

NEWS RELEASE

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MINNESOTA COUNCIL FOR QUALITY ANNOUNCES STATE FARM K-12 GRANT

The Minnesota Council for Quality, in cooperation with the Rochester Area Math and Science Partnership, is pleased to announce that it recently received a grant from State Farm Insurance to support its work with K-12 school districts in Southeast Minnesota.

The grant supports a rigorous assessment of approximately one-third of these districts a year, the output of which will help education leaders identify improvement opportunities upon which to focus resources and energy. The grant also assists with training on Baldrige for education leaders, as well as provides funds for districts to implement improvement initiatives in their schools.

“When educational organizations assess their performance against the Baldrige Criteria, school leaders not only gain a better understanding of their strengths and opportunities, but also can make systemic and focused improvements that build organizational capacity, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and – most importantly – improve student learning and other organizational outcomes,” says Brian Lassiter, president of the Minnesota Council for Quality.

The overall goal of the program is to improve student learning and organizational performance of the 12 districts in Southeast Minnesota. To accomplish the goal, this program has three distinct objectives:

1. To increase knowledge of the Baldrige framework with educators and administrators in the 12 districts in Southeast Minnesota,
2. To facilitate Baldrige-based organizational assessments within the 12 districts in Southeast Minnesota, and
3. To support the implementation of specific improvement initiatives within these 12 districts as well as create processes to share best practices across these 12 districts.

In addition, the program has two additional objectives:

4. To involve State Farm employees as much as possible to increase State Farm’s community outreach and to strengthen ties between State Farm and the community we are improving, and
5. To refine and improve – and eventually replicate – this program to other parts of Minnesota (and possibly across other states).

This program is a joint effort between the Minnesota Council for Quality and the Rochester Area Math Science Partnership (RAMSP). The RAMSP has focused on educational improvement in Southeast Minnesota since 1991; the Council has been focused on organizational improvement

since 1987. Beginning in 2003, the Council and RAMSP agreed to more systematically collaborate to improve the performance of Partnership school districts.

“This program expands on what the Partnership and the Council have accomplished to date and will rapidly accelerate the pace of improvement within the 12 school districts in Southeast Minnesota,” says Sarah Field, executive director of the Rochester Area Math and Science Partnership. “Our mission is to enhance student achievement and facilitate continuous improvement in our member districts. With State Farm’s assistance, we will be able to accelerate our work.”

These are tough times for Minnesota schools,” continues Lassiter. “The need to improve organizational performance within school districts has perhaps never been greater: the importance of student learning is at an all-time high in our society, but budgets have never been tighter. And NCLB has created additional challenges for some districts. The Baldrige framework provides a proven way to optimize educational assets, improve organizational performance, and enhance student learning. We are grateful that State Farm sees the value in our program and that they support efforts to improve the quality of education in Minnesota and the US.”

About the Minnesota Council for Quality

Founded in 1987, the Minnesota Council for Quality is a non-profit corporation that advances improvement and performance excellence within organizations, individuals, and communities. The Council helps leaders identify strengths and improvement opportunities and builds networks that bring information, resources, knowledge, and best practices to organizations desiring to improve. We do this by offering services such as our Baldrige-based organizational assessments (and Minnesota Quality Award), the Performance Improvement Network, the Consultant Referral Network, and the improvement Clearinghouse, and by collaborating with other non-profits that focus on improvement. For more information, visit www.councilforquality.org.

About the Rochester Area Math and Science Partnership

The RAMSP is a collaborative effort between twelve K-12 districts, two business partners (Mayo Clinic and IBM Corporation), and three higher education partners (University Center Rochester – RCTC, Winona State University, and University of MN-Rochester). RAMSP’s goal is to enhance: high student achievement; leadership and support for continuous improvement; and collaboration among K-12 districts, business, and higher education. This collaboration provides the framework and support necessary to build the capacity of quality assessment and continuous improvement for schools to provide excellence in education and leave no child behind in the process. For more information, visit www.ramsp.org.

About the State Farm Companies Foundation

The State Farm Companies Foundation was established in 1963 as an independent private foundation. The Foundation is primarily committed to education, helping to raise the level of student achievement in our elementary and secondary schools, as well as supporting key higher education initiatives. The Foundation is a separate nonprofit organization funded by the State Farm Mutual Company. The Foundation provides funding for our Education Excellence (education) initiatives that are national in scope: K-12 Public Schools, Service Learning, Systemic Improvement, and Teacher Excellence. The Foundation also supports higher education initiatives. For more information, visit <http://statefarm.com/foundati/foundati.htm>.

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