



IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY 2005

Saint Paul Public Schools
Office of Instructional Services

SAINT PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SAINT PAUL'S PROJECT FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Implementation Summary 2005

Saint Paul's *Project for Academic Excellence* is a comprehensive academic reform initiative coordinated and managed by Maria J. Lamb, Chief Education Officer, and the district's Center for Academic Excellence.

A COMPREHENSIVE REFORM MODEL

Rooted in the district's commitment to standards-based education and professional development opportunities, the *Project for Academic Excellence* is a comprehensive reform model that is being implemented in distinct phases throughout Saint Paul Public Schools.

The design of this model has grown out of the district's partnership with University of Pittsburgh's renowned Institute for Learning (IFL). Since 2000, IFL has provided seminars focusing on the development of instructional leadership to the superintendent and key administrative leaders, area superintendents, principals, teacher leaders, coaches, and curriculum specialists throughout the district. IFL has also offered extensive consultation, guidance, resources, and professional development to support the growing instructional leadership strengths of Saint Paul Public Schools.

The *Project for Academic Excellence* model is designed to meet two overriding goals:

- I. To wholly transform the way the core skills of reading, writing, mathematics, and science are taught in Saint Paul Public Schools.
- II. To effectively and efficiently provide in-depth, ongoing training to teachers and administrators.

Despite its vast scope, the *Project for Academic Excellence* initiative has been unfolding at a brisk pace with intensive activities occurring at every level of the district, focusing on the twelve nationally researched and proven education reform practices described below.

I. Shared Instructional Leadership at the School

Shared leadership, responsibility, and collaboration are at the heart of the *Project for Academic Excellence*. The work of IFL has been a key component in building capacity in the schools to embrace this concept.

II. Principals as Instructional Leaders

The leadership of principals is central to the success of the *Project for Academic Excellence* reform. As such, principals are given training and resources to succeed in their roles as instructional leaders. Principals are active in the classroom each day, reviewing student work and interacting with students. This gives principals a solid foundation from which to oversee the school-wide implementation of the district's standards-based instructional programs in literacy, mathematics, and science.

III. District-level Instructional Leadership

District-level instructional leaders are also key to the successful implementation of the *Project for Academic Excellence*. They hold responsibility for translating the district's message to the schools, providing support for principals as well as holding them accountable. For this reason, the superintendent and other administrators have been deeply involved in IFL trainings and reform implementation. As with the principals, they have been provided clear roles and have been given the training and resources to become true instructional leaders who set the benchmarks for successful implementation at all levels of the district.

IV. Standards-based Curriculum and Instruction as the Foundation of Reform

Standards-based curriculum and instruction is the core of the *Project for Academic Excellence*. The reform model has led a district-wide commitment to adopt

and implement standards-based curriculum and instruction in core academic subjects. Encompassing the best practices in standards-based education, the district's standards-based reforms in reading, writing, mathematics, and science have been integrated into the *Project for Academic Excellence* professional development framework.

V. Standards-based Assessment to Monitor Progress

The *Project for Academic Excellence* is committed to using formative and summative assessments to plan for instruction and resource allocation. Standards-based assessments are embedded into the school's operations and continually inform students, parents, and teachers of students' progress toward district, state, and national standards. The entire school—from students to literacy coach to principal—is involved in this process. Furthermore, staff are supported in monitoring progress to standards by IFL program consultants.

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

The *Project for Academic Excellence* offers schools sustained, accessible professional development and support by a strong team of trainers and coaches. This is the backbone of the initiative. Professional development is focused on building staff capacity to implement school-wide reform and sustain reform results. The professional development model provides three progressive levels of training in literacy, mathematics, and science. By the end of a school's third year of participation, all staff will have participated and a core group will have completed the highest level of training. Professional development offerings are consistent with national standards for effective professional development, provided by national recognized trainers, and utilize the concepts of nested learning communities and learning walks.

VII. On-the-job Content-focused Coaching for Teachers

Highly skilled, content-focused coaching has been an integral component of the *Project for Academic Excellence* since its inception. Coaches work with teachers who are on the cusp of becoming professional developers in their school and are eager to refine their knowledge and practice. The goals of coaching include:

1. Deepen teacher content knowledge and pedagogical practice in writing, math, and science
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 shared accountability for student learning.

VIII. Demonstration Sites to Promote Replication

Demonstration lessons are another important component of the *Project for Academic Excellence* for teachers at all schools in the project. To date, John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary, Monroe Achievement Plus Community School, and Nokomis Montessori Magnet School have served as demonstration schools for these professional development efforts. Plans are underway to transform additional Saint Paul schools into demonstration sites as well.

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

The *Project for Academic Excellence* creates multi-level communities of learning for teachers to give and receive support from their colleagues and address any concerns. At each school, a Lead Teacher acts as a liaison between the reform model and teachers and hold network meetings and study groups that meet regularly to share ideas.

X. Focus on Core Academic Skills

The *Project for Academic Excellence* began by focusing on a single core subject area—writing—and is now carefully expanding into reading, math, and science. With a three-phase implementation schedule, participating schools follow this model of focusing energies initially and expanding when they are ready.

XI. Providing Essential Implementation Support to Schools

Schools in the *Project for Academic Excellence* initiative receive significant support for implementing key reform elements. The district provides assistance in developing classroom libraries, arranges for substitute teachers so that educators may attend professional development events during the school year, and offers stipends for teachers attending summer training institutes in writing and reading instruction.

XII. Going to Scale Across the District

The *Project for Academic Excellence* is bringing its comprehensive reform model to the entire school

district, following a strategy of going deeply into selected schools which can then serve as learning sites as the initiative fans out broadly throughout the district.

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE 2004–2005

Priorities for 2004–2005 included a continued focus on instructional leadership, the inclusion of Special Education and English Language Learner students and teachers, and literacy, math, and science initiatives.

Progress in Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership in the 2004–2005 school year continued to include activities at the district leadership, intermediary, and school levels. District leaders continued to attend national IFL meetings, where this year they focused on benchmarking, comparing district practices to a core set of principles developed by the National Center for Education Accountability. Other district-level instructional leadership activities included seminars, think tanks, and an annual retreat that focused on the topics of curriculum and instruction, professional development, and assessment.

A special focus on school principals was evident in 2004–2005. School principals participated in special half-day Writer's Workshop sessions designed to help them identify characteristics of effective Writer's Workshop classrooms and suggest strategies for principals to help teachers become more successful.

In 2004–2005, as in previous years, IFL provided instructional leadership seminars tailored to the specific needs of three distinct cohorts of schools:

- **Cohort I: 14 elementary schools that joined the initiative in its first year, 2001–2002.** Now in their fourth year of implementation, these schools focused on deepening their work, meeting in small groups to explore the structures and practices needed to support comprehensive reform. Cohort I schools became more proficient in using Learning Walks, building learning into regular staff meetings, facilitating study groups among teachers, and analyzing student work to identify areas on which to focus instruction.
- **Cohort II: 36 elementary schools that joined the initiative in 2002–2003, 2003–2004, and 2004–**

2005. These school leadership teams participated in a series of seminars, Learning Walks, and Area Cluster Meetings, frequently dividing into smaller groups as appropriate. Goals for Cohort II schools included participating in coaching and networking opportunities, developing a school plan for Learning Walks to determine progress in their schools, establishing study group opportunities based on the Principles of Learning, and developing school plans about integrating the Principles of Learning into the district's Literacy Initiative to review with area superintendents.

- **Cohort III: 9 junior high schools that joined the initiative in 2002–2003, 2003–2004, and 2004–2005.** These schools concentrated on understanding and applying the Principles of Learning in the core content areas of English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. By the end of the school year, Cohort III principals and lead teachers had reached a greater shared understanding of how to focus their resources.

Inclusion of Special Education and English Language Learner Students and Teachers

The participation of teachers and staff from English Language Learner (ELL) and Special Education departments into the *Project for Academic Excellence* continued to deepen in 2004–2005, with great strides made in using Writer's Workshops and Reader's Workshops with these students. Teachers have reported great success in using the workshop model with both ELL and Special Education students, in some cases reporting achievements they did not believe possible prior to alignment of the educational program to the *Project for Academic Excellence*.

Writing Institutes

In 2004–2005, the *Project for Academic Excellence* concentrated on moving the Writing Institutes to scale in every classroom in the district. Writing Institutes train teachers to use the Writer's Workshop, a standards-based model, in their classrooms. Three levels of

ongoing professional development include content and pedagogy, extensive materials, and demonstration classes—all of which have enabled teachers to implement Writer's Workshops at a consistent quality across the district. By the end of 2004–2005, the vast majority of elementary school teachers were conducting daily Writer's Workshops. In 2005–2006, the *Project for Academic Excellence* will expand opportunities for teachers to see fully-functioning Writer's Workshop classrooms.

Reading Institutes

Two levels of Reading Institutes have been held to date, in the summers of 2004 and 2005. Level I introduced a total of 457 teachers to Literacy Frameworks and providing an overview of the Reader's Workshop model. Level II provided 392 teachers with a more in-depth study of these components. More than 200 additional teachers were interested in these opportunities but unable to attend due to limited capacity. The district plans to offer a Level III in the summer of 2006. In addition to Reading Institutes, the *Project for Academic Excellence* offered three different workshops on Reader's Workshop components to all district employees. During 2005–2006, demonstration classrooms will be created to provide ongoing support for teachers who have completed Reading Institutes.

Math and Science Initiatives

The first *Project for Academic Excellence* Math Institute was launched in the summer of 2005, building on the groundwork laid by six math content coaches at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels. Eighty teachers participated in this introduction to Everyday Math.

Efforts to improve science teaching and learning in 2004–2005 focused on aligning the K–12 science curriculum with new Minnesota Academic Standards in Science.

Achievement Plus

Achievement Plus is a comprehensive urban education reform model that integrates the school community, families, and the resources of public and private

organizations. 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 three Achievement Plus schools (Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary, John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary, and Monroe Achievement Plus Community School) became part of the initial cohort of schools that were the earliest implementers of the *Project for Academic Excellence*.

Achievement Plus schools demonstrate how an existing reform model can coexist with the comprehensive reform effort of the *Project for Academic Excellence*. In many ways, Achievement Plus schools paved the way for the broader implementation of the *Project for Academic Excellence*. Their experiences have demonstrated the importance of ongoing district support if a school is to fully implement a comprehensive reform model. Teachers, coaches, and principals from Achievement Plus schools agree that the *Project for Academic Excellence* has provided critical implementation support for their schools.

Junior High Literacy Initiative

First launched in 2003, the Junior High Literacy Initiative focuses on the disciplinary literacy framework, which seeks to integrate the teaching of reading and writing skills in the core subject areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In 2004–2005, two levels of professional development were offered to teachers at the junior high level. Level I offered content-specific training for math and science teachers, helped to develop interdisciplinary literacy teams, and training targeted to helping struggling readers. Level II offered a deeper training in the disciplinary literacy framework. In addition, coaches worked closely with sixteen teachers in four junior high schools to develop model classrooms.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Academic achievement results from standardized testing confirm the long-term success of the *Project for Academic Excellence* since its earliest inception several years ago. A data analysis in 2005 examined students' proficiency in the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA), which measures how well students have mastered state standards in reading, writing, and mathematics for third and fifth grades over the past seven years. This analysis revealed steady gains in the percent of students reaching proficiency on the MCA from 1998 to 2005:

- Students passing the fifth grade writing assessment increased from 47 percent to 74 percent.
- Students passing the third grade reading assessment increased from 26 percent to 62 percent, and in fifth grade from 27 percent to 63 percent.
- Students passing the third grade mathematics assessment increased from 23 percent to 61 percent.

It is clear from these figures that significant progress has been made in improving student achievement

since the *Project for Academic Excellence* began. These improvements are even more significant when considering the changes in district demographics over this same period. Students are increasingly low income (14 percent increase), speak languages other than English (16 percent increase) and require more Special Education services (6 percent increase). Despite the greater challenges faced by the student body, instruction has improved, expectations have been raised, and student achievement has climbed.

By spring 2005, there was also considerable evidence that, as a result of the *Project for Academic Excellence*:

- Administrators and principals have played a much greater instructional leadership role in schools;
- Teachers have made tangible changes in their instruction and report significant growth in knowledge and skills; and
- Ongoing professional development and support is building teacher capacity to implement and sustain school-wide reform.

PROGRESS IN BUILDING CAPACITY AND GOING TO SCALE

This implementation summary is the third in a series of summaries based on the evaluation being conducted by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), College of Education and Human Development, at the University of Minnesota. Taken together, the CAREI evaluations and related summaries illustrate the growth and depth of the *Project for Academic Excellence* and the process of implementation across the entire school district.

The Saint Paul Public Schools has followed a carefully crafted strategy for taking the *Project for Academic Excellence* to scale in all schools throughout the district. This strategy began by implementing reform in a single content area deeply within selected elementary schools and then leveraging these schools as learning sites to fuel reform in additional schools at the elementary level. Once reform was firmly established in the original

content area throughout the elementary level, the district expanded the initiative to additional content areas and began to expand to the junior and senior high levels as well. The end result is reform that is going to scale to reach a level of truly systemic reform, district-wide.

The district initiated the *Project for Academic Excellence* within the content area of writing in summer 2001 in several schools. By 2002–2003, comprehensive professional development plans for reading, mathematics, and science were underway, with reading and mathematics implemented in 2003–2004, and science put in place in the 2004–2005 school year. Throughout this time, the reform model has gone to scale both within individual schools and expanded to include more and more schools in the district. For the second year in a row, all K–8 schools in the district took part in the *Project for Academic Excellence* in 2004–2005.

SAINT PAUL'S PROJECT FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

As the chart below demonstrates, the number of teachers participating in professional development through the *Project for Academic Excellence* has grown

exponentially in the past three years, from 925 teachers in 2003 to 2,946 in 2005. (Note: The 2005 figure is a duplicated count, as described in the table.)

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.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	Writing Level I	Writing Level II	Writing Level III	Reading Level I	Reading Level II	Jr. High Initiative
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	
Capitol 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 Montessori and Science 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
Highwood Hills Elementary	16	7	2	6	2	

SAINT PAUL'S PROJECT FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	Writing Level I	Writing Level II	Writing Level III	Reading Level I	Reading Level II	Jr. High Initiative
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 and Monroe Middle	27	14	10	17	7	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	22	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: More than 200 teachers who requested registration for Reading Institute Level I in 2005 could not be accommodated due to limited resources.

As this table shows, in August 2003, 625 teachers had participated in Level I Writing Institutes; by August 2005 that number had climbed to 1,212. The 2004–2005 school year marked the second year in a row that all elementary and junior high schools were engaged in the *Project for Academic Excellence*.

**NEXT STEPS:
FOCUS FOR 2005–2006 AND BEYOND**

The *Project for Academic Excellence* continues to focus on going to scale in every classroom throughout the district. This effort will not be without challenges, including the departure of Superintendent Patricia Harvey and extremely limited financial resources that have hampered the ability to fully support the *Project*

for Academic Excellence. Nevertheless, district leaders have begun working with IFL to develop professional development at the high school level. The district is committed to exploring ways to ensure that all classroom teachers throughout the district participate in Level I training and more classroom teachers continue straight through Level III.

IMPROVEMENTS IN STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Student performance has improved at schools participating in PAE.

In fifth-grade writing:

- The proportion of fifth-graders deemed “proficient” on the state writing test grew by 26 percentage points at PAE schools (from 45 percent to 71 percent) between the beginning of PAE (2001–02) and 2004–05.
- Growth at PAE schools surpassed growth at non-PAE schools in Saint Paul (up 10 percentage points during the same period, 2001–05); a demographically similar school district in Minneapolis (up 7 percentage points), and at the state level (unchanged, averaged across four writing levels).
- Growth is evident at all PAE schools, although the amount of improvement varies with the number of years a school has participated in the project. The greatest growth in the proportion of proficient fifth-grade writers has been at schools that joined PAE in 2002–03 (an increase of 42 percentage points).

If one examines data from 1999, the improvement is even more dramatic: The proportion of fifth-graders who passed the state writing test in 2004–05 grew 38 percentage points district-wide and 42 percentage points at schools with the longest exposure to the reforms.

In fifth-grade reading:

- The proportion of fifth-graders deemed “proficient” on the state reading test grew by 21 percentage points

at PAE schools (from 43 percent to 64 percent) between 2001 and 2005. The growth was comparable at non-PAE schools in Saint Paul (up 20 percentage points during the same period).

- Growth at PAE schools surpassed growth in Minneapolis, Anoka-Hennepin County, and statewide by 2 to 11 percentage points.

Again, during the period of 1999 to 2005, the improvement is even more dramatic: The proportion of fifth-graders who passed the state reading test grew by 38 percentage points district-wide and by as much as 48 percentage points at schools with longer exposure to PAE.

In third-grade reading:

- The proportion of third-graders who passed the state reading test grew by 17 percentage points at PAE schools (from 45 percent to 62 percent) between the beginning of PAE and 2004–05. This growth was comparable to growth at non-PAE schools (up 18 percentage points), Minneapolis schools (up 15 points), and the state average (up 11 points) during the same period.
- The growth was greatest for schools with the longest experience in PAE. Those that began the project in 2001 saw a growth of 16 percentage points, compared with a drop of 3 percentage points for schools that began in 2002 and a very modest increase of 2 percentage points for schools that began in 2003 and 2004.
- Comparisons using 1999 data show greater gains than 2001–05 comparisons. Between 1999 and 2005, the proportion of proficient third-grade readers

SAINT PAUL'S PROJECT FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

grew by an average of 36 percentage points in SPPS overall—including a gain of 45 percentage points for schools that began PAE in 2002—and 17 percentage points in PAE schools, compared with a drop of 6 percentage points for the state overall.

In middle/high school:

Tests for middle- and high-school students also show improved achievement. Between 1999 and 2005, the

proportion of eighth-graders who passed the Minnesota Basic Skills Reading Test on their first attempt grew by 16 percentage points (from 49 percent to 65 percent); in eighth-grade math, the increase was more modest (4 percentage points). The proportion of tenth-graders who passed the Minnesota Basic Skills Test in math grew by 17 percentage points (from 63 percent to 80 percent).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This summary was based upon a report 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.