

2021 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Teacher development and evaluation

Educators are always looking for quality professional development to help them grow in their profession and prepare students for success inside and outside the classroom.

The state's current budget ignores funding for professional development for half of the teachers in the state. Minnesota's teacher development and evaluation law has no state funding, but the voluntary Q Comp program— made up mostly of larger, metro districts—does get state dollars.

The disparity arises because Minnesota has two similar laws for teacher development and evaluation. The voluntary Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System, or ATPPS law, commonly known as Q Comp, was passed in 2005. The mandatory Teacher Development and Evaluation law, or TDE, was passed in 2011.

The Legislature has allocated almost \$90 million to the Q Comp program, which is capped out at about 111 districts and 75 charter schools. The TDE is an unfunded mandate on nearly 240 districts and 90 charter schools, which together educate half the E-12 students in Minnesota.

This is unfair to the students and educators working in districts and schools that aren't in Q Comp. For example, rural students lose out because their teachers' professional development plans have access to fewer resources than plans in many metro and suburban schools.

The TDE law provides an excellent blueprint for professional development programs by giving districts the flexibility to develop local plans provided they meet certain criteria, including annual evaluations, peer reviews, individual improvement plans, empirical measures of student growth and a clear pathway for removing teachers who can't—or won't—improve.

However, like all blueprints, TDE plans can't be properly built without funding. It's time for the Legislature to pay for the plan it drafted in 2011, or scale back the requirements to make the mandate affordable.

Education Minnesota supports fair funding of the current TDE law. Our proposal:

- Funds most requirements of the teacher development and evaluation law by appropriating \$169 per pupil in state aid for all districts and charter schools.
- Preserves the professional development focus of the current TDE law.
- Maintains the accountability and evaluation requirements of the current TDE law.
- Lifts the cap on the Q Comp program.

Teaching during a global pandemic is not normal. We shouldn't evaluate teacher performance the same ways when they are navigating different learning models due to COVID-19.

The state should reevaluate all TDE expectations for the 2020-21 school year. Educators should focus only on student needs, self-care, and as much work-life balance as possible.

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Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.  1770



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