, a design coach and a literacy coach were designated at each school. The coaches attended intensive institutes both across the country and in Saint Paul three or four times a year for four to five days. Each time, they brought the materials, ideas, and concepts back and trained teachers for the next few weeks, passing on what they learned. This professional development typically occurred within each school every other week all year. Each school's principal was part of the principals' network and went to meetings for two days at a time to learn about the design and how to move it forward.

During 2000-01, through their America's Choice work, Dayton's Bluff and Johnson teachers had training, provided by their literacy coaches, in the workshop model both in reading and writing. In the fall of 2001, Dayton's Bluff essentially started over after being restructured, and Monroe began their first year of America's Choice implementation. The schools participated fully with America's Choice training for the three years required by that model, although they made individual school decisions about the pace of training teachers and implementing America's Choice strategies.

PAE training: At the same time the schools were implementing America's Choice strategies, they joined the *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* when the Writing Institutes were launched in the district in August 2001. All the licensed teachers from the three Achievement Plus schools participated together as a school staff in the summer Writing Institutes, making it possible for every teacher to participate in the same training at the same time. By 2003, they had completed three one-week summer Writing Institutes led by a national expert and consultant. During each of these three years, a person from each grade level went to the Writing Institute Level II training involving the observation of classes during the school day. After August 2001, implementation of Writer's Workshop utilized both the structure of America's Choice and the structure and content of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence*. In the fall of 2004, most of the Achievement Plus teachers attended their first PAE Reading Institute to add depth to their teaching of reading.

PAE pilot and demonstration sites: The year before launching the first Writing Institute, Monroe was the pilot school for the Writing Institute. Because Johnson was to be a demonstration school for the Writing Institute, their design and literacy coaches received early training with the national consultant by participating in a weeklong session with an El Paso, Texas, group. The coaches returned and prepared the Johnson teachers to provide the demonstration lessons for the 2001-02 Writer's Workshop Level II training. By 2002-03, both Johnson and Monroe teachers were collaborative sites at which teachers

taught demonstration classes during Level II training. Dayton's Bluff became a collaborative site, increasing the capacity of the training because Dayton's Bluff has more sections for each grade level.

Coaches' role: The role of the design and literacy coaches at the Achievement Plus schools has been to provide extensive professional development and coaching for their teachers. They use what they learned from PAE Writing Institutes and instructional leadership seminars, from America's Choice training, from attending additional workshops and conferences, and from doing their own reading. Much of their work with teachers has been done during team or staff meetings scheduled every other week at their school. In addition, teachers might meet by grade levels during a common prep time, or weekly by departments at the upper grade level. At Monroe, with specialization from grade three through eight, teachers worked in reading, writing, and math groups at those grade levels. Coaches and teachers collaborated on unit and lesson design, on curriculum mapping, and on review of student work. Coaches planned the professional development teachers needed to enable them to use new strategies. They identified additional professional development needs through their work with teachers and through Learning Walks with the principal and others.

Data based decisions: Achievement Plus schools place heavy emphasis on ongoing data based decision-making. Principals and coaches have been trained to look at their student data, identify students' weak areas, and collaborate with teachers to plan strategies to address the needs. At Dayton's Bluff, the coaches guide teachers four times a year in developing "class plans" for reading, writing, and math. One literacy coach talked about the importance of continuous assessment:

We started looking at the SAT10's and the MCAs in addition to the criterion referenced exams provided by America's Choice. We saw that kids were low in main idea. Then we asked ourselves what can we do to teach main idea? Who doesn't have it in your classroom? In addition to these formal class plans, our teachers are constantly assessing on a daily basis, whether it's during conferring for five minutes during reading or writing, whether it's taking work home and looking at the writing, or whether it's at grade level meetings.

Instructional leadership: Both PAE and America's Choice focus on the principals' responsibility to assure the efficacy of implementation of the reform in their schools. America's Choice trained school leaders to do Focused Walks as a way to observe implementation of the model. When the Achievement Plus schools became involved with PAE instructional leadership seminars led by an Institute for Learning national consultant, they practiced Learning Walks, which is a similar strategy taking the principal and teachers into classrooms to observe teaching and learning. One of the "big" messages principals learned was to be in the classrooms. The Johnson principal attested, "When I can't get into classrooms, I feel I'm not doing part of my job. We do business differently now."

Reflections on America's Choice and Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence

By the end of 2003-04, the three Achievement Plus schools had completed their three years of intensive America's Choice training. They continue their work with *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* comprehensive reform model. The principals, coaches, and teachers reflected on their experiences with both and identified what these pieces brought to their schools.

America's Choice moves the implementation forward: Johnson's design coach summarized how America's Choice propelled implementation of reform:

Because we paid for this training, everybody was really focused. We were having staff development, and there was such a focus that it did get done. Everybody in the school does Writer's and Reader's Workshop. Everybody has classroom libraries. Everybody sends books home every single night. There are book logs by every single child in this school. There are certain things in this school everybody is doing.

But something was missing: After participants had experienced both America's Choice and PAE, they identified what was missing from their work with America's Choice:

America's Choice provided a wonderful structure for us and the new performance standards are very clear goals of where we want to take our children. We had training and some strategies to reach the standards, so we were teaching to the standard, but we knew something was missing. America's Choice told you to do mini-lessons, but they didn't give any mini-lessons to do. With America's Choice, they use the NCEE standards book, and they give you samples of how a narrative piece should look. But it's not a manual; they don't tell you how to get there.

PAE Writing Institutes were a key component: Everyone agreed that the Writing Institutes led by Susan Radley, the national consultant to the district, were a crucial addition to teachers' implementation of Writer's Workshop:

She really provided the content for the structure—the workshop model. She is the depth of what you do and how to do it effectively during that workshop once you have set it up. She presented us the genre study structure. America's Choice started some of that during 2002-03 but had only one genre per grade level. Those are good, but the depth that she provides is extraordinary.

When Monroe was recruited to be the pilot school for the Writing Institute, eight teachers across all grades volunteered to work with Susan Radley during that year before the Writing Institutes were launched. One of the volunteers, a sixth grade teacher, provided this assessment, "Susan Radley is such a good teacher, and I learned TONS about the teaching of writing from her." A kindergarten teacher remembered, "It was a good staff development model—you learn about it, you go try it, you come back and de-brief." She had been doing reading and writing in first grade and in kindergarten since she was trained in Reading Recovery. But she said:

I was sort of stuck and didn't know how to accelerate the children. Genre studies were the key, and Susan gave suggestions for what our units of study should be. You could grab onto that as a

teacher. Most of us had never approached writing like that. We never intentionally created the strong link between literature and writing. We never used mentor books—Touchstone Books. She provided a lot of book lists of good literature that we could use for writing. We hadn't used children's writing in our mini-lesson. We had never taught from a Writer's Notebook. There are so many components that opened up. We certainly hadn't done poetry at the primary level. By spring of that very first year, she wanted us to try some poetry, and at kindergarten, I had done only group poems. She suggested I take the next step and have the children write individual poetry. And so I did, and it went fairly well.

A teacher who had read about Writer's Workshop years ago, reflected:

I was never really sure how to put it into practice. We were given a blueprint for how to do it, the rituals and the routines and the structure of the writing time. [Susan] not only told us how to do it but she modeled how to do it. She modeled the mini-lesson, and she modeled the conferencing. She modeled the expectation that students would be writing for a certain period of time; she modeled the share time. That is a great way to learn.

Integrating America's Choice and PAE's Writing Institute: Coaches at the three schools all agreed that they integrated the content of the PAE Writing Institutes and America's Choice training. PAE provided more content, including for the mini-lesson instructional piece, and the connection between Readers' and Writers' Workshop was much greater. The literacy coach at Monroe described the integration as a “layering of learning”:

When I did the learning on my own, I read the books of Lucy Calkins and various Writer's Workshop people—this was back in the early 90s—then put it in place the way that made sense to me. Then when I got the training from America's Choice, they put rules around it and gave it a stronger framework—how it was supposed to look, what the kids were supposed to do, and what I was supposed to do. They brought standards in, which back in the early 90's weren't really there. Then, with Writing Institute training, it brought a different level of rigor. We looked at the writing itself so that we could make sure our teachers knew what good writing was in the variety of genres, and then, make sure we could teach it to our kids. It's great layering of learning over the years, which is the way you learn!

Role of the PAE Instructional Leadership Seminars: Many Achievement Plus staff described the PAE instructional leadership seminars, led by the Institute for Learning (IFL), as the theoretical umbrella which provided the nine Principles of Learning. One of the things that one principal understood from the Principles of Learning was that, if you work hard, you'll get smarter. “It's all about effort-based education, how much effort you put into it and the expectations that you have for the kids.” Dayton's Bluff's coaches said, “The [PAE] gave us the opportunity to study three Principles of Learning in depth: Clear Expectations, Accountable Talk, and Academic Rigor. It took the curriculum a step further to look at academic rigor and how to place that in the classroom.” Principals and coaches brought what they learned during the PAE seminars back to their schools, trained teachers in ways to use the Principles of Learning with their students, and looked for evidence of these principles during Learning Walks.

The major focus of the PAE seminars was on developing instructional leaders across the role groups in the schools and in the district. One principal explained the shared, instructional leadership that he learned from his involvement:

It's taken me three years to become semi-proficient in this instructional leadership piece. You have to get into the classrooms to see if the teachers are actually teaching and the students are actually getting what the teachers are trying to teach them. It's about understanding standards and what kids are expected to do. Instructional leadership doesn't actually mean the principal being in the classrooms all the time. It's being able to understand the strengths of the people you have in your building and being able to let them lead without fearing that you're incompetent. My design and literacy coaches are my eyes and ears, and we talk all the time. They have a revolving door in that classroom they're in; it's like a "think tank." That's where they do their research. That's where a lot of the professional development planning is done. My job right now is to provide the best professional development that I can for my coaches—my design and literacy coaches—and provide the best development that I can for my teachers, and to continue to create an environment where teachers can teach and students can learn.

Integrating the reform models: Achievement Plus schools have learned the importance of ongoing district support if a school staff is to implement a comprehensive reform model. As one coach summed it up:

America's Choice tries to give you an entire, comprehensive school reform in three years, which is not realistic, but because of the cost of it, it's the way it has to be. So what PAE has done for us is to then take us more deeply into using each of the pieces that we've gotten from America's Choice. So in some ways, it was like America's Choice gave us this great framework, gave us an overview of how to reform the school in a deep and whole way, and then they left. And PAE has picked that up exactly where we needed it and continued to support us as we're learning all those pieces.

One principal added:

The district is able to support us with district-level coaching and continued staff development, both for the leadership of the building and for the staff, so we'll be able to continue this initiative well into the future, and it won't just die. That's huge.

Achievement Plus Schools Pave the Way in the District

While laying the groundwork for *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence*, Patricia A. Harvey and Maria J. Lamb learned from and incorporated much of the significant work that the Achievement Plus schools had undertaken in the past few years.

Phasing in the reform model: The district developed a strategy for implementing comprehensive school reform in small increments. Achievement Plus schools learned from experience that they could not begin all the components at once. For example, Dayton's Bluff, when they started over, decided as a team that they were just going to do Writer's Workshop the first year. Since then, near the end of a school year, the design and literacy coaches illustrate to the teachers where they would be going the next year. For

instance, in April 2003, they introduced teachers to Reader's Workshop and asked them to try some things for the next two months—try to do the hour with the mini-lesson, work time, and sharing. Teachers were encouraged to try guided reading and other strategies if they knew how to conduct them. Then in September, step-by-step, they began implementing Reader's Workshop.

Needing additional resources: The three schools had extra resources to do this work. In addition to funding for Extended Learning and Learning Supports programs, the schools have had funding for additional materials and extended time for professional development. During the first years, Johnson teachers' contracts were extended to add twenty days for professional development; they continue to have ten extra days. Dayton's Bluff also has ten extra days for professional development. To provide for needed materials and professional development, several PAE schools sought Comprehensive School Reform and Reading Excellence grants from the state of Minnesota. The district also received a grant from the Robins, Kaplan, Miller, and Ciresi Foundation for these purposes. Special funding requests have been designed toward sustainability at the end of the grant—using funds to build up classroom libraries and to pay for extra time for professional development needed.

Exploring kindergarten philosophy: The kindergarten classrooms at Monroe are often visited by other kindergarten teachers from across the district, and they demonstrate the strength of the workshop way in allowing each child to work to their potential. Many visiting teachers saw the student work during training and began implementing Writer's Workshop in their own classrooms. At the beginning of the reform effort, there was no consensus among kindergarten teachers on the developmental appropriateness of Writer's and Reader's Workshop for kindergarten students.

Developing curriculum maps: The early implementers of Writer's and Reader's Workshops are well along in mapping out genre studies for each grade level and integrating the writing with the reading. In the three Achievement Plus schools, the on-site literacy coaches and/or design coaches meet with teachers from each grade level to work on curriculum mapping, including standards, rubric development, and collecting samples of student work. The coaches have developed expectation checklists for the teachers to follow for a month or a year. At the same time, the district coaches have built a literacy scope and sequence for kindergarten through grade six.

Developing new genre studies: After three years, Achievement Plus teachers had enough experience in genre studies to launch new genre units of study. Staff at Johnson reported:

We have been given a kind of blueprint on how to teach new genres. We know the system of incorporating Reader's and Writer's Workshops. We know how to do the immersion piece, and we know how important it is. We have to have samples and mentor texts, some of which we read

aloud. We know how to do the exploration piece. We know how to plant seeds in their notebooks so they have something to write on. We know how to come up with our own criteria or rubrics with the students. We know about the whole process kids need to go through, how to develop scaffolding experiences that kids need to be successful. We've been exposed to various types of publications and different kinds of reflective pieces that children need to do at the end. We're able to take it now and generalize it, and that, to us, is very exciting. As we did our curriculum maps, we went into genres that we have not been taught how to do. But we have confidence that we know how to do them now.

Raising expectations and achievement: By 2003-2004, there was considerable evidence that student achievement was strong in Achievement Plus schools. A Monroe teacher said that student writing had improved enormously because they had become better teachers.

We are better able to present to the student, and then they are better able to perform. With the standards and the rubrics, you can really help children understand what you expect and where they should be headed for the final project. One of the happiest things that has come out of this is that I see students who think of themselves as writers. It is very pleasant to hear 'I am a poet; I am a writer' coming from their mouths.

A composite of comments from Johnson staff members concludes:

The difference in three years is phenomenal. We had every child at grade level last year. We have the majority of them this year. Two years ago we had less than one-fourth. The difference in writing is just unbelievable. So it's phenomenal. It's making a difference.

The 2004 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments were quite significant for Dayton's Bluff. The principal responded:

We're very proud. I just saw the superintendent and she said, 'I couldn't believe it.' I knew we were going to do well; I didn't know we were going to do that well. But you know what? We believe in these kids. They will reach any expectation that you set for them, if they know that you care and believe in them. And we do that here, and the sky's the limit with this school. I told the staff three years ago that we were going to lead the way in balanced literacy. We're going to lead this district, and we're doing that now.

However, principals and teachers knew their journey was not over. They were still learning how to assess student work against standards and learning how much more to expect of the students. Among the three schools, student achievement levels differed, probably because of differing expectations and skill in analyzing students' needs.

The work of raising the expectations of students and teachers was ongoing work. From a principal's perspective:

High expectations is constantly believing in [the students] and telling them that we care about them. I tell them 'you are not different from the kids out in the suburbs or the kids in the private schools, and you can compete on that level. But it comes down to, when you walk through those doors, you've got to give me 100%. This is about learning.' I tell them, 'we were number one in

the state last year in fifth grade math, top ten in fifth grade reading, and third grade math.’ I say, ‘do you guys like being number two?’ They ‘say no, we want to be number one.’

By 2003-2004, student achievement at Dayton's Bluff served as evidence that urban students can achieve at a high level when a school engages in comprehensive reform. The Monroe principal said, “Thank goodness Dayton's Bluff is out there. Because every time teachers come to me, and they say, ‘Yeah, but...,’ I can say, ‘Dayton’s Bluff did it.’ We pale compared to Dayton’s Bluff. So what is it they did?”

To address student achievement, Monroe school structures were developed or refined to facilitate sharing and problem-solving within learning communities. Monroe staff focused their work on increasing their skill in using assessment to determine instruction. In study groups, the staff learned to use assessment information to identify students’ needs, and they shared teaching strategies to address them. The school set expectations for study group activity that included considerable time looking at student work and student assessments. Teachers in the building with high levels of expertise made important contributions within the study groups. The study groups solved important questions, for example, why the third graders’ comprehension levels were much higher on the diagnostic assessment than on the MCAs. Together the third grade teachers decided to use a higher level of diagnostic assessment and found that it gave them a more accurate measure of students’ skills.

Additional support was provided by the principal through one-on-one meetings with teachers to help monitor student progress. Together, teachers updated and refined their curriculum maps and teaching strategies. The Minnesota AYP coaches helped Monroe align their required AYP plan to their district School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP), both focusing on the examination of student work and on using assessment to inform instruction. The school structures were aligned to focus on raising student achievement.

2004-2005 student achievement: The Monroe principal and teachers saw their intense work pay off in improved student achievement, and their expectations and faith in the students increased. Their students scored significantly higher than in the previous year on all three 2004-2005 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments related to literacy: third and fifth grade reading and fifth grade writing. All three Achievement Plus schools continued to perform well and did meet all Annual Yearly Progress targets.

Looking Ahead

The Achievement Plus initiative has created models of full-service community schools that provide support for the academic achievement of students. After several years of providing particular programs

and services at the three sites, Achievement Plus knows a lot about the problems and some of the solutions for providing effective supports for students and their families.

Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence staff members know a lot about the essential components of a comprehensive reform model and know how it looks at different stages of implementation in schools across the district. They know how it looks at Dayton's Bluff, which was a very low-performing school that made significant progress. They know from Johnson how it looks in a new school designated a demonstration school. And they know how it looks at Monroe, an existing school that needed improvement but was not deeply troubled. They saw how school leaders and staff learned from each other, adopted successful leadership and instructional strategies, and made mid-course corrections where necessary.

The best features of Achievement Plus are spreading to other Saint Paul schools. “We now have all K-8 district schools coming together around the instructional strategies we honed in the three Achievement Plus schools,” Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey noted about the initiative. “It’s systemic—we can see it in every school in the project. The establishment of rituals and routines is self-evident when you go from room to room. You see the same things—author’s chair, leveled books, and the standards that make it clear what we want kids to know and be able to do. We see kids writing some publishable materials.”

The conversations among the staff from the Achievement Plus schools and across the district are quite different from when the project began. Maria J. Lamb reflected on the district’s phased-in approach and the idea of finding stellar principals and teachers who were ready to jump in because they could see that achievement was not equal for all students. She noted, “We put our resources to work at all levels, whether they are principals, area superintendents, teachers, or special education, and we are able to begin to have the same conversations at all levels. The district has had the opportunity to learn from the first group, including the Achievement Plus schools. The other thing that is happening in those first schools is that a student who goes from kindergarten to first grade to third grade to sixth grade is hearing teachers use the same common language. The schools and the classrooms are opening up and we are engaging in the conversation so we can learn from each other. I couldn’t be more proud to be with this group of people from Saint Paul—a district on the move.”

Junior High Initiative

In the summer of 2003, *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* (PAE) launched the Junior High Literacy Initiative. The junior high reform initiative employs all the components of the PAE comprehensive reform model. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are standards-based. Shared instructional leadership at the school and district levels are key components of implementation. The professional development model employs a strong team of trainers, sustained on-the-job coaching, demonstration classrooms, Nested Learning Communities, and Learning Walks. Professional development focuses on the Principles of Learning and the Disciplinary Literacy Framework (DL), both developed by the Institute for Learning (IFL). The implementation plan focuses on the four core subject areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—integrating strategies for reading and writing throughout the content. There is a strategy for going to scale across the district.

Standards-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: In the primary grades, the term “literacy” refers to reading and writing. In junior high school, as academic subject matter becomes more complex, so does the definition of “literacy.” Literacy at the secondary level is anchored in the specifics of individual disciplines.

Disciplinary Literacy is defined as mastery of both the core ideas and concepts and the habits of mind of one or more disciplines. The driving idea behind the Disciplinary Literacy Framework is that knowledge and thinking must go hand in hand. To develop deep conceptual knowledge in a discipline, one needs to use the habits of mind that are valued and used in that discipline. At the same time, to develop strategic and powerful discipline-specific habits of mind, one needs to be directed by one’s content knowledge. In math, students will learn content by doing the work of mathematicians, students in social studies will work like historians, and students in science will be scientists. Thus, teachers must have content experience—including both the conceptual knowledge and the habits of mind of their disciplines—and pedagogical strategies, or habits of practice, that scaffold students’ learning.

Toward this goal, five principles provide a model for designing standards-based instruction that supports learning and teaching within the Disciplinary Literacy Framework: (1) students learn core concepts and habits of mind within each discipline as defined by standards (Minnesota state standards aligned with national and district standards); (2) learning activities, curricula, tasks, text, and talk apprentice students within the discipline; (3) teachers apprentice students by giving them opportunities to engage in rigorous disciplinary activity and by providing scaffolding through inquiry, direct instruction, models, and

coaching; (4) intelligence is socialized through community, class learning culture, and instructional routines; and (5) instruction is assessment-driven.

District Level Instructional Leadership: During spring 2003, the Junior High Design Team, representing all stakeholders in Saint Paul Public Schools' junior high schools, met to study issues around school climate, accountability and expectations, and delivery models. The goal was to develop consistency across the district and move toward agreement on a junior high philosophy with the ultimate vision of content-rich, standards-based classrooms.

Denise Quinlan, Director of the Professional Development Center, was selected to direct the PAE Junior High Initiative, working with the PAE Junior High Team. The Junior High Team members include two language arts coaches, two math coaches, two science coaches, one social studies coach, one gifted and talented coordinator/social studies, an Excel program coordinator, a technology coordinator, and a counselor. These team members, as well as other district-level administrators, have participated in IFL training on the Disciplinary Literacy Framework and the district Instructional Leadership Seminars to build their expertise for the work of the initiative. The Junior High Team has planned and conducted professional development and on-site coaching for junior high participants with assistance from subject area content experts and IFL trainers. During 2003-2004, members of the Junior High Team participated in four sessions with the IFL in Pittsburgh along with other districts from around the country and started blending Disciplinary Literacy concepts into subject area content training toward the end of the year.

Principal and Shared Instructional Leadership at the School Level: Beginning with 2003-2004, the junior high schools became a cohort of their own, Cohort III, for PAE Instructional Leadership Seminars. The principal and a lead teacher from each junior high school participated; two schools had joined the Project in previous years. The Junior High Team coaches participated in and supported Cohort III sessions. Cohort III participants expanded their understanding of the vision of principals as strong instructional leaders of comprehensive reform through districtwide and area meetings. All attendees participated in formal Learning Walks, visiting classrooms of teachers who participated in professional development.

During 2004-2005, the Cohort III planning team developed a range of learning opportunities. During Instructional Leadership Seminars participants delved deeper into their understanding of effort versus ability, questioning their beliefs and school practices related to effort-based learning. The Seminars focused on standards-based teaching and learning and developing Disciplinary Literacy classroom lessons—using standards and the Principles of Learning, especially academic rigor. The participants

engaged in task analysis, asking whether particular assignments were rigorous. They agreed they needed to continue the work of looking at assignments and the resulting student work in order to more consistently reach understanding of what assignments were rigorous.

Seminars were followed by replication of the professional development back in their schools, often provided by teachers who had participated in district professional development. Learning Walks were conducted in each school to look for evidence of the effectiveness of the professional development. Principals learned the importance of clarifying expectations of teachers, visiting classrooms, asking questions of students, and providing feedback to teachers. Principals and teacher leaders recognized the need to provide specific support for teachers implementing Disciplinary Literacy, for example, materials, planning time, and curriculum writing time. Principals and teacher leaders were challenged to address the differing needs of teachers within their relatively large junior high staffs.

Focus on Core Academic Skills: The primary standards-based professional development for junior high teachers and principals focused on developing support for struggling junior high readers and writers and on Disciplinary Literacy in the four core subject areas—English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Professional development focused on subject area content, reading and writing in the content areas, the Disciplinary Literacy Framework, the Principles of Learning, and Learning Walks.

On-going Professional Development: The Junior High Initiative provided comprehensive, continuous professional development. The PAE junior high coaches planned and facilitated workshops with follow-up opportunities for participants, including study groups, additional professional development sessions, and on-the-job coaching.

As the Junior High Initiative rolled out, the professional development model evolved to incorporate three levels of training, similar to the elementary-level Literacy Initiative. Level I training included content specific workshops for mathematics, science, and literacy across the disciplines. There was a Level I Struggling Readers Workshop for English/language arts, ELL, reading, READ 180, and Special Education teachers, and a Level I Introduction to the Principles of Learning. Teachers, who had participated in one of the Level I trainings, could participate in Level II—either Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy or Advanced Struggling Readers Workshop. Level III was Advanced Disciplinary Literacy.

After participating in Level II training on Disciplinary Literacy, a team of junior high coaches worked with selected teams of junior high teachers to begin developing model classrooms. The goal was that teachers who participated in Level III training would have model classrooms and become demonstration

teachers, would lead study groups in their schools, and would become professional developers in their schools and in the district.

Early Professional Development: Early professional development involved literacy teams in six schools—four high schools and two junior high schools—from January to June 2003. Through pilot workshops, the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) coached literacy teams in strategies of reading and writing through content material. A literacy team was an interdisciplinary team of teachers—English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—from a single school. Building on that experience, the district decided to focus first on the junior high level through the Junior High Literacy Initiative.

2003-2004 Professional Development: Junior high interdisciplinary literacy teams of teachers (ideally from English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) were invited to week-long workshops, led by MWP and district coaches, in strategies for teaching reading and writing using disciplinary content material. In June or August 2003, seventy (70) teachers and administrators from the ten junior high schools participated in the workshops and in four additional training days during 2003-2004. After each session during the school year, participants had an assignment to go back to their schools to try what they learned. At the next session, teachers shared what they did and how it worked. The training sessions provided opportunities for teachers to meet by discipline and to plan by their interdisciplinary school teams.

Each junior high coach was assigned to specific junior high schools to provide support to teachers who were participating in the professional development. Coaches worked with teachers in their schools as literacy teams or as individuals. The literacy team might read books together or give each other feedback on strategies they were trying with their students. Coaches worked with individual teachers by doing demonstration lessons in the teacher's classroom or watching the teacher and giving feedback. Coaches might provide professional development requested by a school (e.g., how to do literature circles), or they might provide necessary materials such as easels and large easel pads—easels were new for secondary teachers.

In addition to the professional development related to literacy, professional development on mathematics and science content has been on-going through PAE since June 2003. Some junior high teachers have been involved in Level I Writing Institutes since 2001-2002.

2004-2005 Professional Development: In August 2004, there were two levels of professional development available to junior high teachers. Level I professional development included content

specific training for mathematics and science teachers. The Level I Junior High Literacy workshop, led by the Minnesota Writing Project and PAE coaches, continued the work of developing interdisciplinary literacy teams, including ELL teachers and Special Education teachers, in strategies for teaching reading and writing using disciplinary content material. There was Struggling Readers (Level I) training, and Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy (Level II).

Struggling Readers Workshops: In August 2004, sixty to eighty regular education, ELL, and Special Education teachers participated in a comprehensive thirty-hour Reader's Workshop to support struggling readers at the secondary level. The workshop taught strategies and tactics that would help any classroom teacher work with struggling readers. The workshop presenter was Adria Klein, who also provided substantial follow-up support during 2004-2005 with professional development and site-level assistance—observing and coaching teachers who had been trained. During site visits, observers, including district leaders, visited ELL and Special Education classrooms. They talked about the components on which they would focus, observed the classes, and then debriefed what they saw of those components. Observers also gathered information to assess teacher needs and to plan next steps.

Struggling Readers Workshop Level II was the next step. The goal is to develop strong literacy teams in every junior high school that will include members that have taken the training in the Minnesota Writing Project and Struggling Readers Workshops. The literacy team would develop goals for reading and writing at the school site, including preparation of students for the MCAs. The goal is to take secondary resource rooms and turn them into skill development rooms that offer a reading and writing course for struggling junior high students.

Principles of Learning Overview: During June 2005, the PAE offered an eighteen-hour Principles of Learning overview to provide a comprehensive immersion into the principles and why they are so important to effort-based learning. Though open to anyone in the district, the largest concentration was junior high school teachers. Creating this overview responded to the need to provide a foundation for recent joiners in the Project. The district junior high coaches collaborated with the IFL for this first overview, but these workshops will be conducted by the district in the future.

Disciplinary Literacy Training: Teachers who previously completed Level I training in mathematics, science, or literacy across the disciplines were invited to attend the Level II professional development during August 2004 and to participate in follow-up support activities

during 2004-2005. The Level II Institute focused on the Disciplinary Literacy Framework developed by the Institute for Learning (IFL). The Junior High Team, assisted by IFL content experts, provided follow-up professional development during 2004-2005 that was content specific. In addition, content specific study groups were formed for participating mathematics and social studies teachers. Starting in 2004-2005, coaches worked intensely in four junior high schools to develop model classrooms.

Sustained On-the-Job Coaching: Content-focused coaching is a component of high-quality professional development that follows initial teacher exposure to content and instructional strategies and helps teachers apply and deepen content knowledge and pedagogical practice. Since 2003-2004, the junior high coaches have been assigned to support literacy teams in specific schools and to assist teachers upon request. They might demonstrate teaching strategies, observe teachers in their classrooms, help develop lessons, and answer questions. In 2004-2005, coaches continued assisting teachers upon request.

In the 2004-2005 school year, junior high coaches began working beside teachers to develop model classrooms. A team of four junior high coaches—English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—worked intensely for six weeks with selected teams of four teachers who had completed the Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy (Level II training). During the six weeks with each classroom, coaches and their subject area counterpart worked together in the classroom three to four days a week. The coach typically would be there for two classes and a preparation period, giving the coach and teacher time to talk about how the lesson went and plan the next lesson.

During the six weeks, the coach and teacher would go through the process of planning a unit of study. Coaches and teachers found it easiest to take a day out of the classroom to plan the unit together because they did not have enough time in the regular schedule. The coach might observe the lesson, co-teach the lesson, or teach the lesson and model a strategy. When teachers were being introduced to a strategy they had not done before, they found it easier if they could see the activity being taught.

Coaches observed the power of sustained on-the-job coaching. They found that teachers hesitated to begin implementation of Disciplinary Literacy before the coach worked with them. Some teachers tried a few strategies; however, many wanted someone there to help if questions arose. Coaches learned that most teachers needed help when they were implementing something as new as Disciplinary Literacy.

Creating Model Classrooms: PAE coaches are creating model classrooms in every junior high school in order to provide exemplars for replication. Model classrooms provide opportunities to observe and work with teachers who can demonstrate their use of the Principles of Learning and Disciplinary Literacy.

Coaches found that teachers typically did not have comprehensive plans for the year and did not write unit plans, but, instead, developed lessons day-to-day. Coaches and teachers followed the Disciplinary Literacy lesson plan format developed by the University of Pittsburgh. The Disciplinary Literacy Framework provided for purposeful planning of a six-week or more unit of study, the length of time the coach and teacher would plan and teach together.

The unit planning process was similar across all disciplines. Unit planning started with the end in mind—what students would know and be able to do, how the learning would be evaluated at the end, and what would be done the closing day of the unit. The teacher and coach would begin by identifying the standards to be met and the guiding questions that arose from the standards. A unit might start with a question such as “Why is it important to study South America?” The students would come up with reasons to study South America, and then, when the teacher looked at the standards to design the guiding questions, some of those reasons would become guiding questions. When students saw those questions, they would feel ownership in them. With Disciplinary Literacy strategies, teachers helped students connect personal meaning to the content. The guiding questions were developed at the start of the unit, and throughout the unit, the class went back to them and checked off which they had learned, staying focused on the goals for the unit and on what students needed to learn.

Each discipline has its own unique core knowledge and its own ways of inquiring, investigating, reasoning, representing, and forming the driving questions in the field. After determining the guiding questions for the unit, coaches and teachers would identify the tasks through which students would attempt to answer the questions. For example, mathematical activity requires students to explore concepts, make and test conjectures, verify outcomes, predict results, and generalize beyond a given mathematical task. Historical literacy involves knowledge of historical phenomena—events, people, struggles, and trends—and being able to analyze, synthesize, and interpret these phenomena from multiple perspectives and then share their ideas through language, writing, and film in ways that historians do. To be literate in physics is to have knowledge of properties of substances, matter, energy, forces, and motion, and be able to investigate, represent, hypothesize, test, explain, and share these ideas as physicists do. One’s literacy in any discipline is the sum of what one knows and can do.

Searching for answers to guiding questions is often done most effectively through collaboration; classroom activities often involved students working in groups. Students worked well in groups when the teacher taught them how to do that effectively. Working in groups required skills such as collaboration, arguing, staying focused, which teachers “coached” students to develop. Students learned to be more

accountable as group members and found strategies for becoming a more cohesive group, having more responsibility for each other's work and actions. There was rich dialogue between students about what they were learning.

In model classrooms, standards were posted, and students worked toward standards. Teachers learned to put up student work that made good connections to the standards without regard to the perfection of the entire work. There were clear expectations of the students, shown to students through posted standards and related scoring rubrics. Students knew what to do to meet the standards or what to do to achieve the grade they wanted. Students were able to explain what it was they did and how their work connected to the standards. Students had a better understanding of the quality of their work and that high quality work required them to explain and clearly write it down for others. Students used rubrics to check each other's work and improve their own work. Students learned whether they had met expectations before a teacher told them. They were more responsible for their own learning and recognized specific areas in which they needed to improve.

Teachers were not dispensing information, but were letting students share the discoveries they were making. Teachers stepped aside and would ask questions, not give answers, and would let students present their findings. Teachers moved from "telling" students what to think to asking the students, "What do you think?" They required accountable talk by asking, "Why do you think that? Show me your proof. Does the person on the other side of the room agree with you?" Students supported their answers and explained why they were taking a particular stand. Students learned to go beyond the superficial answer.

Teachers developed tasks that were rigorous. Students learned that they were going to do some struggling in the class. Classrooms had a culture that invited struggle and debate, and teachers were adept in managing a classroom that looked like that. Teachers noticed an improvement in climate and student behavior in their classrooms.

In model classrooms, teachers anticipated problems and misconceptions students might have and thought about when to bring those out. Teachers observed student groups at work and purposefully decided the order that students would share their work—whether to start with misconceptions or with a group that would address other students' misconceptions. Teachers planned scaffolding activities in order to take students from where they were to the goal of meeting the standard.

Coaches and teachers found that interdisciplinary alignment helped student learning. If there was consistency across four classes, with students doing the same type of activities, there was reinforcement

as they went room to room. If all team members had the same expectations and were using the same language, it would become second nature to students. Team members could support the standards of other subject areas.

Coaches observed that where principals had changed their expectations of teachers, there was greater implementation of Disciplinary Literacy and Principles of Learning. Coaches, teachers, and principals observed that in emerging model classrooms students were more engaged and thinking deeper. On Learning Walks in spring 2005, a district-level observer noted, “When they get to model classroom status, you walk in and it’s strikingly different from a non-DL classroom.”

Lessons Learned and Challenges: During the first year of development of model classrooms, 2004-2005, the Junior High Team identified challenges and lessons learned, including:

- The selection of teachers who would develop model classrooms was crucial to success within the school. New or struggling teachers were not the teachers who were most ready to develop model classrooms.
- The concept of small learning communities and teaming was not widely accepted or practiced at a high level in the junior high schools. However, there were examples of schools that made adjustments to their teaming structure for 2005-2006, attempting to schedule common preparation time and fewer students in each class, in order to facilitate the implementation of Disciplinary Literacy and the Principles of Learning.
- Providing district-level professional development and follow-up coaching was made more difficult by schools not having a common curriculum. For example, English/language arts teachers choose their own curriculum and their own texts. The work of English/language arts teachers and coaches to align district curriculum with standards and to develop scope and sequence will help. There were several different mathematics programs in the district and also within some schools.
- Every school had a different number of minutes. In the four schools, classes were 75 minutes, 60 minutes, 47 minutes, and 45 minutes.
- Schools with several initiatives may feel they do not have time to work on Disciplinary Literacy. Principals and school leaders need to become adept at integrating other initiatives with Disciplinary Literacy and helping the school set priorities.

Multi-Level Network of Teachers: During 2004-2005, content area study groups were formed for mathematics and social studies teachers. Study groups, meeting monthly for two hours, were open to all teachers who participated in professional development, not just to teachers developing model classrooms.

Study groups delved deeper into how Disciplinary Literacy looked in mathematics or social studies classrooms. Teachers exchanged “how to” ideas.

During study group sessions, teachers worked through a lesson or a problem as a learner. They were sent off to do that same lesson in their classes, bring back student work, and in some cases, have their teaching video taped and brought back to study—making practice public. Sessions focused on examining student work, developing rubrics, and discussing how high-quality work would look.

When facilitating study groups, coaches would model the strategies they wanted teachers to use. They would post the guiding questions for the study group session. They would assign a warm-up activity that was academically rigorous, requiring teachers to stretch their minds and struggle to solve the problem. They might have a rubric for judging the teachers’ work. They would ask teachers to explain and support their answers, modeling questions to elicit accountable talk.

Study groups provided a “safe” environment in which teachers could test innovative teaching methods that they could transfer to their classroom practice. A teacher could present a lesson using the Disciplinary Literacy model on a topic that they were either using or going to use, and, afterwards, the participants would deconstruct it.

Teachers found it valuable to spend time with colleagues in study groups. Teachers implemented strategies they learned in study groups. They learned how to set up their classrooms. Study groups provided more opportunity for lesson planning, developing units of study, and brainstorming ideas for inquiry-type activities for particular topics.

Building Capacity: By the end of 2004-2005, the junior high coaches felt confident about their design for working with teachers to create model classrooms. As they went into the four junior high schools for six weeks each, the coaches were learning and found they got better at working with standards and developing guiding questions as the year went on. They felt they would be more effective in the coming year and would be clearer about their expectations of teachers. The coaches have developed a rubric for describing a model Disciplinary Literacy classroom which will help them be more concrete.

For two years, PAE junior high coaches have participated in IFL training in Disciplinary Literacy in Pittsburgh. IFL Disciplinary Literacy content experts also came to Saint Paul to “coach the coaches” and build their capacity to provide the Disciplinary Literacy training and support to teachers in their classrooms. The work with IFL will continue in 2005-2006. During summer 2004, junior high coaches co-taught the Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy training with IFL staff, but, in summer 2005, they

taught it on their own. The Advanced Disciplinary Literacy training and follow-up support was designed by the coaches with assistance from IFL staff but was implemented by the junior high coaches.

Coaches felt that the model classroom component had changed teachers more than any other Junior High Initiative activity. Some teachers changed their practice because of study groups, but usually not as effectively or as quickly. Teachers in the model classrooms had more complete unit plans, more student work displayed, and more evidence of use of standards. Coaches observed that the teachers they worked with on developing model classrooms transferred what they learned to their next unit of study. Some teachers would continue to email unit and lesson plans to the coach for feedback.

Teachers who completed the Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy came back to their schools to provide training for their staff. They might video tape their own students—not the highest performing—to show that students of all ability levels responded well to Disciplinary Literacy strategies. Schools have developed professional development plans designed to involve all teachers in school-wide Disciplinary Literacy training and follow up study groups. Schools have developed structures for teachers to meet by interdisciplinary teams and by subject area departments.

Going to Scale in the District: Going to scale in the district would signify that all core subject area teachers had fully implemented Disciplinary Literacy and the Principles of Learning in their classrooms. In addition, all junior high teachers would be using strategies and tactics to improve students' reading and writing skills.

In 2004-2005, junior high PAE coaches worked with sixteen teachers to develop model classrooms. In 2005-2006, they will continue to support these sixteen teachers and work intensely with another sixteen. Approximately forty percent (40%) of teachers from the eight junior high schools have participated in training offered by the Junior High Initiative. It is envisioned that as teachers achieve model classroom status, they will teach other teachers, demonstrate lessons, conduct school-level and district-level professional development, and lead school-level study groups. Both district-level and school-level professional development and follow-up support will continue to be available to all junior high teachers.

Mathematics Initiative

Early Work to Improve Mathematics Instruction

The first PAE Literacy Institute was launched in summer 2001, and the first PAE Mathematics Institute was launched in summer 2005. During the four intervening years, three math coaches provided continuous support to mathematics teachers, especially teachers new to Everyday Math, with professional development and follow-up support upon request. The district mathematics programs focused on strengthening teachers' content knowledge, building the capacity of math coaches to provide training and follow-up support in schools, and promoting leadership among mathematics teachers.

Saint Paul Public Schools Mathematics Curriculum: The process of adoption for the elementary and middle school curriculum occurred during the 1998-1999 school year. Since the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Principles and Standards for School Mathematics was published in 1989, the Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has actively worked to incorporate the principles and standards into the mathematics curriculum of the district.

In the spring of 1999, curricula were selected to be implemented in the fall of 1999. The core curricula in elementary mathematics are Everyday Math and Connected Math. Everyday Math is a comprehensive, research-based, standards-based, pre-kindergarten through sixth grade integrated mathematics curriculum developed by the University of Chicago School Mathematics Project. Connected Math, developed by Michigan State University, is a complete mathematics curriculum for grades six through eight that helps students develop understanding of important concepts, skills, procedures, and ways of thinking and reasoning in numbers, geometry, measurement, algebra, probability, and statistics. Both programs emphasize reading, problem-solving, everyday applications, and the use of calculators, computers, and other technologies.

Initial Professional Development: When first adopted, teachers of Everyday Math were offered a six-hour New Users Training and several three-hour trainings on specific content areas. Three or six hours of New Users Training was offered each year thereafter for teachers new to Everyday Math. Ninety hours of initial training was offered to new teachers of the Connected Math Project (CMP) during the first two years of the adoption.

Starting in October 2002, district-wide professional development sessions were offered nearly monthly through May 2003 for Everyday Math teachers from kindergarten through sixth grade and Connected Math teachers from grades six through eight. Examples of sessions included: six hours on algorithms,

three hours on fractions, and six hours on algebra and data. Week-long summer institutes in 2003 were offered on algebra and geometry topics. Any teacher in the district could choose to attend one or more of these sessions. Outside consultants, including the developers from the University of Chicago, provided the training for the teachers and coaches. The purpose was for teachers to strengthen their mathematics content background and for math coaches to prepare to do the training in the future. At teachers' requests, seminars could be followed up by one of the three PAE math coaches who would go out to schools or answer questions by telephone or email.

Launching the Mathematics Initiative

Mathematics Initiative team: During 2003-2004, Denise Quinlan, Director of the Center for Academic Excellence, was selected to direct the Mathematics Initiative. The Mathematics Initiative team (Math Team) consisted of the director and the math content coaches. Lesa Clarkson⁴ was selected as the district's national consultant to provide expert training and consultation for the initiative. The Math Team, with assistance from Lesa Clarkson, was responsible for short and long term action planning. The design of the Mathematics Initiative is similar to the PAE Literacy Initiative with ongoing professional development and follow-up support to teachers within schools and classrooms.

Math Content Coaches: Math content coaches are the merger of district curriculum coordinators and professional development specialists. The content coaches plan all district-wide trainings; provide school support in implementing the curriculum, best practices, and the Principles of Learning; and coordinate curriculum-standards alignment and mapping efforts. Although the content coaches operate out of the Center for Academic Excellence, a majority of their time is spent in buildings in classrooms. In the academic year 2004-2005, there were six math content coaches—elementary, middle, and high school—responsible for the training and support of the district-adopted mathematics curriculum.

Evaluation of the Saint Paul Public Schools' K-12 Mathematics Curriculum: During 2004-2005, the Mathematics Initiative team undertook an evaluation of the implementation of the district mathematics curriculum. The evaluation plan for the K-12 mathematics curriculum was designed to address the following questions: To what extent is the district adopted reform mathematics curricula operationally mature (having district level training and materials) in each school in the Saint Paul Public School District? To what extent have the teachers been trained in the use of the district adopted reform mathematics curricula? To what extent are teachers implementing the district adopted reform mathematics curricula in their classrooms, as prescribed?

A report was completed in May 2005. Recommendations included: provide professional development around the curriculum and the connection of the curriculum to the Minnesota Academic Standards in Mathematics, provide extensive focused training around the curriculum to new teachers in the district as well as ongoing support training for teachers currently teaching the curriculum, revisit the concept of classroom autonomy in the era of accountability to incorporate community responsibility, and utilize a monitoring tool or indicator list to monitor the implementation efforts.

Mathematics Initiatives for Elementary

During 2003-2004, the elementary math coach spent four days a week coaching in schools that were selected because of their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) status and in schools with designated Math Leads. For 2004-2005, a second elementary math coach was added to the PAE staff to continue working with AYP schools. For the past two years, six hours of training has been offered for grades three and five mathematics teachers to prepare students for the MCA tests. For 2005-2006, grades three, four, five, and six will be tested, and test preparation materials will be included in future training.

Mathematics Frameworks for Kindergarten through Grade Six: With the lead of a PAE elementary math coach, the Mathematics Standards-Based Frameworks K-6 (Mathematics Frameworks) was developed during 2004-2005. The Mathematics Frameworks aligns the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards with the new Minnesota Academic Standards in Mathematics. The standards give benchmarks that describe the specific knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of each grade level. The Mathematics Frameworks also describes the instructional strategies teachers will use, the strategies for assessing students' progress, and the materials/resources available to teachers. The IFL Principles of Learning are embedded in the Mathematics Frameworks.

The first draft of the Mathematics Frameworks was distributed to teachers in August and September 2005. Prior to release, national consultants, as well as elementary teachers in several schools were involved in pilot training and feedback sessions to refine the document.

Mathematics Institutes for Kindergarten to Sixth Grade: PAE Mathematics Institutes for elementary teachers will be phased in as were the Writing and Reading Institutes. The first PAE Mathematics Institute Level I was held August 2005 for eighty participants. Mathematics Institute Level I is an eighteen-hour standards-based training with two six-hour days during the summer and two three-hour

⁴ Lesa Covington Clarkson is an Assistant Professor for mathematics education in the Curriculum and Instruction Department, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota.

follow-up sessions during the school year. The focus of Level I training is strong implementation of Everyday Math. Teachers learn to implement best practices in their classrooms and gain a full understanding of the benefit of kindergarten through sixth grade spiraling of integrated mathematics concepts. The Level I content includes: introduction of the Mathematics Frameworks and to the Everyday Math pacing guide, test preparation, data-driven decision making for instruction, and examination of student work using rubrics and writing commentary.

Mathematics Institute Level II focuses on specific mathematics content topics chosen based on district test data and needs that emerge. The training is offered as a kindergarten to sixth grade training to deepen teacher knowledge of the content as well as to see the progression of the complexity of the skills embedded in that content area.

Mathematics Institute Level III invites teachers to become Math Leads at their buildings, including content-focused coaching. One primary and one intermediate teacher per building would be ideal. These teachers demonstrate proficiency at mathematics teaching and will be supported and trained to do content-focused coaching with their peers.

Math Leads for Elementary Schools: Established in 2004 by an elementary math coach, Math Leads is an elementary program in which one to two teachers from each building acts as an Everyday Math (EM) resource for the teachers in their buildings. Specific duties included coaching peers through the curriculum including best practices and the Principles of Learning, helping new teachers become familiar with the use of the EM material and resources, and coordinating and identifying building needs. During 2004-2005, there were fifteen Math Leads who each worked within their classrooms to implement Everyday Math as designed. During 2005-2006, two days of formal training will be provided for the Math Leads. In addition, the Math Lead program will expand through Mathematics Institute Level III training for elementary teachers.

Mathematics Initiatives for Junior High

During summer 2003, the Junior High Initiative was launched, and the junior high math coaches joined other junior high coaches in developing junior high interdisciplinary literacy teams of teachers. In week-long workshops, led by the Minnesota Writing Project and the district junior high coaches, interdisciplinary teams were trained in strategies for teaching reading and writing using disciplinary content material. During 2003-2004, the mathematics teachers participated in four additional days of professional development followed by implementation in their classrooms with help from the math coaches and debriefing at the next training session.

As the Junior High Initiative rolled out, the professional development model evolved to incorporate three levels of training, similar to the elementary-level Literacy Initiative. For mathematics, Level I training included content-specific workshops and a Level I Introduction to the Principles of Learning. Teachers who have participated in one of the Level I trainings can participate in Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy (Level II). Level III is Advanced Disciplinary Literacy. For all levels, math coaches provide follow-up opportunities for junior high mathematics teachers, including study groups, additional professional development sessions, and on-the-job coaching.

During summer 2004, thirty hours of standards-based mathematics content training on Connected Math Project (CMP) and other programs was offered to junior high teachers. During the opening week of school, two hours of training was offered on aligning mathematics curriculums to the Minnesota Academic Standards in Mathematics. During the alignment session, mathematics teachers met by mathematics program and by strand (e.g., geometry or algebra) to identify where in their curriculum the specific state standards were addressed.

During summer 2004, thirty hours of training on Disciplinary Literacy (DL) was offered to junior high teachers including mathematics teachers. During 2004-2005, site-specific coaching support was provided to mathematics teachers involved in DL training and to others upon request. As described in detail in the Junior High Initiative section of this report, junior high math coaches were deeply involved in developing model classrooms in junior high schools.

Since 2004-2005, junior high math coaches, assisted by the high school math coach, have worked with study groups of mathematics teachers. Mathematics teachers who participate in the summer Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy or Advanced Disciplinary Literacy continue their work during study group sessions. During 2005-2006, there will be one all day follow-up session for participants of Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy and Advanced Disciplinary Literacy, five Disciplinary Literacy study group meetings, and six weeks of work with four-person teams in four junior high schools. During the Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy training and follow-up activity, teachers start learning to go deeper into mathematics with students through analysis of tasks and examination of resulting student work. During the Advanced Disciplinary Literacy training, teachers continue to go deeper with tasks and student work and begin co-planning with colleagues and co-teaching when possible.

In 2005-2006, the mathematics study group will include eight teachers developing model classrooms and fourteen teachers who have participated in one or both Disciplinary Literacy workshops. During the study group session, teachers participate in a mathematics task as a learner, and then they do the task with

their own students. With the fourteen teachers who are not part of a four-person team, the junior high math coaches will have a pre-conference before the teacher uses the task with their students, observe or co-teach the task with the teacher, and post-conference with each teacher.

Junior High Math Coaches' Menu of Services: In addition to providing workshops in Disciplinary Literacy and Principles of Learning and follow-up on-site assistance to participants, junior high math coaches respond to other needs of mathematics teachers in the district. They will assist mathematics departments as they align curricula to state standards and prepare to address MCA test specifications, assist schools in the analysis of MCA, SAT10, and Scantron data to guide instructional practices and objectives to raise student achievement, provide assistance in locating materials/supplies as requested by teachers, and assist Excel 5.5 teachers in mathematics implementation. They are available for individual coaching, to assist school-level study groups, and to serve as liaisons to connect school personnel with coaches, program evaluators, and data analysts as requested.

Building Capacity of Junior High Math Coaches: This year the math coaches will continue working with the IFL Disciplinary Literacy mathematics content expert. During three visits to Saint Paul, the IFL expert will visit classrooms with the math coaches—to “coach the coaches.” Junior High math coaches will also travel with their SPPS colleagues to Pittsburgh for additional IFL national training in Disciplinary Literacy.

The junior high math coaches teach or co-teach all levels of the professional development. For content-specific workshops, they might co-teach with the IFL Disciplinary Literacy mathematics content expert. For Disciplinary Literacy workshops, they co-teach with their junior high colleagues from other disciplines and with IFL staff.

Mathematics Initiatives for Senior High School

One PAE math coach concentrates on supporting senior high school science teaching and learning through a number of initiatives including:

- Drafting of the Mathematics Frameworks for grades nine through twelve, concentrating on the alignment of Minnesota Academic Standards in Mathematics with school science curriculums. Teams of teachers were brought together from the seven high schools to align the standards and curriculum, sorting the standards into a three-year sequence. The framework will allow teachers and administrators to organize their instruction to meet or exceed these standards so that students will have attained the skills needed to be successful on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment in mathematics in grade eleven.

- Assist high school mathematics departments in creating a scope and sequence for their course offerings.
- Disseminate information and provide training on the Mathematics Frameworks and on the eleventh grade MCA test specifications.
- Organize curriculum-specific training for adopted curriculums, for example, a two-week class on Probability and Statistics taught by University of Minnesota experts.
- Offer the Dynamic Classroom Assessment class for secondary teachers to learn to use assessment as a tool to drive instruction, by looking at student work, and to learn to embed the Principles of Learning into instruction. The math coach is a certified instructor of this thirty-hour class.
- Assist the coaches assigned to the high school teacher teams who are engaged in Focused Inquiry. The SPPS Focused Inquiry model provides a study group structure for high school teachers to work together with a district coach to improve instructional practices. The teams of teachers may be disciplinary specific or interdisciplinary.

Other services provided by the secondary math coach include:

- Coach and assist senior high teachers as needed.
- Assist the junior high team as needed.
- Train Career and Technical Education teachers on embedding mathematics standards into their curriculum.
- Developed on-line mathematics courses for at-risk students and courses to help students complete graduation requirements until the class of 2008 graduates.
- Coordinate textbook adoptions when the cycle requires.

Science Initiative

Early Work to Improve Science Instruction

Though literacy has been the focus of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* since it was launched, science coaches have worked since 2001-2002 to sustain a science program that continued to develop inquiry science methodology and establish a more integrated science curriculum. In the early years of PAE, elementary teachers were immersed in the district literacy and mathematics priorities, and they participated less in science programs.

Saint Paul Public Schools Science Curriculum: The core curriculum in elementary and middle school science includes the *Full Option Science System* (FOSS), developed at the University of California-Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science. FOSS program materials, adopted by SPPS in 1992, provide meaningful science education for all students, incorporating time-honored methodologies such as hands-on inquiry and interdisciplinary projects with contemporary methodologies of multi-sensory observation and collaborative learning.

Early Professional Development: During the school years of 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, funding from the Medtronic Foundation supported a number of capacity-building activities. The goals were to build the capacity of district science coaches to assist schools and build the capacity of elementary and middle-level teachers to teach science through inquiry and become a resource for other teachers in their buildings.

The design of science programs shifted toward the PAE model—providing ongoing professional development with follow-up content coaching in classrooms and developing leadership among science teachers. For example, in 2001-2002, elementary teachers received updated FOSS materials, participated in workshops to learn to use the materials, and received follow-up support from a science coach in their classrooms for up to 15 days. At the same time, science coaches were building their capacity to provide effective training and coaching support.

At the same time, the district science program continued to offer professional development sessions open to all elementary teachers and secondary science teachers. Kindergarten through sixth grade elementary teachers participated in training to use updated FOSS materials. An Elementary Science Inquiry Institute was held during summer 2002. Middle school science teachers participated in workshops on inquiry science methodology and a middle school science leadership program. Examples were the Science Museum of Minnesota workshops in math-science integration and science-literacy integration, followed up with coaching support and opportunities to observe colleagues.

During 2003-2004, the district science program continued to offer professional development and one-on-one coaching in inquiry instruction. In summer 2003, the Elementary Science Inquiry Institute (eighteen participants) and the Middle School Science Leadership Program (thirteen participants) provided extensive training (thirty hours) and support to teach science through inquiry and to become an on-site resource for other teachers in their buildings. In addition, professional development was offered districtwide for new teachers, for updated FOSS materials, and other special programs such as Big River Journey (use of science-based curriculum about the Mississippi River).

Development of the Catalyst Program

During 2003-2004, as part of the Saint Paul Public Schools action plan, the district started a major effort designed to continuously improve science teaching and learning through aligning curriculum and science standards, deepening our knowledge of science and science pedagogy, implementing effective instructional practices, engaging all students, assessing student learning in science, and partnering with the scientific community. This effort includes an elementary-level program and a secondary program. In the school year 2004-2005, both programs focused on the alignment of kindergarten to grade twelve (K-12) science curriculum with the new Minnesota Academic Standards in Science, in particular with the National Science Standards (AAAS Project 2061 Benchmarks and National Research Council Science Standards).

The district sought funding for strengthening and ongoing support for the kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8) science program from the Medtronic Foundation and for seventh grade to twelfth grade (7-12) through a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant proposal. Medtronic Foundation, continuing their work with Saint Paul since 1999, agreed to fund a four-year program to build a foundation in science for all students and teachers at the elementary level beginning in 2004-2005. Funding for the secondary-level was not granted from NSF, but the program was begun in 2004-05 through past funds available in the district science budget from 3M. By spring of 2005, a 3M grant proposal to fund four more years of the Catalyst programs at the secondary level was finalized for approval.

There were five teacher-development components to the Catalyst Program 2004-2005: Science Standards Alignment Reflective Teaching Groups (RTG) for grades K-12, Catalyst Summer Institutes for grades K-6, and Common X-Change Teams for grades K-12. The secondary Catalyst Summer Institutes (CSI) for grades 7-12, Reflective Teaching Groups at the building level, and the Science Associates program were added in 2005-2006 with the additional funding from 3M.

The Science Team: The current Science Team consists of three district science coaches who work as a team on most science programs, though two focus on the Catalyst Programs (K-12), and one focuses on a specialized version of the Catalyst initiatives (RTG and CSI) called Disciplinary Literacy with model classrooms in junior high schools. Science coaches provide professional development and teacher leadership development through the Catalyst programs, curriculum support, instructional support, resource support, and follow-up coaching to teachers and school sites.

Toward Comprehensive Science Frameworks: During 2004-2005, a major effort of the science team was to create a Science Standards Alignment Reflective Teaching Group (SSA RTG) to review Minnesota Academic Standards in Science and align them with national standards and district standards and curriculum. The SSA RTG—twenty-six classroom teachers—worked intensely to develop a document that outlines the placement of standards across grade levels kindergarten to twelfth grade (K-12). During 2005-2006, the next phase of this initiative is to align the SPPS K-12 curriculum scope and sequence with the standards. In the following two years, assessment alignment will complete the Science Frameworks document with particular focus on teaching strategies and effective student assessment to assure access and equity in science literacy for all students.

Disciplinary Literacy: The junior high school program now incorporates Disciplinary Literacy (DL), which incorporates inquiry and the Principles of Learning. DL engages junior high science teachers in interdisciplinary teams of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies teachers. During Introduction to Disciplinary Literacy (Level II), trainers present model lessons to give teachers a clear picture of what a DL lesson looks like and time to plan with other teachers so they can incorporate what they have seen into their classrooms. During Advanced Disciplinary Literacy (Level III), teachers who have completed Level II expand and refine their use of DL in their teaching. After completing DL Level II or III, junior high interdisciplinary teams may apply for more intensive individualized coaching on DL and receive six weeks of coaching. While working with the science teacher, the science coach supports the teacher by helping to plan lessons and units, team teaching lessons, and modeling DL teaching strategies. There will be opportunities for Reflective Teaching Groups and Summer Institutes specialized for teachers participating in DL.

Common X-Change Teams: Common X-Change Teams are short-term, classroom-based partnerships between Saint Paul teachers and scientists from the University of Minnesota and other institutions. Two teachers from the same school, but potentially different grade levels, and two scientists co-plan and co-teach four classroom lessons to enrich and support student learning in science. The scientists and teachers

work intensely in a particular science content area doing a series of projects for two purposes: to deepen the teacher's science content knowledge and to impact the pedagogy of both the teacher and the scientist.

During 2004-2005, twenty-two scientists and eleven school teams participated. Many of these partnerships may continue this coming school year, and more scientists and teachers will be recruited to increase the number of partnerships. The relationships with scientists have increased the opportunities for teachers to take their classes on field trips to locations such as the University of Minnesota neuroscience and physics labs and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Scientists brought materials into classrooms that were not otherwise available to the teachers, for example, a scientist working in an anatomy class passed around a human brain. Another outcome is that plans are being made at the University of Minnesota to build a science resource hall so that science teachers will have access to laboratory materials that are not available in schools.

Catalyst Summer Institutes: The first Catalyst Institute was held during summer 2005, at the University of Minnesota with the Biological Sciences providing staff, labs, and other materials support. Teachers spent one week doing investigative science co-planned and co-taught by a scientist and a master teacher as researcher/learner to deepen their knowledge of science and to expand their knowledge of science teaching strategies. The Elementary Catalyst Summer Institute focused on the effective use of district-adopted FOSS curriculum units for investigative science. The Secondary Catalyst Summer Institutes will include content area instruction with topics that will change each year (e.g., Architecture of Life, Chemistry of Life).

Reflective Teaching Groups (RTG): During 2005-2006, the Science Standards Alignment RTG Phase II will involve teachers K-12 in aligning curriculum across the district. Additional Reflective Teaching Groups (RTG) will begin during 2005-2006. The teams are groups of teachers who meet regularly to reflect about their science teaching strategies, standards and curriculum alignment, and assessment of science learning to promote access and equity. A building-level RTG consists of teachers/staff from a school that focuses on a particular science area aligned with the science standards and reflects the group's science content and pedagogy needs. A specialty RTG will bring together particular groups of teachers from across the district with a common area of focus selected by the group or the district science coaches.

Science Associates: Any school that has teachers participating in two or more Catalyst programs (SSA RTG, Common X-Change, or Catalyst Summer Institute) is eligible to become a Science Associate School and have support for a Science Associate. A Science Associate is a person from the school community such as a parent, grandparent, retiree, or other adult who likes science. They are responsible

for refurbishing science materials including inventorying kits, making repair orders and replacement orders for consumable materials, and restocking kits. They may also support teachers during hands-on lessons by preparing materials. Eight elementary schools will begin the program in 2005-2006.

Expansion of the Catalyst Program

During 2004-2005, the district sought funding for strengthening and ongoing support for the seventh through twelfth grade (7-12) science program. The 3M Foundation agreed to fund a four-year project, beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. The four components of the Catalyst Program for grades 7-12 are the same as for elementary teachers: Science Standards Alignment, Catalyst Summer Institutes, Common X-Change Teams, and Teacher Reflection Teams.

The 2005-2006 SPPS science priorities are to:

- Continue to provide standards support through understanding and implementing standards districtwide by incorporating the science standards alignment work into all programs;
- Aligning district curriculum to standards;
- Extend the Catalyst Programs to grades 7-12;
- Utilize scientist/teacher partnerships in all program strategies;
- Integrate Disciplinary Literacy and Focused Inquiry into Catalyst Programs;
- Fund eight Science Associate Schools; and
- Facilitate partnerships with other district science resources, for example, Belwin Outdoor Laboratories and SPPS District Materials Center.

Building Capacity and Going to Scale

The Saint Paul Public Schools has followed a carefully crafted strategy for taking *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* (PAE) to scale in all schools in the district. A cornerstone of this strategy has involved working with an initial cohort of schools to engage in deep reform, and at the same time, continuing to offer general professional development focused on balanced literacy in elementary schools and content development in secondary schools. District-level leaders built the district's capacity to phase-in schools' adoption of the comprehensive reform model.

The initial cohort of schools helped build the district's capacity to provide essential demonstration classrooms—modeling standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment—and put into practice Learning Walks—modeling shared instructional leadership. Additionally, the first cohort of schools has been the testing ground for how the comprehensive reform would look given sufficient resources to take the reform to scale within a school. These schools provided the environment for learning among all role groups in the district, including Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey and Chief Education Officer Maria J. Lamb, district-level administrators, principals, and teachers. These schools have shown that, when the comprehensive reform model is fully implemented, students have the opportunity to significantly improve their achievement. By 2004-2005, all elementary and junior high schools were engaged in the *Saint Paul Project for Academic Excellence*.

Key Components for Building Capacity and Going to Scale

A number of components have been important in moving the Saint Paul Public Schools' reform a great distance toward scale across the district. The key components include:

- ***Partnerships with the larger community***—including the Saint Paul citizens, elected officials from the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, community foundations, and the Minnesota legislature;
- ***Strong instructional leadership*** from Superintendent Harvey and Chief Education Officer Lamb, who in turn have brought district-level administrators into the reform;
- ***Clarity of the vision*** through publications and presentations, updated each year as components are launched—most recently (fall 2005), *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence: A Comprehensive Academic Reform Model*, describing all the components of the PAE;
- ***A theory of action requiring the insiders to own the reform***, a crucial factor in being able to take the reform to scale—an essential difference between SPPS and much less successful districts with the same agenda;
- ***A phase-in strategy*** with willing early implementers modeling the reform and proving that it works;
- ***Shared leadership at the school-level***, critical for ownership and capacity building school-by-school;

- *Continuous district support for principals and lead teachers in becoming instructional leaders* in their schools to guide the implementation of the Principles of Learning, Learning Walks, and Writer's and Reader's Workshops;
- *A progressive system of ongoing district-level high quality professional development*, providing Levels I, II, and III, first for the Writing Initiative and then for the Reading Initiative, Junior High Initiative, and Mathematics Initiative;
- *A strong team of high quality trainers* have been available for all components of the reform;
- *Content-focused coaching by high quality district coaches* provided ongoing support to schools;
- *Demonstration classrooms and demonstration schools* for district staff to see models of the reform by establishing four SPPS elementary schools as demonstration schools and developing model classrooms in all junior high schools;
- *Capacity-building activities for district coaches with expert consultants* to deepen their coaching skills and support implementation in individual classrooms; and
- *Considerable district support for developing classroom libraries* in every elementary school.

Accomplishments by the End of 2004-2005

Finest Education in an Urban Setting: Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey said, “My goal was to change the perception that you couldn’t get the finest education in an urban setting.” Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments have shown continuous improvement in student achievement each year of Superintendent Harvey’s tenure in Saint Paul. At the same time, the poverty rate has increased from the mid-sixty percent to the mid-seventy percent, and the number of different languages spoken increased from forty-seven to ninety-seven. Harvey said, “The kids have gotten more complicated, but their achievement has gone up.”

Partnerships with the Larger Community: The Saint Paul community has supported Saint Paul schools in many ways including passage of two funding referenda and other vital financial support. The reputation of the Saint Paul Public Schools has changed in the community and the state, making a difference during the 2005 struggle for an increase in state funding for schools.

Ownership of the Reform by Internal Stakeholders: Ownership by internal stakeholders—district staff, principals, and teachers—was demonstrated at the end-of-the-year celebration. Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey heard ownership in the voices. She said, “I heard the elementary principals and teachers say, ‘this is just the way we do business.’ And I heard middle school people stand up and say, ‘don’t worry elementary schools, we’re ready for them’ and they were serious. And then, high school staff stood up and said, ‘we’re getting ready for them in high schools. We have become a different school district.’”

IFL also celebrated the “great job” the leadership in the district did in “taking ownership of the work and really turning it into a district effort.” The IFL liaison said, “Instead of the Institute being outside, they brought the Institute into the work and took it on as their work, which is the way it should be, and they have done an incredible job. It shows their commitment to the work.”

National Contribution: A source of pride for Patricia A. Harvey and Maria J. Lamb is the bringing together of the America's Choice School Design and the work of the Institute for Learning. “The Learning Walk strategy is the glue,” said Harvey, “and the year-end celebration was created by Saint Paul to be able to display where we are and talk about it to help guide us to the next level.”

The success story of Saint Paul is getting national recognition. Superintendent Harvey has presented several times at the Council of Great City Schools. Saint Paul’s IFL staff liaison is being asked in her other districts to “teach us those great things they are doing in Saint Paul.” Student achievement in Saint Paul is solid and recently highlighted in an IFL published article.

Phase in of Schools: The phase-in of schools adopting the Project for Academic Excellence comprehensive reform model began with seven elementary schools that were ready to come into the Project in summer 2001. Eleven schools (including one junior high school) were added, so that eighteen schools participated during 2001-2002, five schools (including one junior high school) came in during 2002-2003, twenty-one elementary and seven junior high schools in 2003-2004, and by 2004-2005 all elementary and junior high schools participated in the Project. Conversations have begun on how to move the reform into the high schools during the coming year.

Too Far to Turn Back: At the end-of-the year celebration, Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey said, “Sometimes we get to a point in a journey that we have come too far to turn around. Friends and colleagues, I’m telling you that we have come too far to turn around.”

In an interview, Chief Education Officer Maria J. Lamb added, “It’s embedded into the classroom, it’s embedded in the schools, and it’s embedded into the district. It would be really hard for somebody to derail this because the teachers have really bought into it.”

It does appear that the vast majority of elementary teachers are implementing Writer's Workshop and a majority of teachers have signed up for training in Reader's Workshop. Coaching assistance was provided to all K-6 schools and made available to all K-8 core curriculum teachers. The partnership with

the Institute for Learning brought Instructional Leadership Seminars and support to all principals K-8 to substantially change their role to an instructional leadership role.

Systemic Change: With all K-8 schools and all district-level administrators involved in the Project for Academic Excellence, there is strong evidence of development of a common language and common materials across the district so that the leadership can have meaningful conversations about PAE work. As senior district staff commented:

It's systemic; it's across our district. It is very self-evident in the appearance of rituals and routines across our district. Regardless of the level of the teachers' training, when you go from room to room, you see the same organization of the classrooms. You see evidence that students across the district understand different genres and understand whether their writing meets standard or not. – Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey

In the past two to three years, we have had an amazing amount of people who have crossed that line and said, "This is the route to go." When Maria first came on, I thought her vision was impossible. She planned to move across the entire district, and I thought I will be gone and retired and probably dead by the time she achieved all this. It's not true. – Area superintendent Lou Kanavati

Principal Instructional Leadership: Saint Paul staff members at all levels understand that principals are important to comprehensive reform. One content coach said,

If you don't have the principals understanding the reform and buying-in, it isn't going anywhere. Organizing for effort happens in the classroom, but, in a bigger way, it happens at the building level. For example, [one teacher] worked for a year to get cabinets that are not used, off the walls so she can post student work and do what she knows she needs to do. They can look at the issues, the big roadblocks, the logjams that we have to overcome. The principal must be willing to push staff, change schedules, or whatever is needed.

Superintendent Harvey commended the principals, who she said, “Need to first be teachers and first be on top of the skills that we are asking our kids to learn and be able to do.”

Members of the each cohort’s planning committee not only co-planned and co-developed the range of learning opportunities, but they also co-lead the presentations to their peers. District-level administrators and principals collaborated to plan next steps in the schools.

Building Capacity of District Coaches: After four years of learning from the writing and reading consultants, district literacy coaches play strong leadership roles in their assigned schools and in the district. They successfully took over much of the Writing Institute Level I training in 2003-2004 and much of the Reading Institute Level I in summer 2005. For 2004-2005, the number of district elementary-level literacy coaches grew to what the district feels is “full capacity” so that each coach worked with four

schools. They continue to interact with the writing and reading experts to improve their presenting and coaching skills.

Junior high coaches have worked side-by-side with IFL Disciplinary Literacy content experts from the beginning of the Junior High Initiative. They initially co-taught sessions with them and then assumed full responsibility for all levels of training of junior high teachers. They continue to attend IFL training in Disciplinary Literacy and to be coached by IFL staff.

Increasing Nested Learning Communities: At all levels of the district, there were many examples of groups learning together and discussions of additional ways to network. Learning Walks have provided the structure for principals, teachers, and district-level administrators to visit schools together. Most schools have organized study groups within their schools through which teachers collaborate and read professional literature together. Learning communities at the building can provide healthy peer pressure—setting expectations from peer to peer. One principal said, “We needed the routine of learning communities coming together to talk about instruction and making decisions and agreements. It makes the difference in creating momentum.”

Integration of Special Education and ELL with PAE: A district document, “Project for Academic Excellence Instructional Plan, Elementary Schools, April 2004,” guides the alignment of services and programs, containing recommendations for the integration and interaction of PAE with other district academic programs, including English Language Learner (ELL), Excel, Gifted Services, and Special Education. By 2005-2006, full-fledged collaboration between ELL and PAE and Special Education and PAE will bring about joint professional development and follow-up support to participants, resulting in all district ELL and Special Education teachers being trained in Writing Institute Level I and having follow-up coaching from district ELL and Special Education staff.

Curriculum Frameworks: The district document, *Standards-Based Frameworks K-6 for Reading and Writing* (Literacy Frameworks), aligns State of Minnesota standards and National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) standards, and provides a clear guide for teachers to establish successful Reader's Workshops and Writer's Workshops in their classrooms. The pilot version of the Literacy Frameworks was used and revised during 2004-2005, and the revised Literacy Frameworks were distributed to all teachers in September 2005. The first draft of *Standards-Based Frameworks for K-6 Mathematics* (Mathematics Frameworks) was available for all teachers fall 2005. Development has begun on science frameworks. Curriculum and standards alignment is underway at other levels of mathematics, English/language arts, and social studies.

Integrating magnet schools with the PAE: Many of Saint Paul's schools are magnet schools with a specialized focus such as the arts, Montessori, or Spanish Immersion. These schools have confronted the issues of blending their focus with the district's literacy initiatives. The Open School staff discussed ways of blending Writer's Workshop with the "open" philosophy. Mississippi Creative Arts Magnet School worked on making "a really good marriage of the arts focus and the Project for Academic Excellence" through two-way curriculum mapping and looking at standards and curriculum from the academic and arts perspectives. Adams Spanish Immersion Magnet had school forums to grapple with questions such as: How does this work in an immersion school? Where do I get the Touchstone Books in Spanish? Do I do Reader's Workshop in Spanish or English? A Success for All school aligned their rigorous Success for All curriculum with the Principles of Learning.

Focus for 2005-2006 and Beyond

Sustainability: As Superintendent Patricia A. Harvey spent her last weeks in Saint Paul Public Schools, she talked about sustainability. She felt that in Saint Paul Public Schools, "It's been a complete renaissance in terms of everything that you can use to validate success. My bet is that it is sustainable. We have proven that we've changed the way we do business...not just the superintendent, but the principals and many others. If it is owned, then it's just going to continue to be the way we do business."

Harvey had some concern that the district might become stuck. She said, "I'm hoping that, just as firmly as we've learned the instructional practices, we've learned creative problem solving so even though we're quite pleased with what we've been able to do, we will maintain that eagerness to do more. That's something that we have to guard against." Harvey spent her remaining time in the district talking with district leaders about areas on which she felt they must concentrate to keep Saint Paul Public Schools improving—what "to be careful about."

With the resignation of Superintendent Harvey, many leaders in the district have been contemplating what will keep the reform moving forward. They understand the importance of keeping the professional development and coaching model at the current level or expanded as resources allow. They are conscious of reaching all schools at all levels so that when a student moves from one grade level to another, they really have a consistent program and consistent materials, rituals, and routines. Maria J. Lamb said, "The future of the PAE is to make sure we don't stop the professional development, that we continue to look at data, and we continue to look at our strengths and weaknesses and fill in the gaps. The next stage is deep implementation."

Obtaining Sufficient Resources: In the past two years, the district has had limited resources and was forced to scale down professional development, on-site coaching support, and funds for substitute teachers and materials. Though the 2005 state legislative session increased funding to schools, there is likely to continue to be more demand for professional development from principals and teachers than the district resources will allow. With more resources, the district would be able to accommodate more teachers in Reading Institutes and pay for more coaches to provide follow-up support in classrooms. With more resources, schools would have more adequate classroom and school libraries. With more resources, coaches would have funds to bring in substitute teachers and could provide support to more teachers, speeding up implementation to scale within each classroom. With more resources, resisting and struggling teachers could be provided more support.

High school reform: During the past few years, high schools have focused most of their professional development time on creating small learning communities. High schools, for the most part, have completed this transition, and the district is working with IFL to design professional development of the same high quality for high schools that is now being provided for K-8 to change instructional practices.

Going to Scale in Every Classroom: Superintendent Harvey said, “What we need to do is make sure that every classroom across our district, leaving none behind, is a highly skilled as possible....We need to be very, very aggressive in telling the story about what works.” The district is exploring ways to be more aggressive in getting all of the classrooms through Level I of the PAE and move more classrooms to Level III.

District and school leaders made suggestions for next steps in the district to stay the course and move to scale, including:

- Develop an implementation guide to be used as a self-assessment by principals to see where their schools are in this process;
- Develop a districtwide plan for going to scale in every classroom in every school;
- Develop supports and structures—benchmarks and timelines—to address the needs of reluctant and struggling teachers;
- Clarify expectations of role groups;
- Share successful school models, structures, or protocols, e.g., study groups, modules for training staff in Principles of Learning, or use of district and school coaches;
- Develop abbreviated versions for principals and administrators of the professional development teachers are receiving;

- Differentiate professional development for principals to meet the diversity of needs, e.g., principal study groups;
- Provide multiple opportunities for principals to meet with colleagues and to partner with other schools;
- Continue strengthening collaboration between the PAE and the Special Education Department and the PAE and the ELL Department;
- Increase the capacity to train elementary teachers in Reader's Workshop;
- Continue development of curriculum frameworks in core academic areas at junior and senior high school levels; and
- Develop a district vision for junior high school education with clear curriculum standards and curriculum maps, a plan for buildings to go to scale, and the resources to support the plan;
- Develop a plan for preparing new teachers to join the Saint Paul faculty.

Changes in Teaching and Student Achievement

The goal of *Saint Paul's Project for Academic Excellence* comprehensive reform model is to improve achievement for all students. The implementation of the PAE reform is predicated on teachers and administrators having the necessary skill, knowledge, and materials to integrate the key components into their daily teaching practice. Given the depth of change required by teachers and administrators to implement the PAE reform model, it is realistic to assume that it would take them several years to implement all components as envisioned by the district. As of spring 2005, there is considerable evidence that administrators and principals have played a much greater instructional leadership role in schools, that teachers have made tangible changes in their instruction, and that there are positive gains in students' achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Findings Related to Teacher Learning

Creating Environments and Structures for Teacher Learning in Schools: Ongoing professional development and continuous, accessible support for teachers is building teacher capacity to implement and sustain school-wide reform. Evidence of improving environment and structures for teacher learning included:

- Schools are creating spaces for learning and sharing ideas, for example, in one school, the library for leveled books was where a Special Education teacher and classroom teacher collaborated on the materials they would use the next day;
- One school changed their staff meetings to a workshop format with a mini-lesson, study group activity, and reporting back to the whole staff;
- Schools meet regularly in study groups by grade level or across grades depending on the topic or task;
- Teachers lead staff meetings and open their classrooms to others to help them gain experience and credibility as master teachers;
- Principals have a phase-in strategy within their schools—starting with the most eager teachers, while allowing others to “dip a toe in before jumping in the pool,” and mapping out their plan for going schoolwide—for having everyone trained and implementing;
- Teachers are seeking out professional development in numbers exceeding the district’s capacity, with numbers completing Writing Institute Level I growing each year from 625 in 2003 to 834 in 2004, and 1212 in 2005; and numbers completing Reading Institute Level I growing from 453 in 2004 to 602 in 2005 (with over 200 more registering than could be accommodated in 2005) (Appendix B);

- Principals walk into classrooms and give informal feedback frequently, and their teachers know what they are looking for—the Principles of Learning with implementation of Writer's and Reader's Workshops or Disciplinary Literacy; and
- Principals and teachers do regular Learning Walks so that teachers will learn how the Principles of Learning look at other grade levels.

Changes in Teacher Knowledge and Skills: Teachers consistently reported that they have significantly expanded their knowledge and skills. For example, teachers overwhelmingly credit the Writing Institute training and materials for their growth in the teaching of writing. The Writer's Workshop represents, for most teachers, a paradigm shift and deepening of teaching skill, as shown in these comments:

Before this training, most of the time I did prompt writing and/or sentence starters. The idea of allowing students to choose their own topics has been very successful. This is a whole different philosophy, and it is producing results.

I have a consistent daily period of time that children are writing. I wasn't consistent about it before.

My understanding of the craft of writing is now so much deeper than before. Through this training, I was exposed to some beautiful literature that I can now use to elevate my students' writing.

I'm able to pick out certain things in my students' work that I wasn't able to before because I didn't know what I was supposed to be looking for.

Findings Related to Perceptions of Students' Writing Performance

Students were Better Writers: Teachers who implemented Writer's Workshop reported that their students improved their writing and they wrote more. Representative teacher comments:

My kindergarten students this year are better writers than my first grade students were at the end of last year, and they are also better readers.

I have a second grade classroom full of writers. They are eager to share their ideas and enjoy the art of writing.

My kids want to write all the time—there has been an explosion of writing in my room.

My students love to share their writing. The writing produced by the students has been phenomenal.

Representative administrative comments:

Kids really have publishable materials. You see kids who understand the levels of writing and understand whether they've met standard or not. Even in our Level I schools you begin to see it by the end of the first year. The organization of the classrooms and their routines are pretty evident across our district. You see the attention to literature. The kids have a deep

understanding about different genres, and you can see the evidence of that in their writing.
Patricia A. Harvey

Standards are part and parcel of the classroom environment; they drive and guide instruction so they are visibly used. We know the best and highest level is when the students themselves are able to articulate the standards in language that they understand. Area Superintendent

I had a first grade student come up to me and say, "I want you to see my work." And he was able to tell me why some of his work was meeting standards and why some of it wasn't and what he had to do to go back to organize it, to produce the type of outcome that he needed. That was a big "wow" for me to hear a student that articulate about where they needed to go to be successful. Principal

Students' Diverse Needs Can Be Met: Teachers found that Writer's and Reader's Workshop worked with a classroom of students with differentiated skill levels and with different levels of language learning. Teachers said:

I feel more comfortable working with students who are at many different places in their skills or in different places with the process of writing.

This is the most powerful means of making ELL students literate. It has improved ELL students' performance, success, and feelings of inclusion.

Findings from Standardized Tests

The results of standardized tests taken by students each spring helped the district and individual schools assess how they were doing in meeting their goal of improving student achievement. For this report, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) were analyzed. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments are given to students each spring to measure how well they have mastered state standards. For this evaluation, the trend, from 1998 to 2005, in MCA scores in reading, writing, and mathematics for grade three and grade five will be examined to assess progress made by students in Saint Paul.

There have been steady gains in the percent of students reaching proficiency on the MCA's from 1998 to 2005. Findings included:

- Students passing the grade five writing MCA increased from 47% to 74% (Appendix A, Graph 1);
- Students passing the grade three reading MCA increased from 26% to 62% and in grade five from 29% to 63% (Appendix A, Graph 2);
- Students passing the grade three mathematics MCA increased from 23% to 61% and in grade five from 27% to 63% (Appendix A, Graph 3);

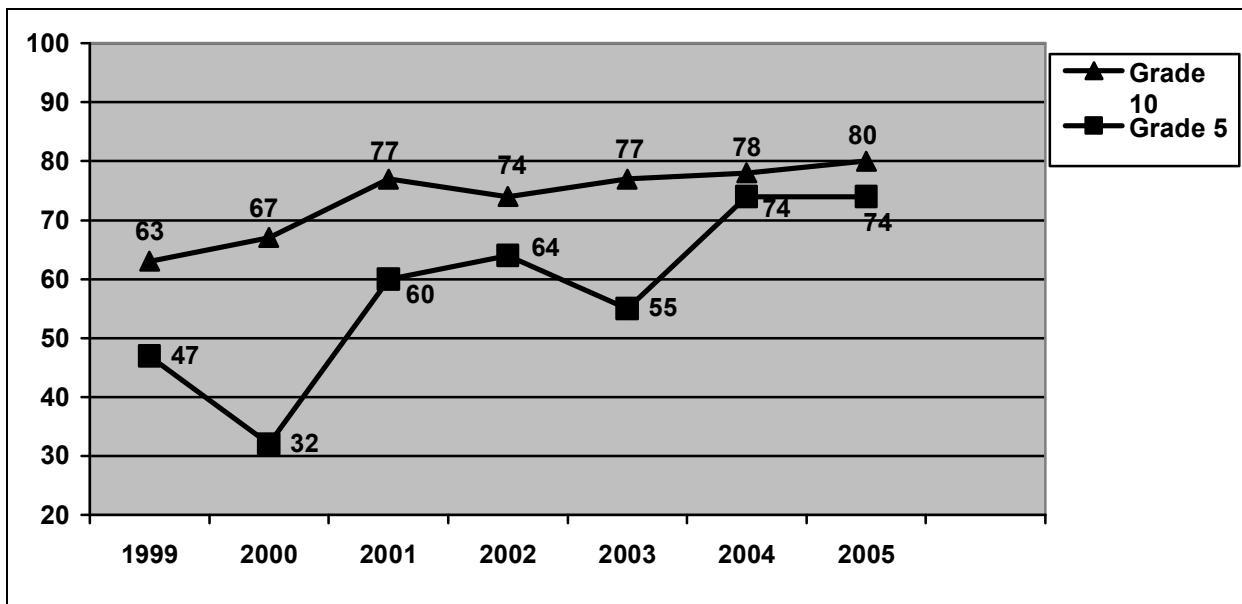
Over a period of six years (1999-2005), SPPS has made progress in narrowing the achievement gap among groups of students. Findings included (Appendix A, Table 2):

- Significant narrowing of the achievement gap between low income and non-low income grade three and grade five students in reading, writing, and mathematics MCA's, the decrease in gap ranging from six percentage points in grade three mathematics to fourteen percentage points in grade five reading;
- Significant narrowing of the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL third and fifth grade students in reading, writing, and mathematics, the decrease in gap ranging from sixteen percentage points in grade five mathematics to twenty-one percentage points in grade three mathematics and grade five reading;
- Significant narrowing of the achievement gap between Asian American and Caucasian students in third and fifth grade in all three subjects, the decrease in gap ranging from seven percentage points in grade five reading to fifteen percentage points in grade three mathematics;
- The achievement gap was narrowed between African American and Caucasian students in fifth grade, from three percentage points in reading and mathematics to nine percentage points in writing;
- However, for Special Education students, the achievement gap widened in all grades and subjects. Additionally, the achievement gap grew for American Indian students in fifth grade.

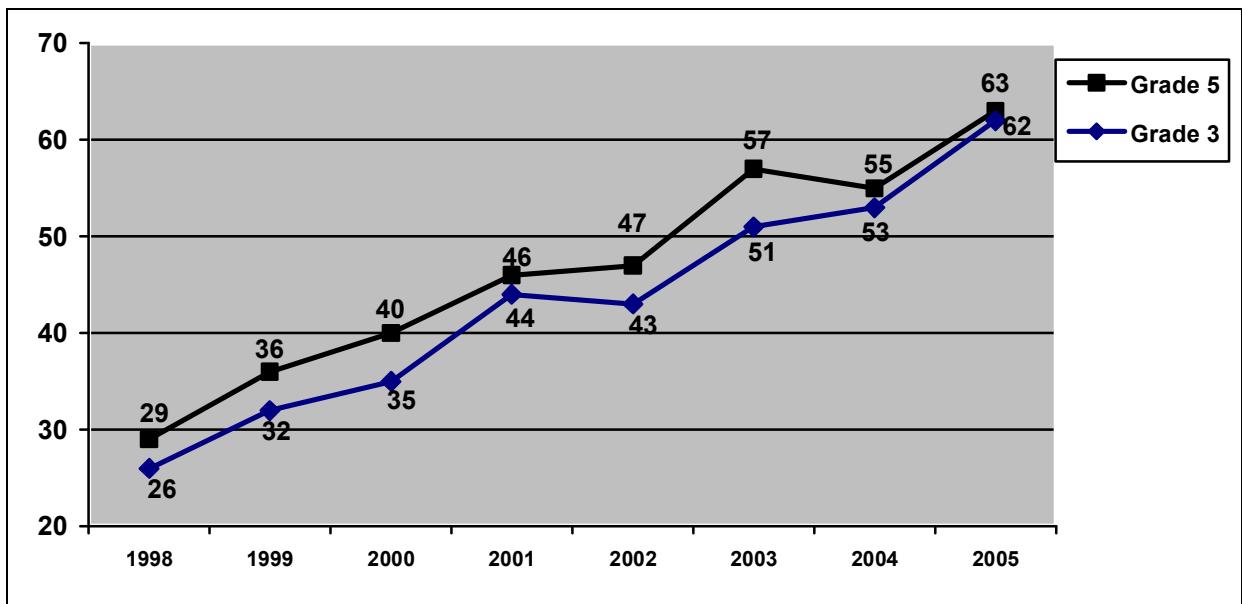
It is clear that significant progress has been made in improving student achievement. After seven years, from twenty-seven percent (27%) to thirty-eight percent (38%) more Saint Paul students achieved proficiency on MCA's in reading, writing, and mathematics. These results are even more significant when considering the change in district demographics over the same seven-year period (Appendix A, Table 1). Even though more students are low income (increased 14%), more speak languages other than English (increased 16%), and more require Special Education services (increased 6%), students passing the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments has gone up. At the same time that Saint Paul students have become more complicated, instruction has improved, expectations have been raised, and student achievement has gone up.

Appendix A ***Standardized Test Results***

Graph 1. Performance of SPPS Students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in Writing – Percent Proficient



Graph 2. Performance of SPPS Students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in Reading – Percent Proficient



Graph 3. Performance of SPPS Students on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in Mathematics – Percent Proficient

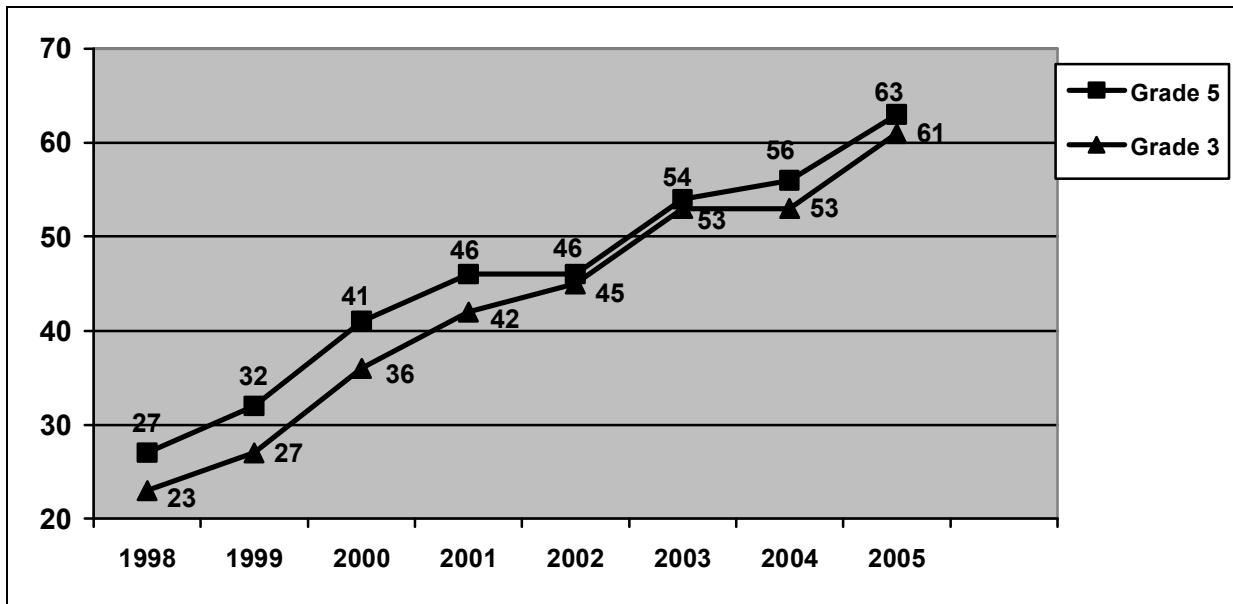


Table 1. Demographic Data for Saint Paul Public Schools

	1997-1998	2004-2005	Increases
<i>Low Income</i>	55%	69%	+14%
<i>Non-Low Income</i>	45%	31%	
<i>ELL</i>	21%	37%	+16%
<i>Not ELL</i>	79%	63%	
<i>Special Education</i>	12%	18%	+6%
<i>Regular Education</i>	88%	82%	
<i>Students of Color</i>	60%	72%	+12%
<i>Caucasian</i>	40%	28%	
<i>African-American</i>	23%	28%	+5%
<i>Hispanic</i>	8%	12%	+4%
<i>Asian American</i>	28%	29%	+1%
<i>American Indian</i>	2%	2%	

Table 1. Progress in Narrowing Achievement Gaps in Saint Paul Public School

Percent of Grade 3 and 5 Students Proficient on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment from 1999 to 2005

Over a period of six years, SPPS has made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gaps between low income and non-low income as well as between ELL and non-ELL third and fifth grade students in reading, math, and writing. Moreover, SPPS has reduced the achievement gap in all three subjects between Asian American and Caucasian students at both grade levels and between African American and Caucasian students in fifth grade. These are all remarkable achievements. However, for special education students, the achievement gap widened in all grades and subjects. Additionally, the achievement gap grew for American Indian students in fifth grade. For these groups, close attention is warranted.

= gap has narrowed by three percentage points or more from 1999 to 2005

= gap has widened by three percentage points or more from 1999 to 2005

	Grade 3 Reading			Grade 5 Reading			Grade 3 Math			Grade 5 Math			Grade 5 Writing		
	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change	1999	2005	change
Low Income	18.9	52.3	+33	21.7	54.9	+33	20.0	50.4	+30	14.3	55.5	+41	38.4	67.3	+29
Non-Low Income	59.7	83.0	+23	66.6	85.1	+19	58.8	83.0	+24	54.8	83.2	+28	69.1	85.6	+17
ELL	9.3	52.1	+43	8.5	50.2	+42	13.3	56.4	+43	7.6	55.0	+47	32.1	69.7	+38
Not ELL	43.5	68.9	+25	49.1	70.4	+21	42.1	64.2	+22	36.7	67.2	+31	56.0	73.6	+18
Special Education	12.3	32.5	+20	10.7	30.0	+19	15.5	35.0	+20	9.3	35.5	+26	17.5	40.3	+23
Regular Education	34.2	67.4	+33	40.7	70.6	+30	34.4	65.9	+32	30.8	69.1	+38	53.6	79.4	+26
African-American	22.2	53.4	+31	25.6	55.8	+30	18.1	45.2	+27	10.1	48.8	+39	35.9	64.6	+29
Caucasian	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20
Hispanic	27.0	54.1	+27	29.4	53.0	+24	25.4	52.6	+27	17.1	51.7	+35	41.2	63.0	+22
Caucasian	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20
Asian American	15.3	52.3	+37	21.7	55.6	+34	19.2	61.2	+42	18.2	63.6	+45	43.9	76.2	+32
Caucasian	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20
American Indian	31.9	60.5	+29	31.5	51.7	+20	22.7	48.9	+26	26.4	50.0	+24	50.0	60.7	+11
Caucasian	55.7	85.1	+29	59.1	85.6	+27	56.1	82.7	+27	49.7	85.3	+36	62.2	82.4	+20

Appendix B ***Teachers Participating in*** ***Professional Development through August 2005***

The numbers in this table may not be accurately adjusted for retirements, transfers, and other changes in personnel. The numbers in Level II and Level III columns are the same teachers that have completed Level I, and in the case of writing, Level II.

<i>PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS</i>	<i>Writing Level I</i>	<i>Writing Level II</i>	<i>Writing Level III</i>	<i>Reading Level I</i>	<i>Reading Level II</i>	<i>Jr. High Initiative</i>
Adams Spanish Immersion Magnet	31	9	15	19	6	
American Indian Magnet	22	10	6	10	3	
Ames Elementary	17	7	5	4	2	
Arlington Senior High (Excel)	2					8
Battle Creek Environmental Magnet	34	10	13	21	9	
Battle Creek Middle	2				2	18
Benjamin E. Mays Magnet	17	9	4	13	5	
Capital Hill Magnet	17	4	4	9	2	6
Central Senior High	1			1		4
Chelsea Heights Elementary	20	5	6	12	2	
Cherokee Heights West Side School of Excellence	29	6	4	16	5	
Cleveland Quality Middle	4					15
Como Park Elementary	38	9	8	27	4	
Como Park Senior High	3					6
Crossroads Elementary	37	17	10	23	3	
Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary	30	10		25	15	
Eastern Heights Elementary	20	11	3	3	1	
ELL/Special Education/Administration	16	5	5	9	1	10
Expo for Excellence Magnet	22	5	2	17	1	
Farnsworth Aerospace Magnet	26	13	4	10	2	
Four Seasons Achievement Plus Elementary	19	6	1	1		
Franklin Music Magnet	26	14	7	18	9	
French Immersion Magnet	14	5	4	6	1	
Frost Lake Magnet School of Technology and Global Studies	45	6	10	19	5	
Galtier Science/Math/Technology Magnet	23	13	2	4		
Groveland Park Elementary	25	10	7	11	2	
Hancock-Hamline University Collaborative Magnet	49	17	16	28	3	
Harding Senior High	1				3	5
Hayden Heights Elementary	29	6	5	12	5	
Hazel Park Middle Academy	1					26
Highland Park Elementary	16	9	3	15	2	
Highland Park Junior High	1				1	27

(Appendix B continued)

Highwood Hills Elementary	16	7	2	6	2	
Homecroft Elementary	15	5	2	4		
Horace Mann Elementary	15	5	4	4	1	
Humboldt Junior High	9					24
Humboldt Senior High					1	4
J.A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary	19	4	12	15	9	
Jackson Preparatory Magnet	30	9	8	2		
J.J. Hill Montessori Magnet	18		1	4	2	
Johnson Senior High	4					6
Linwood Achievement Plus Elementary	15	3	3	6		
Longfellow Humanities Magnet	21	5	7	14	5	
Maxfield Magnet School of Academic Excellence						
	11		1	5	1	
Mississippi Creative Arts Magnet	43	9	23	21	4	
Monroe Achievement Plus Community	24	14	10	17	7	
Monroe Middle	3					8
Murray Junior High						18
Museum Magnet	16	8	1	3	1	
Nokomis Montessori Magnet	29	20	17	19	14	
North End Elementary	13	3	2	1		
Open School	7	4	2	8	2	12
Parkway Elementary	12	2	1	11	6	
Phalen Lake Elementary	31	6	9	17	1	
Prosperity Heights Elementary	19	8	6	14	6	
Ramsey Junior High	2				3	27
Randolph Heights Elementary	16	9	3	14	2	
Riverview West Side School of Excellence	14	5	5	5	1	
Rondo	2	1	1	1		
Roosevelt West Side School of Excellence	22	3	2	1	0	
Sheridan Elementary	16	13	4	11	6	
St. Anthony Park Elementary	18	8	5	11	3	
Vento, Bruce F. Elementary	20	3		10		
Washington Technology Middle	4					32
Webster Magnet, The Enrichment School	47	15	14	25	6	
Wellstone, Paul & Sheila Elementary	25	4	4	12		
World Cultures Magnet	21	9	6	12	2	
Totals as of August 2005	1212	398	299	602	179	256
Totals as of August 2004	834	344	157	453		
Totals as of August 2003	625	206	94			

Note: Over 200 teachers requested registration for Reading Institute Level I in 2005 than could be accommodated.