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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

*Children,
Families &
Learning*

CLEARINGHOUSE
OF
BEST PRACTICES

*Implementation
Report
1998-1999*

*Improvement
Support
Team
Teachers*

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SUMMARY

Through the Clearinghouse of Best Educational Practices, Minnesota's Department of Children, Families & Learning has provided customized support for system wide improvement and implementation of graduation standards for up to 2,300 individuals per week between September, 1998, and February, 1999, and their work continues. Twenty classroom teachers, Improvement Support Team (IST) members, were released from their district responsibilities for one year to facilitate school improvement in alignment with graduation standards. This report documents the quality and scope of their work over a five month period.

Two sources of data are used in this report: Journals kept by each of the IST members and evaluations submitted by 802 customers. Each of the IST members determined their own manner of recording their activity. IST journal entries were organized under questions. The design of the evaluation cards permitted each customer to determine the nature of each comment. There were no lists to check or scales to choose from (Appendix 1). Each of the comments recorded and reported represents an individual reaction to the work of Improvement Support Team members and their impact on classroom practices related to implementation of graduation standards and application of best instructional practice. For the purpose of this report, customer comments were organized into 5 broad categories: clarification of rule and role, initiated new practices, expressed frustration, request more time with IST, and satisfaction with IST concept and members.

Improvement Support Team members (ISTs) were in agreement on their approach, **"Find out what schools want and try to deliver it,"** and by the end of September, they had engaged in training, provided workshops, coached individuals and small groups and worked with administrators. Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program (MEEP) regional coordinators teamed up with ISTs and assisted with their training and orientation to districts. School sites contacted ISTs directly and MEEP coordinated regional activity. By mid-September, most ISTs were scheduled well into February and had to turn down several district requests.

The information that follows is representative of all journals and evaluation cards. Quotes are sampled from many of them to give a clear sense of what each of the categories and questions represents. Evaluations were overwhelmingly positive and demonstrate appreciation for this effort and a desire for continued support from fellow teachers.

An added benefit of this program is the return of teachers who have experienced extraordinary professional development opportunities to the districts and schools that so generously shared their best with sister schools across the state. These teachers will likely provide continued leadership in their districts.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Department of Children, Families & Learning's (CFL) response to MN Statute 1998 Article 5, Section 42 was based on preliminary planning and work done in collaboration with the MN Federation of Teachers and MN Education Association. In March, 1998, representatives of MFT and MEA and staff from System Services at the Department of Children, Families & Learning carefully analyzed support for graduation standards implementation recommended by a joint committee on graduation standards which included members/leadership from both Education Minnesota and Minnesota Federation of Teachers. Implementation of the legislatively mandated formation of a clearinghouse of best practices took much of its direction from those early recommendations.

Draft recommendations from the joint committee of the teacher unions included the following:

Grade level training	Need based training
Varied training times	Standards for teacher competence
Quality standard for training	Customize to teacher need and convenience
Record keeping	Performance assessment
Special Education	

Those listed in bold print are directly addressed by implementation of the Clearinghouse for Best Educational Practices.

Following further discussions with association members, the following methods of support for immediate needs were recommended:

1. Release 55 Best Practice Network teachers from their district responsibilities to partner with MEEP regional coordinators to provide customized support to schools. *CFL had a team of over 350 Best Practice Teachers in reading, math, science and writing at that time. Clearinghouse of Best Practice funded the release of 20 teachers from their district/site responsibilities.*
2. Add 3 staff development days.
3. Repeat training phases I and II. *Clearinghouse services are customized to districts and include components of early training as needed.*
4. Convene and activate an auditing committee.
5. Reinforce training of district assessment approval teams. *Clearinghouse provides this on request.*

6. Train one assessment leader for each site in the state *MEEP regional coordinators provide this training and Clearinghouse will also provide it on request.*

MN Statute 1998 Article 5, Section 42 describes the Clearinghouse of Best Educational Practices as follows:

The Department will establish the clearinghouse for improving student performance, particularly for at-risk students.

It must (1) **align with all current activities for best educational practice, shared decision-making, and the results oriented graduation rule**; (2) conduct research and collect information on the best educational practices affecting a school's management, operation, financing, personnel and instruction; (3) **train quality intervention teams**; (4) develop and make available to interested school districts a model for an independent educational audit that evaluates a school's performance strengths and weaknesses; (5) develop student and school performance indicators schools may use to reliably measure school improvement; (6) **provide staff development opportunities to assist teachers and other educators in integrating educational reform measures into a school's best practices**; (7) **at district request, recommend methods to increase parent and community engagement**; (8) **collaborate with stakeholders** .

The recommendations and provisions in law addressed by the Improvement Support Team (IST) are shown in bold print above. Of funding dedicated by the legislation to the Best Practice Clearinghouse, \$1.2M was expended to deploy a team of 20 teachers, IST members, to provide training and to coach and support teachers and administrators implementing MN High Standards in grades K-12. The Federation of Teachers and MEA representatives assisted in determining desirable characteristics and credentials for IST members. They also assisted in determining the process for selecting and interviewing candidates as well as the training that members would need prior to deployment. Teachers were invited to apply (Appendix 2) and members were selected with consideration for geographic distribution, content expertise and instructional expertise (Appendix 3). The purpose of this report is to document the scope and quality of the contributions made by ISTs. While Improvement Support Team members focused on the provisions listed in bold print above, "Critical Friends", which include MEEP coordinators and is described on page 19 addresses items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Once identified, CFL negotiated intergovernmental agreements with school districts that employed the teachers, and team members were assembled for essential training (Appendix 3). They joined MEEP regional coordinators to provide customized training and support to school sites and districts throughout the state, tripling the capacity for support and bringing diverse expertise to the support process. Within weeks of their contract date, all twenty of the IST members were booked into January. **Data in this report represents contributions made between September, 1998 and mid-February, 1999.** ISTs had yet to complete 1/3 of their contract time with the state at the time this report was written. Completion of a final report is recommended.

Two sources of data are used in this report: Journals kept by each of the IST members and evaluations submitted by 802 customers.

JOURNAL RECORDS OF IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT ACTIVITY

Each of the IST members determined their own manner of recording their activity. They were in agreement on their approach, "Find out what schools want and try to deliver it." By the end of September, they had engaged in training, provided workshops, coached individuals and small groups and worked with administrators. Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program regional coordinators teamed up with the ISTs and assisted with their training and orientation to the districts as well as co-facilitating training and support. The information that follows is representative of all journals. Quotes are sampled from many of them.

What do Improvement Support Team members do? Content addressed and services provided:

Create materials

Train, coach and support groups and individuals

Assist with local review of locally developed assessments

Generic check lists

Performance assessment

Content-specific information

Alignment of curriculum, assessment, checklists, tasks and standards

Large processes and concepts

Cross age class issues

Local assessment/evaluation review panel training

Placement of standards

Scoring student work

Selection of instructional materials

Brain research

Curriculum frameworks

Data analysis

Assist with development of local assessments

Policy requirements

Needs assessment and strategic planning

Integrated instruction

Best research based practices: curriculum, instruction, assessment

Special education modifications and accommodations

Review of student work

Listen to concerns and answer questions

Typical journal entries:

"Whatever someone asked for, we tried to deliver."

"I worked with elementary teachers creating new tasks only when existing assignments didn't fit. One teacher said, 'If I can use my stuff, this won't be so bad!'"

"Unfortunately headlines in Duluth News Tribune about the State Advisory Committee for Implementation of Grad Standards' possible recommendations soured the day and staff."

"This was my second afternoon helping teachers here write tasks. This went very well. The more teachers work with the standards the more they like them."

"(We) conducted our 2nd Decision Making group. An entirely different group than the first one. A few more vocal 'torpedoes' but they left 'feeling they could do this' and we received very positive feedback and requests for follow up sessions in the spring."

"This was a great and productive day. Teachers had requested this day to be trained in frameworks to help them prepare for benchmark tests and adapt math packages. We had some wonderful discussions on math reform and math best practice. At lunch time teachers asked if we could have a working lunch to gain more work time. When leaving everyone thanked me and one teacher commented, 'Thanks, I feel really good about these math standards now. You helped me understand why they look like they do and that all children deserve to be taught this.'"

Introductory remarks by a principal quoted in a journal entry: *"Our plan of action for grad rule will follow the action of our football team. It's not the winning of the game that's important, it's the journey to get there. We don't care what St. Paul does with the grad rule, we will put our efforts into implementing it because it's good for kids."*

Teacher participants quoted in journal entries: *"Where did these large processes and concepts come from? This is what we've been doing for years!" "I like the common sense you brought here today. You make this seem really doable."*

With whom do Improvement Support Team members work? They worked with thousands of people, people who had not had any training in graduation standards, people who had developed expertise in providing standards based learning opportunities and assessments and people who fall anywhere between. Most gratifying were return visits to districts that were just getting started. Progress was often rapid and easily observed on follow up visits.

Typical journal entries:

"Teachers very confused. Didn't have packages or standards. I ran off standards. Gave Grad Rule 101. General feeling was that curriculum used was better than standards and they could just use curriculum. I explained that they could use this in place of packages but need to document student demonstration of learning and understanding."

"One other observation, 3 new graduates, 1st year teachers, were more skeptical about math education reform than anyone else in the room. What a shame!"

"Teachers are not nearly so negative when I meet in small groups as in large group settings. Maybe my failure to meet individual needs?"

"30 more teachers than expected showed up and there were 61. The day didn't go too badly, frustrations and doubts were expressed, but work time for writing, adapting and building activities was provided and all teachers worked and stayed on task."

Quote of the day from a participant: "I'll keep trying to make this work, but all this talk about changing the rule is driving me nuts! Whatever happened to making a decision and then sticking to it?"

"Met with (a team member) to plan and organize our afternoon. Worked with 20, K-3 teachers on their people and cultures, science and resource management standards. Some confusion because they had been given some materials early and it confused the process. Interesting to watch the processing of where they are and what they need to do to move forward. First time I had the opportunity to present with her...we had fun and worked well together."

Met with individuals and varied groups ranging from 1-200 but most often 4-8 individuals. A pattern frequently used for formal presentations was large group of 40-60 followed by small group break out sessions:

Teachers by learning area

Teachers by grade level

Teachers by building

Teachers by district clusters

Teachers by standard College classes
Administrators Graduation Standards Technicians
Parent groups including ECFE Curriculum coordinators
Superintendents District graduation standards implementation teams
Counselors Special education teachers
District Graduation Standards Steering committees

Typical journal entries:

Quote from a principal: "I trust my staff, they work very hard. I want them to implement the standards because they're good, educationally sound. I trust they know best how to do this."

"Worked with individual teachers on designing and writing assessment tasks. 'Finally, FINALLY, this really makes sense!' was the comment from one participant."

"A participant thanked me and said that the rule was becoming clearer and clearer. That it is so good for kids."

"Met with K-12 People and Cultures staff - 10 total-very angry. In 24 years of teaching I have never been talked to or treated so unprofessionally."

"Our greeting for the day was, 'I have been to a lot of these sessions and I left the last one, so I hope this one is better.' We met with a very disgruntled staff with many questions and concerns. When we left at the end of the day they were positive and said they would spread the word by e-mail to the remainder of staff who will be trained in January. Another case where they thought the packages were the grad rule. They realized the value of standards and that they can do this!! Packages, a blessing and a curse?"

"I also worked with a special education teacher. She is very concerned and wants to do this right. She was feeling very overwhelmed about her caseload and doing what is best for students along with what is required."

ISTs meet with district/site staff for varied lengths of time (day, week end, and evening) at the convenience of the districts and schools they serve:

½ day

1 day

1 hour, 2...

Typical journal entries:

"Scheduled to be here as a resource for staff during prep time. People are implementing and have good questions. They have designed and have tools and strategies, built tasks and developed check lists. Found a possibility for exemplar video. Worked with several content

areas. *A great day! - what a positive environment - all on board; sent in two names for exemplar video. Great Leadership!*"

"Spent the day at middle school. In the a.m. we were available to work with teachers one-to-one, answering questions on the standards, performance packages, package adapting and writing. In the afternoon we presented terminology, large processes and concepts, student centered learning, standards based instruction and reviewed their placement of standards. It was very productive and we received good feedback about the value of the workday."

What did the IST members learn? Members regard these few months as the most compelling, practical and challenging professional development that they have ever experienced. IST members received training in:

Principles of adult education	Formats for assessment
Performance assessment	Special education
Scoring student work	MN comprehensive assessments
Software	Curriculum framework development
Principles of change	Data gathering and analysis
Best practices regarding curriculum, instruction and assessment	

Typical journal entries:

"Very busy month. Learning curve is high, but every day is exciting and different. Hard to believe a month has gone by?! Tomorrow it is on the road again."

"It was a good day. I am learning a great deal and appreciating the opportunity to work with so many quality people."

"I love going into the schools and working with teachers. I am learning great things, getting good ideas and receiving positive feedback."

"What an exciting few days for me! Our fellowship awards presentation was very special... I was overwhelmed by the standing ovation. I have a wonderful McAuliffe group to work with and we had incredible discussions. It was great to spend time with other ISTs and to touch base."

Improvement Support Team members presented at the following conferences and events:

State Fair

Minnesota Assn. of Administrators of State and federal Education Programs

Middle school conference

Reading conference

Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program Conference

Education Minnesota Conference

Special education conference
MN Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference
MN Academy of Science
School board meetings
State Board of Education meetings
Center for School Change conference

Typical Journal entries:

"Nuts and bolts of implementation. Last session of day, absolutely packed, had to move to ballroom. Tells us something about level of concern. 200 people."

"Good sessions, our presentation went well and was well attended. Can't forget lunch with the Lt. Gov. Elect!!"

Their journals described the teachers they worked with as:

Interested	Talented
Angry	Reassured
Empowered	Creative
Fun	Hard working
Wonderful	Worn out
Professional	Eager

What results are the ISTs observing?

"After we have visited schools, the teachers and administrators feel they are up to date on what's going on, and questions are answered and clarified. We show them that what they are doing does not have to be thrown out, but aligned with the standards and perhaps adjusted a bit. The staff also gains an understanding of how to use checklists and the large processes and that it is manageable and indeed good for the teachers and the children. We have also written tasks and checklists together utilizing their curriculum and not the model packages. This makes so much sense to the teachers when we are done."

"K-1 teachers feel they know where they fit in the scheme of grad standards."

"An understanding of how to make standards work with what a teacher is already doing."

"Ability to write tasks, checklists and rubrics."

"Greater expertise and confidence with performance assessment."

"Gets teachers to see beyond performance packages."

What other contributions did Improvement Support Team members make at the state level?

Participated in development of test specifications and items for statewide tests

"Spent the day reviewing test items. I've learned a valuable lesson: Make sure we've got clear test specs for the next time."

Assisted in the development of the social studies curriculum framework

Assisted with the MN Electronic Curriculum Repository

Assisted with Best Practice Network

Dissemination of state curriculum frameworks

SCOPE AND MAGNITUDE OF CONTACT WITH DISTRICTS

Each month since September, these 20 teachers have collectively traveled up to 33,384 miles to visit an average of 300 districts per month and serve up to 2,300 teachers, district staff, administrators and community members **each week**. The nature and distribution of their work is visually illustrated on a map (Appendix 4).

A typical example for the first month (September travel) of appointments from **one** IST member's log:

Bemidji	Ely elementary school
Hill city School	Grand Rapids
Bemidji administration	Grand Rapids
Baudette	Hill city
Floodwood	Two Harbors
Hill city	Bagley
Ada	Warren
Babbit	Ely
Eveleth/Gilbert	Toivola Meadowlands

Not included are e-mail contacts, materials mailed, phone contacts, visits from teachers to the office of IST members and training or work sessions specifically planned for the ISTs. By the end of January most ISTs were scheduled in districts through April.

"Everywhere is still under construction. Hwy. 2 from Floodwood to Grand rapids took just under 2 hours. Getting from one side of Crookston to the motel took 25 minutes! It's hard always arriving when it's dark and being ready to present in the morning. 233 miles took 5 hours and 15 minutes. We still need to travel 31 more miles in the morning to get to Warren by 8:00 am. Very tired!"

"Well, we had the 24 hour nightmare. We got caught in a snowstorm in western MN. We were going to E. Grand Forks but had to stay in Bemidji. In the morning we spent 3½ hours trying to get there. I went in a ditch and we finally made it late."

"Yeah!! Time to get organized. Finally an opportunity to sort and file. Chance to catch my breath and get ready for the next week."

"Interesting request today. A consortium of districts want me to come on Aug. 30 to do a presentation. I told him what the situation was and that I will keep him informed. He also requested that if ISTs were not available, would I come anyway if it worked in my school calendar."

"Well, no signs of a slow down for the month of Dec. Keep hearing it won't be busy in Dec.? I am enjoying this job. Learning a great deal and meeting wonderful people."

INTERVIEW

At a meeting of IST members several questions were asked. Those questions and the responses follow.

Would the IST members do this again? **The overwhelming response is yes.**

" We have all gained knowledge and expertise that we could have gained no other way."

Why did you choose to be an IST?

- I have seen many reforms come and go and observed that they really haven't gone. We take the best parts and carry them forward. This is the most comprehensive reform I have witnessed and it holds the most promise for real improved learning opportunities.*
- We learn so much.*
- I am a little crazy.*
- We are adventurous.*
- Experience with the Best Practice Network was rewarding. I saw this as an extension of that work.*
- Giving back is important. I have knowledge as a pilot site member of the frustrations with misinformation and the need for validation and support.*
- It takes my caring for kids to a larger scale.*
- We can be effective because of high levels of credibility based on our recent classroom experience.*
- We use standards as a point of entry and bring people help to move forward.*

What results have you observed?

- More students engaged in learning in standards based, student centered classrooms*
- Teachers have had misinformation clarified*
- Teachers brought up to date on issues/components related to grad rule*
- Higher rigor in classrooms. All students expectations are increased*

- *Increased student accountability. Teachers learning how to elicit and assess student evidence*
- *How to align checklists to standards and tasks*
- *How to design tasks aligned with standards*
- *How to look at the standards and back up to identify or create tasks and activities for prior learning*
- *Learning curriculum has become more developmentally appropriate and better sequenced, coordinated and articulated, K-12*

What is the pattern of distribution of the evaluations?

We leave them for anyone interested to fill out when we remember. They are mailed directly to Mary Lillesve.

What are the holes in distribution or content of services?

It works well for rural. We need to negotiate the role and entry for urban schools and strategically plan the approach.

What obstacles have you encountered?

- *Loss of training days*
- *No substitute teachers available for teacher release time*
- *Misinformation*
- *Lack of administrative support for professional development*
- *More work than we have time for*

Any other comments?

- *Benefited greatly from monthly cluster team meetings*
- *Work with administrators. Sometimes the principal will ask that I spend time 1:1 with him/her after I have worked with staff.*

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

The format for customer feedback was open ended, simply requesting anonymous comments. The comment cards were sent directly to CFL (Appendix 1). The comments fell into a pattern and were placed into 5 categories: improved understanding, initiated new practices, requested follow up, expressed frustration, and satisfaction with IST members.

"Improved understanding" includes clarification of the rule and responsibilities, simplification of the implementation process and refinement of implementation strategies. 388 of the respondents expressed greater understanding as a result of their time with the ISTs. Typical responses placed in this category include:

"I feel I have more control over what I am doing and now I want to."

"She was extremely knowledgeable and helpful in simplifying and breaking down the planning of tasks and packages. Much more clear about how to embed them in our curriculum rather than changing our current curriculum to fit standards."

"I am glad to find that we can reach our end outside of the packages. It is still vague for me in places but we have an excellent resource to call on. Thanks."

"Great job - really broke down standards well and made them easier to understand. I'm a lot less stressed about them. Thanks."

"Focus on simplifying the assessment was very interesting and informative. I don't feel so snowed under. Glad to hear more information is coming. What I am doing now is in the right direction. Enjoyed discussing with others."

"Made things fall into place for the whole topic of standards. I feel much more at ease with the standards now."

"Many things I'm doing can fit into the standards."

"I'm on the right track and many of my colleagues are in the same boat."

"It isn't as hard as everyone makes it seem!!"

"These are workable - thank you for relieving my stress level."

"I will take a much more positive approach into working with these after today."

"Very helpful - I understand our grad standard much better."

"Very helpful - I have a much better idea of what is expected of us as teachers."

"I plan to bring this information back to others in my department and start implementing the standards into my classes more efficiently."

"Excellent presentation. Put a lot of fears back into the closet."

"Initiated new practices" includes practical information gained with regard to curriculum, focusing instruction, creating assessments based on existing curriculum and evaluating student work. 488 of the respondents commented that they had gained practical skills that they would be able to apply in their classrooms. Typical responses from this category include:

"...today will help me to write my own packages, tasks, and checklists. For the first time I feel 'in control' again!"

"I got help with how to write a package and look at what we have done."

"She was very helpful and informative. I feel we can start getting going."

"I learned how to use rubrics, more about grad standards and how to use the processes and concepts. The whole grad standards is becoming a little more clear."

"I will be more purposeful with the package with my new semester II students."

"Before this inservice I was having a hard time thinking of how to get the grad standards implemented and I'm leaving with ideas of how to do it without stress!"

"The example you gave of using a checklist with journaling is much more realistic and non threatening than trying to squeeze in packages! We teach so many things every day that fit into the standards but we need a way to document this (checklists!)."

"I plan to get together with primary, intermediate and middle teachers to work a plan for each grade level in order to suit each level required."

"I plan to implement the personal health and fitness package. I will bring this info back."

"I'll really get going on this next month."

"I learned how to implement the grad standards into my classroom with my curriculum that I teach currently."

"I will keep working on this package and implement it fully next year!"

"It was wonderful to walk away with ideas that can be used in the classroom. It helps to see what is actually being done in other second grade rooms."

"I got some ideas, that's what I came for."

"I will revise my implementation more in line to what I have seen today."

"The workshop was helpful to me because it gave me TIME to network with others, collect ideas and realize that the standards are doable. Time is essential for teachers to implement the standards."

"Requested follow up" includes those comments that specifically requested follow up visits from their IST/MEEP team members and statements about the workshop or time with the IST being too short. 109 of the respondents requested more time with the ISTs. Typical responses from this category include:

"It would be helpful to have this two days next time. Follow up is appreciated. Good day of learning!"

"Super presenters! They were full of energy and knowledge. We need more time with people like this. 2 days would be nice."

"This is the type of training we need more of. Now we need a one on one or small group workshop to clarify our individual needs."

"I'm feeling that what we do can be placed in these standards - am more comfortable with the process - could use another day next year to get back together to look at these again and to check on progress."

"Keep up the great workshops, we need another one (or two or three)."

"Having implementation support team members working in our specific learning areas is the most beneficial way to feel comfortable with the standards. Out of all the preliminary training I've had, this was by far the most useful."

"I would like small groups meeting with both presenters so we could process this information."

"You did fine on what you did. I would like to see more on the evaluating and discussing the packages that we are using."

"It's always helpful to discuss grade level issues with same grade teachers. Grad standard information at primary level and from primary level teacher helps. More time to share please."

"We need more time for these kind of workshops. Teachers helping teachers is a great way to go. Hope it continues next year."

"Thank you. I need more, please."

"I wish we would have had more time."

"Expressed frustration" includes comments regarding time needed to complete tasks for full implementation, rule changes, confusion, dislike of rule, amount of paper work, too many standards, invention of new terms, need more content training, student mobility, communication, and refusal of students to do work. 155 of the respondents expressed frustration. The most common concerns (47) were for more time. Changes in rule language and implementation was the second most frequent concern (13). Typical responses from this category include:

"I learned that I am on the right track for the standards that I have incorporated in the classroom. Still feel pressed for time to complete all these activities and teach the basics too. Which I feel is most important in the primary grades."

"It's about time this got simplified! We still need help with the paperwork and record keeping."

"Although I whole heartedly have difficulties with the Grad Standards/Profile of Learning as they currently are, much information was presented and clarified."

"I wish information was written in a simpler form. there is just so much paperwork. I like the stuff that is going to be on the repository."

"This specific workshop should have been given before our district writing days. More specific information was provided here than what we received. Record keeping is still an issue when we don't see our elementary kids daily. It is a lot to ask of us to have them write in PE Class when we see our kids 3 times a week, 25 minutes at a time. Kids and teachers want physical activity and to spend some of that energy!"

"To be fair I am not in favor of the profiles but the two people doing the program did a very good job. I believe the Profiles is a top down reinvention of the wheel. We already get higher level learning at our school. I believe we need to and will do a better job if the same amount of energy was directed within our traditional system."

"She answered our questions. I'm quite against the grad standards because I just don't think it's the answer to our problems! But she did a good job of trying to explain them. I still feel the same about the whole thing."

"I am feeling more confused and like we are behind. I agree with the philosophy but wonder about the packages?"

"Finding time and resources are frustrating."

"We are not ready to fully implement. How do I deal with 300+ students and the involved paperwork?"

"I would like to receive some standards that I can use now. It is difficult to get any standards off the Internet."

"Helpful, but still many questions."

"She did a good job trying to help us with an impossible, hopeless task. That is not going to fly! It is a paperwork nightmare that is taking a tremendous amount of time away from students, rather than adding anything. Good Luck trying to make it workable..."

"Our presenter gave us some neat ideas on how what we do is great. Still confused about the rigor. Am I making the rigor up to state qualifications!"

"Satisfaction with IST members" includes comments about the ease of relating to teachers so recently in the classroom, expertise, appreciation of having someone who knows their grade level or subject to work with and the advantage of working with teachers who spoke their language and have recently worked with high standards and assessment in the classroom. 276 of the respondents offered comments about the value of working with classroom teachers (their peers) and the ease with which they are able to relate with these teachers regarding the real work and challenges of instructional improvement. Typical of those comments are:

"Thank you for having presenters who were recently in the classroom and who know their 'stuff'. It is very helpful to have presenters who were recently in the classroom."

"If we couldn't have accessed her services, I don't know how the whole staff could have been inserviced. Essential to have these trainers available! Flexible and addresses our needs."

"Helps me believe this can be done without throwing out all the good things. We have gone through 5 different principals in as many years and I feel I need practical advice and direction on implementation. Thank you for giving that."

"Teachers helping teachers is definitely helpful. We need to see and share."

"The position of a teacher helping teachers with grad standards is very helpful - a must."

"Is this type of workshop effective? Absolutely. I need to hear from someone who has been there so that I can get ideas to help implement."

"I feel the workshop helped us zero in on resources and problems. Having a person direct from the classroom makes it very helpful - she's been there, knows how it is!"

"I heard what was expected from a teacher who knows. It was teacher friendly and told in my terms and aimed at my grade level. Very valuable."

"The best workshops I attend are like this one - put on by actively teaching colleagues, sharing with the same grade level participants. Thank you!"

"Great job. I appreciate having classroom teachers as presenters."

"Good speakers - helps to have teachers teaching teachers."

"The availability of materials/ideas is great - discussion with other teachers and the sharing of ideas good and bad, special moments, example from actual firsthand experience."

"The classroom samples and plans were the best presentations ever done on this topic. It was great to see true and tried tasks!"

"I think it is helpful to have 'teachers' available to schools to visit with other teachers."

"Support team members were very willing to attend our inservice and help out. Great attitude by all - they gave the message it is okay where you are at with implementation, we'll meet you there and help you progress."

"Great help! Allowing teachers to guide us through the Profiles of Learning is the best way to do it. People who have the same experiences and concerns we have. She was fantastic."

"They provided a well balanced, effectively organized and content rich workshop which gave (us) an opportunity for advancement and highly valued collegiality."

Many general comments that were made but were not categorized are characterized by examples that follow:

"I saw the light! There seemed to be some order in the whole situation. The answers seemed to be more easy to understand."

"Fabulous!"

"So helpful!"

"Very interesting presentation. A lot of ideas that I can use. Thanks for a great day!"

"She was very helpful! We should have had her help from the start!"

"Very good! I feel much better about the whole thing!"

"Very well presented."

"I have a better outlook on the grad standards idea."

"I feel more comfortable but have a long way to go."

"Great job!"

"Good workshop! Lots of wonderful hands-on activities!"

One respondent noted the following quote on the evaluation:

"Knowing is not enough, we must apply. Willing is not enough, we must do." Goethe

Of the 402 respondents, 6 generally negative criticisms were made about speakers or presentations. Those criticisms range from, *"She talked to fast."* to *"More time should have been allowed for questions,"* and *"Always helped the same people (not counselors). The new info was helpful."* *"Not enough examples. Words used are too confusing for people."*

FINDINGS

Evaluation forms were intentionally designed to avoid eliciting a particular type of information or response and gave no direction to participants. Comments made were based on the priorities and perceptions of the participants. The

comments recorded and reported represent individual reactions to the work of Improvement Support Team members and their impact on classroom practices related to implementation of graduation standards and application of best practice. The evaluations were overwhelmingly positive and demonstrate appreciation for this effort and a desire for continued support from fellow teachers recognized for excellence.

Work was coordinated with MEEP activities. Individual school sites contacted ISTs directly and MEEP coordinated regional activity. By the third week in September, most ISTs were scheduled well into February and had to turn districts down. By the end of January, they were scheduling into May.

Evaluation cards and journal entries show that the Improvement Support Team concept and program, which is supported through the Clearinghouse of Best Educational Practices, is effectively supporting significant change in schools and classrooms. The scope and content of their work are meeting a variety of needs and purposes at the school and classroom level. An added benefit of this program will be the return of teachers who have experienced extraordinary professional development opportunities to the districts and schools that so generously shared their best with sister schools across the state. These teachers will likely provide continued leadership in their districts.

RELATED INITIATIVE: Critical Friends

CFL also initiated plans and facilitated training for Critical Friends, a cadre of people who are addressing the question of, "What happens to schools that don't meet state performance standards?" They are designing a system to support change and serving as intervention teams in support of system wide improvement. Critical Friends have been paired with 15 school sites for the purpose of providing support for system wide improvement including data gathering, data analysis, strategic planning, curriculum design, assessment, governance, parent and community involvement, and a full range of best practice initiatives. At the same time they are improving their ability and the state's capacity to provide assistance to schools struggling with low student performance. Improvement Support Team members are a resource to these intervention teams and the schools that they serve.

The two initiatives provide an effective complement to one another. The network of Critical Friends includes representatives of NCA, Partners for Quality, Shared Decisions, MEEP, Education MN, Office of Education Accountability, at large community members, district staff, and all offices of CFL. Mary Lillesve of CFL can be contacted for additional information about these initiatives at 651-582-8812.



Improvement Support Team

Help us make it better!

We value your comments and suggestions. Please take a few minutes and return this card to our office.
Thank you!

Improvement Support Team Member: _____

Event Name and date: _____

Comments: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

1500 Highway 36 West, Roseville, MN 55113



Improvement Support Team

Help us make it better!

We value your comments and suggestions. Please take a few minutes and return this card to our office.
Thank you!

Improvement Support Team Member: _____

Event Name and date: _____

Comments: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____



Appendix 2

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE

TO: K-12 Teachers

FROM: Kate Foate Trewick *Kate Foate Trewick*
Assistant Commissioner
Office of Teaching and Learning

DATE: May 21, 1998

RE: Implementation Support Teams

You are a talented professional educator! Are you interested in helping your colleagues use best educational practices to enhance learning? Are you interested in taking a professional "stretch?"

Implementation support teams are being established in each of eleven regions of the state to insure that best educational practices for improving student performance are available to support implementation of the graduation standards in all Minnesota classrooms. In addition to current regional Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) staff, two teachers in each of the MEEP regions will be hired to be part of a team which will provide assistance to teachers, schools and districts as they implement the results oriented, standards based system. Applicants should have delivered a Minnesota Standard in their classroom and assessed student achievement using performance.

The regional team will assess needs and design intervention strategies in addition to responding to requests for assistance from schools and districts. Teams or clusters of teams will be prepared to assist staff in schools to:

- 1) identify and implement best educational practices aligned with the Graduation Rule;
- 2) implement shared decision-making models for management, operation, financing, and personnel;
- 3) use an independent education audit and a comprehensive assessment framework to evaluate performance strengths and weaknesses of schools;
- 4) provide staff development opportunities in order to implement educational reform; and
- 5) engage parents and communities in improving student performance.

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May 21, 1998

No one person will be expected to have expertise in all of the areas listed above. However, every effort will be made to insure that clusters of teams can respond to all of these needs. Selected teachers will be "on loan" to the state for the 1998-1999 school year using an Intergovernmental Agreement between the District and CFL. In addition to the contracted work year, selected teachers will be required to work one week prior to the start of the school year for training and planning.

If you are interested in participating in this exciting endeavor, please complete and return three copies of the attached application materials by June 15, 1998. Teachers will be selected by July 20, 1998 in accordance with criteria designed in partnership with Minnesota Federation of Teachers and Minnesota Education Association.

Send your application to:

Mary Lillesve
Department of Children, Families & Learning
631 Capitol Square Building
550 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone: (612) 297-4679
Fax: (612) 296-3775

RESULTS-ORIENTED SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAM

Application Deadline June 15, 1998 by 4:30 p.m.

Name _____

Home Address _____

City _____

Home Phone __ () _____

District _____ District # _____

MEEP Region you would be willing to serve _____
(See attached map.)

School _____

School Address _____ School Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Position _____ Years of experience _____

Grade Level _____ Content area _____

Standard you have delivered _____

Selected teachers will work with the MEEP coordinators in a cluster of regions. Regions will be clustered as follows:

Cluster A - 1, 2, 3

Cluster C - 6, 8, 9

Cluster B - 3, 4, 7

Cluster D - 10, 11

Please include one letter of recommendation addressing "Why you would be an excellent candidate to assist other teachers in implementing standards."

Using the amount of space you need:

Briefly describe your experiences related to Graduation Standards.

Explain how your experiences with Graduation Standards have changed your teaching methods and instructional strategies to better prepare your students to demonstrate what they know and are able to do.

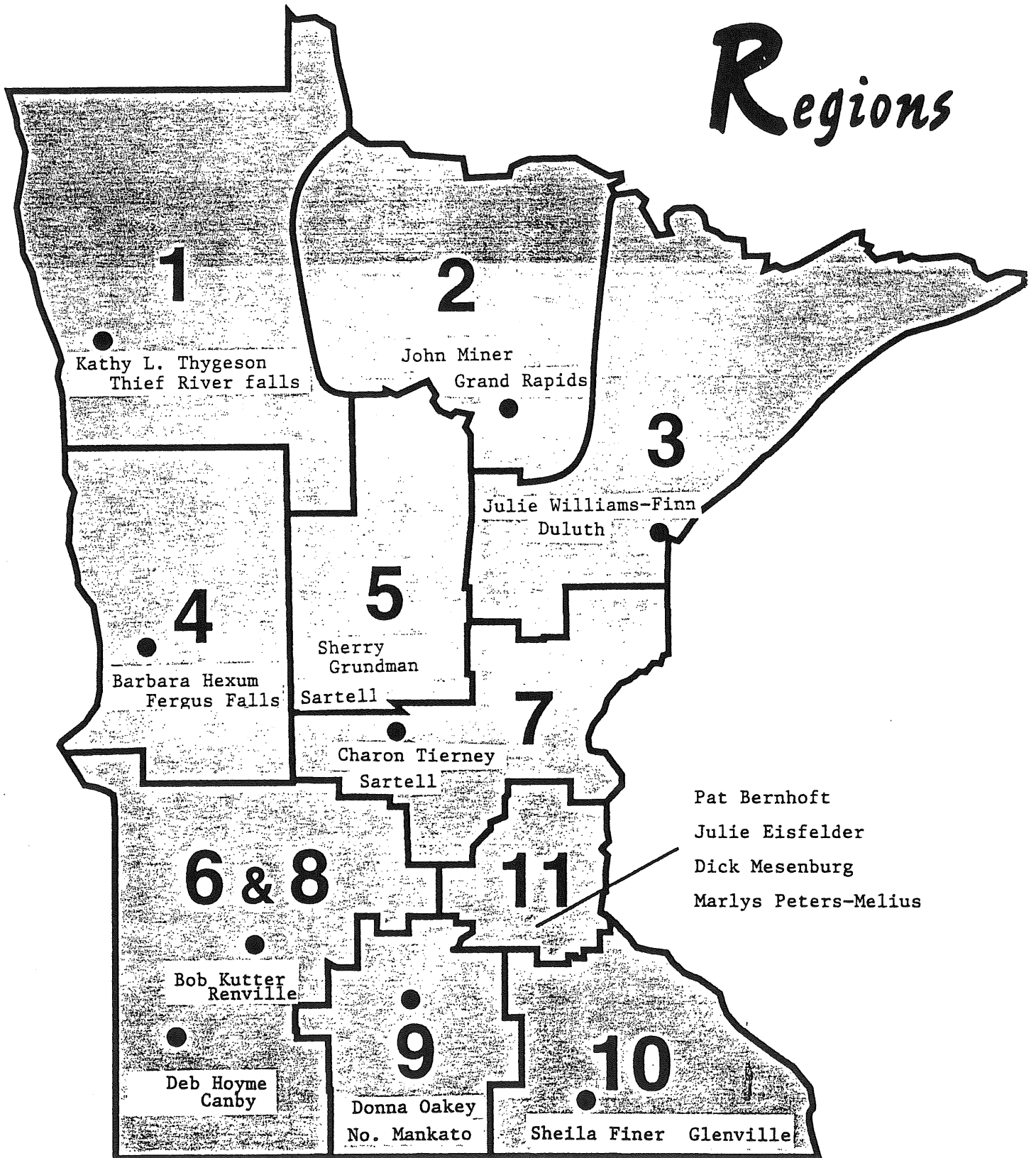
List all training workshops you have attended regarding the Graduation Standards in the past two years.

Briefly describe all training workshops you have facilitated regarding Graduation Standards and other best practice initiatives.

List experiences you have had or expertise you have developed that support implementation of a standards-based system (e.g. site-based decision making).

MEEP

Regions



Improvement Support Team Teachers

	ELEMENTARY	SECONDARY				
CLUSTER REGION	ALL SUBJECTS	MATH	SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	ENGLISH	PHY ED/ HEALTH
Cluster A Regions 1,2,3	1	1	1	1	1	
Cluster B Regions 4,5,7	2	1			1	1
Cluster C Regions 6,8,9	2	1		1		1
Cluster D Regions 10,11	2		1	2		
Totals	7	3	2	4	2	2

