

**QUALITY PERFORMANCE ACCREDITATION  
SURVEY RESULTS**

**February 2001**

**Prepared by Dr. Sherrill Martinez  
Planning & Research  
Kansas State Department of Education  
&  
Dr. Janet Marquis  
Life Span Institute  
University of Kansas**

## Executive Summary

In the fall of 2000, surveys regarding the Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA) process were sent to all superintendents and local board of education presidents and to a random sample of principals, parent/community site council members, teachers, and district office curriculum and instruction personnel. Return rates ranged from 77 percent for superintendents to 27 percent for board of education presidents.

A factor analysis was run on the fifty items in Section B on the survey. Based on the factor analysis and the researchers' review of the items, items were grouped into four domains or subsets of items, which, in this report, will be broadly titled: Overall Purpose of QPA, Clarity, Consistency and Facility in Implementation of the QPA process, On-site Teams and Visits, and Obstacles to the QPA process. Except for the domain of Overall Purpose, the item subsets seem to be factors that affect successful school improvement through QPA.

Data were analyzed both by individual items and by domains. In addition, various demographic variables were considered in the analyses. The demographics included years of direct experience with the QPA process, enrollment level of the respondent's school district, and type of position. Respondents were grouped according to four types of position: teacher, administrator (principal, superintendent, or district level support staff), community member (board of education or local council), and site team chair. Everyone except visiting team chairs responded to the items as they relate to the respondent's own school or school district. Visiting team chairs were asked to consider the school that they last chaired, when completing the survey.

Overall, there was general agreement about the concept and purpose of QPA. However, there was also agreement that the practice of QPA is not working as it should. Few response differences were found when data were analyzed by the demographic variables. Other observations from the survey are summarized below.

### Purpose of QPA

There is fairly strong agreement that:

1. *QPA has as its goal individual student improvement and program improvement.* Respondents also believe that the QPA process can lead to increased learning for students.
2. *QPA encourages schools to make a commitment to school improvement and helps focus school staff.*
3. *QPA is designed to include/involve all students, staff, and parents/community members.* However, respondents agree less frequently that QPA forms a resource link between KSDE and schools.
4. *QPA as a process of continuous improvement is an effective strategy for aligning all components of the educational system.*

## **Clarity, Consistency, and Facility in Implementation of the QPA Process--Factors Affecting Successful School Improvement through QPA**

1. *Clarity in the definition of improvement.* Nearly 40 percent of the respondents disagree that definitions of improvement are clear in the QPA process. Clarity and consistency are difficult without an understanding of this basic concept by all participants.
2. *Clarity of QPA standards and availability of uniform criteria and procedures for schools and visiting teams to use to determine accreditation status.* Developing such criteria and standards is one of the improvement strategies ranked highest by respondents. Another strategy of clarifying and communicating QPA expectations is ranked highest or second highest by 44 percent of the respondents.
3. *Clarity regarding the role and expected level of involvement of district office staff and local boards of education in the QPA process.* Over 60 percent of the respondents disagree with the statement that these roles and levels of involvement are clear.
4. *Understanding of the QPA process by teachers and administrators.* Respondents think that administrators understand the QPA process better than teachers. Almost no one strongly agrees that teachers understand the process. This may be the reason that over 60 percent of the respondents think that more teachers need to participate in the site visits at their own schools and become involved in site visit teams for other schools. Forty-five percent of the respondents say the majority of teachers are not at all involved in the QPA process or are involved in a limited way. When item data are analyzed by position of respondent, 15 percent of the teachers are identified as being extremely negative about QPA.
5. *Facility in implementing/managing the QPA process.* Other difficulties to the process mentioned in the comments include the huge time commitment required, paperwork burden, high cost, and number of days taken away from instruction. Two of the highest ranking strategies for improving the process address some of these difficulties. They are providing resources for schools to use to improve learning and identifying/sharing successful approaches for implementing the QPA process. Other suggestions made in the comments include cutting down on paperwork and allowing schools to select their own targets.

### **Site Visit and On-Site Teams**

1. *Impact of site-visit teams on school improvement.* Respondents moderately agree that site teams/visits have a positive impact on school improvement. However, over 40 percent disagree that the visits create positive tension in the schools. There is agreement that expectations for site visits are clearly defined.
2. *Duties and qualifications of site team members.* It seems that most visiting teams prepare well for the visits. However, over 30 percent of the respondents disagree that the process requires buildings to select impartial visiting team members and that the site team members have the training to facilitate the school improvement process. Respondents agree that the chairs are required to consistently update their knowledge of QPA. There is agreement that more teachers need to be

- involved in the site visits in their own schools and in other schools as members of a visiting site team.
3. *Difficulties in finding qualified chairs and members.* Over half of the respondents believe that it is difficult to find qualified chairs and visiting team members. Site visit chairs are more likely than other groups to believe that it is difficult to find qualified chairs and team members and that team members do not have the necessary skills to assist schools with school improvement.
  4. *Number and timing of site visits.* Over 60 percent of the respondents believe that the timing of the first visit is about right and that additional visits are not needed. More than half would not remove the site visits from schools that are making adequate progress.

### **Obstacles to the QPA Process**

These are situations that appear to negatively impact the QPA process but which are not under the control of those implementing and managing the QPA process itself

1. *Turnover in district and building leadership.* Among the obstacles to QPA indicated by the respondents are turnover in district and building leadership (more than 70 percent agree that these are problems).
2. *Lack of continuity in the state assessments.* 93 percent of the respondents agree that changes in the state assessments disrupt the QPA process. Among the strategies added by the respondents was to leave curriculum and assessment constant for a longer period of time.

### **Information from Survey that Pertains to Task Force Subgroup Questions**

1. Training: How might QPA be improved by changes in training for local school and district staff, Board members and KSDE staff?

Only 13 percent of the respondents rank the increase training requirements strategy as very important, and 30 percent think that increased training is very unimportant. However, respondents do not think that teachers and visiting team members have the skills they need. Respondents seem to prefer that assistance be given to those who need it through the development of uniform criteria and procedures, which 32 percent rank as important, and through the sharing of successful approaches for implementing the QPA process, which 27 percent rank as important.

2. Site visits: How might site visits better serve the QPA process?

Over 30 percent of the respondents disagree that the process requires buildings to select impartial visiting team members and that the site team members have the training to facilitate the school improvement process; and over half believe that it is difficult to find qualified chairs and visiting team members. Respondents believe that all schools should have site visits, but that two are enough.

3. District and Board responsibility: Should districts and Boards of Education have more responsibility for the QPA process?

Respondents do not believe that the roles and expected level of involvement of district office staff and local boards of education in the QPA process are clear. They do think that district and building leadership give schools support for the process. It could be that district leadership is currently playing too much of a role in a school's process, since over 70 percent of the respondents say that turnover in district leadership creates problems for the process. Thirty-two percent of the respondents think that putting more responsibility for the coordination and alignment of the accreditation process at the school district level is important, while over half think it is unimportant.

4. Accreditation criteria: What should be included in criteria/procedures for schools and visiting teams to use to determine accreditation status?

There is strong disagreement among the respondents with the statement that there is consistency among on-site chairs, KSDE staff, and local district staff on QPA process expectations. Over thirty percent of the respondents think that developing uniform criteria and procedures for schools and visiting teams to use to determine accreditation status is very important. Accreditation criteria were not really discussed on this survey.

5. KSDE support: What support for QPA is needed from KSDE?

Two of the ten strategies listed on the survey deal with KSDE support in the QPA process. Eighteen and 16 percent of the respondents, respectively, give the (1) define the role of KSDE staff as resources for the QPA process and (2) use KSDE staff to coordinate partnerships between schools and among schools, service centers and universities to help school staff gain the knowledge and skills necessary for the school improvement process strategies very important rankings. A few comments suggest that the staff at KSDE is too small to give support to districts, and that agencies like service centers should be enlisted to provide support.

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Executive Summary .....	ii
Survey Overview .....	1
Table 1:; Response Rates by Position.....	1
Graph 1: Size of School District .....	2
Graph 2: Length of Experience with QPA Process .....	3
Results of Individual Items .....	3
Table 2: Means of Individual Items .....	4
Table 3: Summary of Open-Ended Comments.....	6
Table 4: Other Strategy.....	10
Results of Subsets of Items and Groups of Respondents.....	10
Overall Purpose of QPA .....	11
Clarity, Consistency , and Facility in Implementation of the QPA Process-- Factors That Affect Successful School Improvement .....	12
The Site-Visit and On-Site Teams .....	13
Obstacles to the QPA Process.....	13
Appendix A: Data Tables.....	14
Appendix B: Comments.....	22

## Survey Overview

In the early fall of 2000, the Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA) Task Force began discussing what they had heard about and experienced through participation in QPA, focusing on perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the QPA process. The Task Force decided to validate what they thought were statewide perceptions of QPA, through surveying school staff and community members. The surveys were sent to all superintendents and district board of education presidents and to a 10-15 percent random sample (depending on size of population) of teachers and district level curriculum or instructional support staff members, principals, site council parent or business representatives, and QPA chairs. Numbers of surveys sent and return rates are given in Table 1. Because random samples were drawn from the previous school year's data, at least a few surveys were sent to individuals who were no longer serving in the positions they were selected to represent. In the case of QPA chairs, names and addresses were the ones given to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) at the time the chairs attended chair training; therefore, some of the addresses were not current. In other words, return rates of valid surveys, especially for teachers and chairs, are probably higher than the figures shown, since some surveys were most likely discarded due to incorrect position titles and addresses.

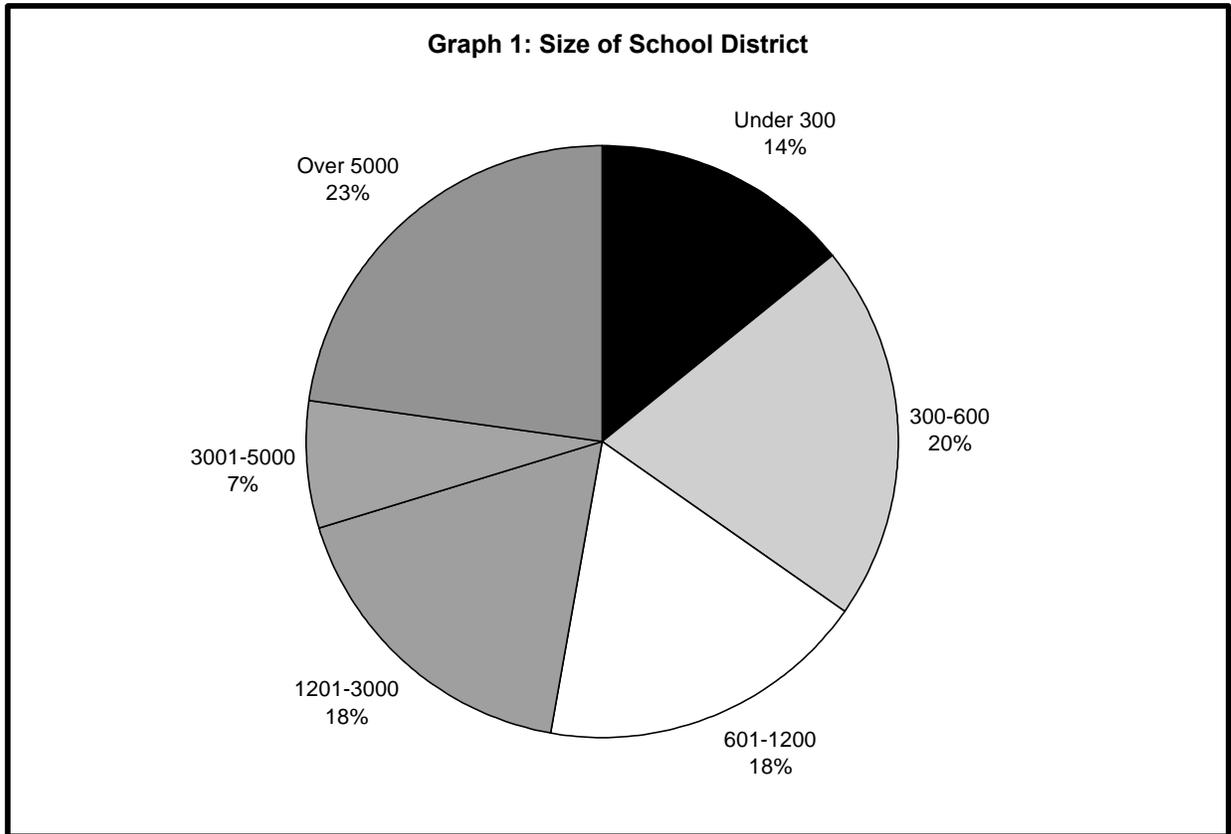
**Table 1: Response Rates by Position**

<b>Position</b>	<b>No. Sent</b>	<b>No. Returned</b>	<b>% Return</b>
Teacher or District Level Curriculum or Instructional Support Staff Member	2565	929	36%
Principal	210	146	70%
Superintendent	300	230	77%
Board of Education President	304	81	27%
Site Council Parent/Business Representative	210	67	32%
QPA Team Chair	212	129	61%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3801</b>	<b>1582</b>	<b>42%</b>

Each chair was asked to respond to the survey, thinking about the last school at which he/she served as a chair. All other respondents gave information about their experiences with their own schools and districts.

All respondents were asked if they were associated with a public or private school or school district. About 96 percent were associated with public schools and 4 percent were associated with private schools. Teachers, principals, and site council members were also asked if their school is currently an NCA member. Fifty-four percent said their school is currently a member.

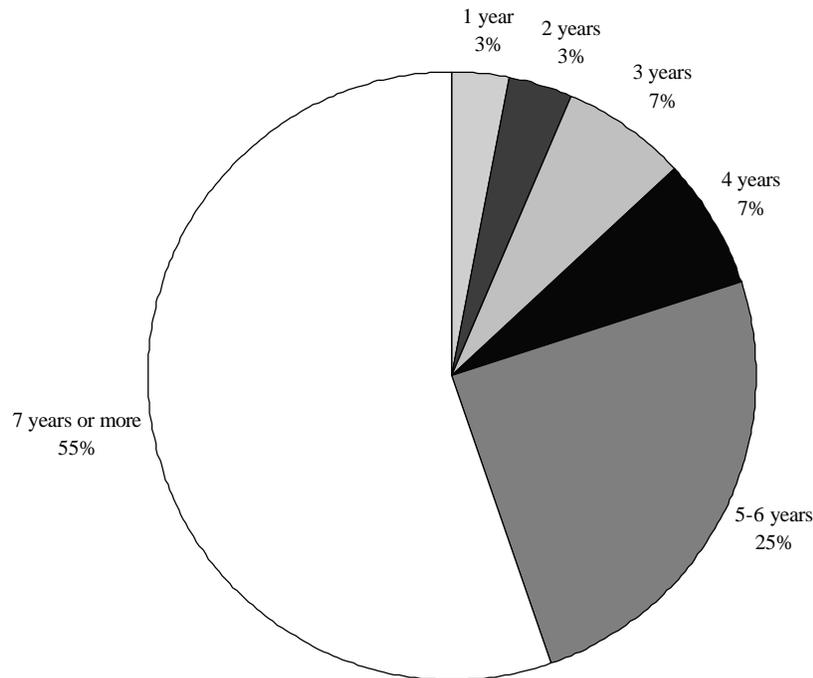
Public school district staff, board of education presidents, and site council members were asked to indicate the size of their district's student population. There was a fairly even split between those over and under 1,200. Results are shown in the graph below.



Everyone was asked to indicate his/her total length of direct experience, in any capacity, with the QPA process. The majority (55%) had seven years or more of direct experience.

Since the percent of respondents who are teachers is high (56 percent), data were analyzed to see if teacher responses were masking the responses of other groups. Except for one item, this was not the case. A much higher percent of teachers than the other group members disagreed that QPA encourages educators to use data to make sound program decisions to improve student academic achievement. On all other items, response distributions were similar for all position types.

**Graph 2: Length of Experience with QPA Process**



**Results for Individual Items**

Respondents indicated the degree to which their perceptions agreed with 50 statements. The rating scale for the items ranged from 1, Strongly Agree, to 4, Strongly Disagree. Agreement was strongest for the following eight items:

1. Changes in the state assessments make data comparisons difficult and disrupt the process.
2. QPA encourages schools to make a commitment to school improvement.
3. Chairpersons have to consistently update their knowledge about the QPA process.
4. The QPA process focuses on standards and target outcomes.
5. Continuous improvement is an effective strategy for aligning all components of the educational system.
6. A goal of QPA is program improvement.
7. A goal of QPA is to align standards, curriculum, and assessments.
8. Turnover in building leadership creates difficulties with the process.

There was strongest disagreement with the following items:

1. The QPA process should include more site visits.
2. There is consistency among on-site chairs, the Kansas State Department of Education staff, and the local district staff (LEA) in QPA process expectations.
3. The expected level of involvement of local boards of education in the QPA process is clear.

4. The role of the local boards of education in the QPA process is clear.
5. The expected level of involvement of the district office staff in the QPA process is clear.
6. The role of the district office staff in the QPA process is clear.
7. The QPA first site visit comes too far into the school improvement cycle.
8. The on-site visit should be required only if there is lack of evidence of progress.

The items listed above with the strongest agreements and disagreements did not differ substantially by type of position.

Means for all fifty items are listed in Table 2 and response frequencies can be found in Appendix A.

**Table 2: Means of Individual Items**

Items	Mean
1. QPA encourages schools to make a commitment to school improvement.	1.72
2. Because of the QPA process, teachers are more focused on school-wide improvement beyond their own classrooms.	2.08
3. The QPA process encourages districts to provide structure, support and resources to buildings for continuous improvement.	2.00
4. The QPA process focuses on standards and target outcomes.	1.80
5. The QPA process allows schools to include local goals.	1.99
6. Continuous improvement is an effective strategy for aligning all components of the educational system.	1.88
7. The QPA process helps increase student learning.	2.32
8. The QPA process keeps schools/faculties focused on what is important for students to learn.	2.25
9. QPA has produced improvement of student performance in conditionally accredited schools.	2.31
10. QPA encourages educators to use data to make sound program decisions to improve student academic achievement.	2.00
11. The QPA process documents the impact instruction has on student performance.	2.26
12. QPA has raised educators' level of expectations for student performance	2.35
13. The QPA process is designed to include all students (general education, special education, Title I, 504, students on improvement plans, LEP/ESL).	2.00
14. The QPA process brings the entire staff together, making everyone part of the team responsible for school improvement.	2.20
15. QPA forms a resource link between the Kansas State Department of Education and schools.	2.36
16. Parent and community involvement are important components of the QPA process.	2.23
17. The visiting team review of student performance and school programs has a positive influence on school improvement.	2.21
18. Most teachers understand the QPA process.	2.45
19. Most administrators understand the QPA process.	2.11
20. There is a consistency among on-site chairs, the Kansas State Department of Education staff, and the local district staff (LEA) in QPA process expectations.	2.77
21. The role of the district office staff in the QPA process is clear.	2.66
22. The role of the local boards of education in the QPA process is clear.	2.72
23. The expected level of involvement of the district office staff in the QPA process is clear.	2.72
24. The expected level of involvement of local boards of education in the QPA process is clear.	2.75
25. Expectations for the site visit are clearly defined for the school and visiting team.	2.21
26. Definitions of improvement are clear.	2.37
27. A goal of QPA is improvement of individual student achievement.	2.10
28. A goal of QPA is program improvement.	1.89
29. A goal of QPA is to align standards, curriculum, and assessments.	1.90

Items	Mean
30. On-site visits create positive tension in the school.	2.44
31. The on-site visit reaffirms efforts for improving student performance.	2.16
32. The on-site visit encourages staff to continue their pursuit of continuous improvement.	2.14
33. The site visit team assists the school staff with school improvement.	2.22
34. The site visit team monitors the school's progress.	2.26
35. The QPA process should include more site visits.	2.79
36. The on-site visit should be required only if there is lack of evidence of progress.	2.52
37. The QPA process requires building teams to select impartial visiting team members.	2.30
38. It is difficult to find qualified visiting site chairpersons.	2.27
39. Chairpersons have to consistently update their knowledge about the QPA process.	1.76
40. It is difficult to find qualified visiting site team members.	2.34
41. Team members have the training to facilitate the school improvement process.	2.35
42. The team members have reviewed the appropriate materials before they arrive for the site visit and are prepared to facilitate the process at that site.	2.10
43. Turnover in district leadership creates difficulties with the process.	2.02
44. Turnover in building leadership creates difficulties with the process.	1.91
45. The final accreditation visit needs to be more standardized.	2.29
46. The entire QPA process needs to be more standardized.	2.30
47. The QPA first site visit comes too far into the school improvement cycle.	2.65
48. Changes in the state assessments make data comparisons difficult and disrupt the process.	1.49
49. More teachers need to participate in the site visits at their own schools.	2.26
50. More teachers need to become involved on site visit teams for other schools.	2.29

The responses indicate that there is general agreement that the vision of QPA is to bring about school improvement through such things as curriculum alignment and a focus on standards and target outcomes. However, changes in state assessments; turnover in building leadership; inconsistencies in process expectations among on-site chairs, district staff, and KSDE staff; frequent changes in the QPA process; and lack of clarity about the role and expected level of involvement of local board of education and district office staff create obstacles to school improvement. Open-ended comments corroborate what is indicated in the fifty statements. Respondents state that making sense of curriculum and assessment data is impossible with the constant changes in curriculum and state assessments, that building teams are second guessing what KSDE and on-site teams want, and that schools not receiving commitment and continuity from building and district administration are having difficulty making the process work. (See complete comments in Appendix B and a summary of the comments in Table 3.)

**Table 3: Summary of Open-Ended Comments**

	No. of Written Response Categories	% of Written Responses	% of All 57 Respondents Mentioning Category
<b>Process Doesn't Lead to School Improvement</b>			
Threats and process are demoralizing	5	4%	9%
It is all hoop jumping for legislators and/or KSDE	7	5%	12%
Process isn't working/creating improvements	6	4%	11%
There is no proof of benefits of QPA	3	2%	5%
The process causes the dumbing down of the curriculum	1	1%	2%
The state is not geared up to make QPA work: leadership, implementation strategy, resources	1	1%	2%
Everyone is second guessing what is wanted; there is inconsistent interpretation/constant change/no clarity	4	3%	7%
Tweak the process before everyone is burned out	2	1%	4%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>Leave School Improvement to Schools</b>			
Let us do our jobs; cut down on paperwork so we can improve	11	8%	19%
Leave school improvement to districts & schools	6	4%	11%
Building should be able to select targets	4	3%	7%
Have schools turn in 5-year plans and then hold them accountable for results. Not everyone needs the rest of the process (site councils, site visits, etc.)	1	1%	2%
QPA is OK for poor schools, but removes professionalism from others & causes unnecessary work for good schools	2	1%	4%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Involvement of State/Building/District Staff</b>			
There must be commitment, assistance, understanding of process, continuity from building and district leadership	6	4%	11%
There is an unfair division of work, with small group doing everything	4	3%	7%
There needs to be a process to ensure more genuine faculty input	2	1%	4%
KSDE staff is too small to support the needs of the state. Need to use others, like service center staff	2	1%	4%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>25%</b>

**Table 3 Continued: Summary of Open-Ended Comments**

	<b>No. of Written Response Categories</b>	<b>% of Written Responses</b>	<b>% of All 57 Respondents Mentioning Category</b>
<b>Takes Away from Instruction</b>			
There is so much focus on assessment and data that attention to instruction is short-changed	3	2%	5%
The additional work is not related to good teaching or student learning	2	1%	4%
Teachers are bombarded with tasks without sufficient time or resources; need time to work on details	5	4%	9%
The time commitment has become cumbersome; we're losing teaching days	6	4%	11%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Site Visits</b>			
Site visits have not been that positive & take resources away from teaching	2	1%	4%
We need more guidance/site visits; possibly should be training every year	2	1%	4%
Eliminate visiting teams or make visits less formal	2	1%	4%
All KSDE employees should be part of site teams	1	1%	2%
There is too much variability in the accreditation visit	1	1%	2%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Assessments</b>			
Using 3 tests for triangulation of data is difficult	1	1%	2%
Provide fair, rigorous assessment & hold students accountable	2	1%	4%
Testing what is easy to test & then teaching to test is not a good way to determine if students have mastered important skills	2	1%	4%
State assessments & NRTs are not most valid indicators of student learning	2	1%	4%
Making sense of curriculum & assessment data is impossible with constant changes	6	4%	11%
The development of local tests is costly and time consuming	1	1%	2%
Kansas assessments are neither reliable or valid	1	1%	2%
State shouldn't have pulled the plug on the promising performance assessments	1	1%	2%
Just mandate algebraic assessment	1	1%	2%
Give us a state curriculum (if state assessments)/more definite requirements	5	4%	9%
You can't solve society's problems through testing.	1	1%	2%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>40%</b>

**Table 3 Continued: Summary of Open-Ended Comments**

	<b>No. of Written Response Categories</b>	<b>% of Written Responses</b>	<b>% of All 57 Respondents Mentioning Category</b>
<b>Costs</b>			
It is difficult for small schools to afford the time and money required	1	1%	2%
The cost in time and money is huge	2	1%	4%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>School Comparisons</b>			
Stop comparing schools/putting assessment scores in newspapers	3	2%	5%
We shouldn't all be held to same standards when communities are different	5	4%	9%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
We are doing activities that are irrelevant to the subject matters we teach, such as teaching math in art	1	1%	2%
Team members donate their time & then get criticized	1	1%	2%
We are mixing efforts for school improvement with accountability efforts	1	1%	2%
The process is causing teachers & administrators to leave or not enter the field	6	4%	11%
The process doesn't consider apathetic/unmotivated students and parents	5	4%	9%
Weaken teacher tenure/award good teachers if you want improvement	3	2%	5%
<b>Section Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>142</b>		

Ten possible strategies for improving the QPA process were listed on the survey. Respondents could also add their own strategy as number 11. They were asked to rank the strategies from most important (1) to least important (10 or 11, depending on whether or not they added a strategy). According to the respondents, the following four strategies are most important:

- Clarify and communicate QPA expectations and standards in a clear, concise format to improve statewide consistency .
- Provide resources (best practice and materials) for schools to use to improve learning for all students.
- Identify and share successful approaches for implementing the QPA process (time, staff involvement, documents, etc.).
- Develop uniform criteria and procedures for schools and visiting teams to use to determine accreditation status.

'Clarify and communicate QPA expectations' was rated 1 or 2 by 44 percent of the respondents, and provide resources was rated 1 or 2 by 35 percent of them. The least important strategies, according to the respondents, are –

- Improve the template (content, purpose, technology).
- Put more responsibility for the coordination and alignment of the accreditation process at the school district level.
- Increase the training requirements related to the QPA process for all stakeholders.

Nearly 30 percent of the respondents rated each of these three items either 9 or 10. There were 184 respondents who suggested at least one additional strategy. The most frequently suggested strategies are shown in Table 4. Many deal with consistency, state assessments, and making the QPA process less complicated and time-consuming.

<b>Table 4: Other Strategy</b>	<b>Approximate % of Other Responses</b>
Decrease paperwork.	16%
Drop or seriously revise QPA	15%
Make the curriculum and/or state assessments more consistent and rigorous. Stop changing them.	12%
Make the process and the monitors of the process more uniform/consistent.	11%
Help pay expenses for things like team visits.	9%
Let teachers teach.	5%
Allow more local control on such things as process and goals.	4%
Find better ways to assess school improvement.	4%
Pay for time for teachers to work on process.	4%
Make process less complicated and lessen time involved.	4%
Test same group, not same grade. Make it more student improvement than school improvement.	3%
Include all curriculum areas in process.	2%
Involve local school boards more.	2%
Stop testing. State testing is a joke.	2%
Get more teacher input into the process and into state assessments.	2%

When asked about the current level of support for the QPA process, 51 percent of the respondents said that district leadership and 73 percent said that building leadership provides leadership and resources to coordinate and align systemic school improvement. The majority of the rest of the respondents felt that district and building leadership provide some support.

When asked about the level of teacher involvement in the QPA process, 16 percent said that all teachers are extensively involved, 39 percent said that a majority of teachers are extensively involved, 40 percent said that a majority of teachers are involved in a limited way, and 5 percent said that a majority of teachers are not at all involved.

### **Results of Subsets of Items and Groups of Respondents**

For purposes of disaggregations, the following groupings were used:

- Position
  - District level curriculum and instructional support staff, principals, and superintendents = administrators
  - Teachers
  - District board of education members and site council members = parents and community
- Size of District
  - 600 and under
  - 601-3000
  - Over 3000

- Length of Experience
  - 2 years or less
  - 3-4 years
  - 5-6 years
  - 7 years or more

Items on the survey can be combined into four subsets of items or domains of information: one having to do with the purpose of QPA, and three having to do with the factors that affect the capability for QPA to reach its potential. This section will summarize findings by domain and subgroups of respondents.

### **Overall Purpose of QPA**

Eighteen items of the fifty items in Section B relate to what QPA is or is suppose to be and to whether or not the QPA process is, in theory, a good one. There is general agreement among all subgroups on the items in this category. The strongest agreement is with items on focus and structure:

1. QPA encourages schools to make a commitment to school improvement.
2. Because of the QPA process, teachers are more focused on school-wide improvement beyond their own classrooms.
3. The QPA process encourages districts to provide structure, support and resources to buildings for continuous improvement.
4. The QPA process focuses on standards and target outcomes.

When looking at the inclusionary aspects of QPA, there is also agreement that QPA is designed to include all students (13), bring the entire staff together (14), and involve parents and community (16). There is a little less agreement that it forms a resource link between KSDE and schools (15).

As to what QPA does for achievement, there is moderate agreement that QPA encourages educators to use data to make sound program decisions to improve student academic achievement (10), helps increase student learning (7), keeps schools/faculties focused on what is important for students to learn (8), has produced improvement of student performance in conditionally accredited schools (9), documents the impact instruction has on student performance (11), and has raised educators' level of expectation for student performance (12).

Items 27-29 deal with the goals of QPA. There is general agreement that the goals are improvement of individual student achievement, program improvement, and alignment of standards, curriculum, and assessments.

Finally, there is fairly strong agreement that continuous improvement is an effective strategy for aligning all components of the educational system (6). In other words, regardless of position, length of experience with QPA, or size of district, respondents agree that a continuous improvement model is an appropriate one.

## **Clarity, Consistency, and Facility in Implementation of the QPA Process--Factors That Affect Successful School Improvement**

According to one of the written comments, the state is not geared up to make QPA work. Other comments indicate that respondents feel that resources, clarity, and consistency are missing from the process. In fact, nearly 40 percent of the respondents disagree that definitions of improvement are clear (26). They also agree that there needs to be more standardization in the QPA process and in the final accreditation visit (45-46). It is difficult to have clarity and consistency in any aspect of QPA when participants in the process do not know what is meant by improvement or what the standards are.

Items 21-24 in Section B of the survey state that the role and expected level of involvement of district office staff and local boards of education in the QPA process are clear. Respondents disagree most strongly with this group of items (2.7 mean). There are no significant differences in ratings among subgroups.

Respondents think that administrators understand the QPA process (19) better than teachers do (18). Almost no one strongly agrees with the statement about teacher understanding. There is disagreement with the statement that there is consistency among on-site chairs, KSDE staff, and local district staff in QPA process expectations (20).

Other difficulties to the process are identified through open-ended comments and the strategies. Comments include such things as the time commitment for QPA interferes with instructional time; and costs of QPA in terms of time and money make it difficult for schools, especially small schools, to fully participate. Among the highest ranking strategies are the following: provide resources for schools to use to improve learning, and identify and share successful approaches for implementing the QPA process. Respondents with less than three years of experience rank the strategy concerning the provision of resources significantly higher than those with seven or more years of experience. Respondents with less experience also rank the use of KSDE staff to coordinate partnerships strategy higher than those with seven or more years of experience. On the other hand, those with seven or more years of experience rank the clarify and communicate expectations strategy higher than respondents with one year of experience.

Among the strategies given the most important rankings are clarify and communicate QPA expectations and standards in a clear, concise format to improve statewide consistency and develop uniform criteria and procedures for schools and visiting teams to use to determine accreditation status. Board, parent, and community members rank the improve the template and identify and share successful approaches strategies higher than other groups. Administrators rank the use KSDE staff to coordinate partnerships strategy lower than other groups.

## **The Site-Visit and On-Site Teams**

Another set of items address on-site teams and visits. They are the most tangible aspects of the QPA process because schools receive actual feedback/direction from the visiting team. However, results of the survey suggest that there may be too much reliance on the site teams to set the standards and structure for the process, leading to inconsistency.

One set of questions is about the effect the on-site visit has on schools. There is moderate agreement that the visiting team review has a positive influence on school improvement (17), the on-site visit reaffirms efforts for improving student performance (31), the visit encourages staff to continue their pursuit of continuous improvement (32), the site visit team assists the school staff with school improvement (33), and the site visit team monitors school progress (34); and slightly less agreement that the visits create positive tension in the school (30). Teachers, especially those with four years of experience, more strongly disagree with the items than other respondents.

Procedural issues with on-site teams make up the second set of questions in this subcategory. Respondents agree that expectations for the site visit are clearly defined for the school and visiting team (25), chairpersons must consistently update their knowledge (39), and team members have reviewed the appropriate materials before they arrive for the site visit (42). There is less agreement that the process requires building teams to select impartial visiting team members(37), and site team members have the training to facilitate the school improvement process (41). Over half of the respondents feel that it is difficult to find qualified chairs and visiting team members (38, 40). There is strongest disagreement that the QPA process should include more site visits (35), the first site visit comes too far into the school improvement cycle (47), and the visit should be required only if there is lack of evidence of progress (36).

On-site team chairs are the group most in agreement that it is difficult to find qualified chairs and site team members and most in disagreement that team members have the training to facilitate the school improvement process. There is moderate agreement that more teachers need to become involved in the site visits, both in their own schools and as members of a visiting site team (49-50). Respondents with more experience with QPA disagree most strongly with the need for more site visits.

## **Obstacles to the QPA Process**

Some of the items in Section B have to do with obstacles to QPA. These are often difficulties that are not under the control of the QPA process, but their existence could and should be taken into account in the planning.

Respondents agree that turnover in district and building leadership creates difficulties (43-44). In the open-ended comments, six respondents say that there must be commitment and continuity from building and district leadership and six speak of the need to have more people involved in the process.

Respondents also strongly agree that changes in the state assessments make data comparisons difficult and disrupt the process (48). A total of 23 of the open-ended comments related to assessment issues.

**APPENDIX A**  
**DATA TABLES**

### QPA Survey Item Frequencies

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
1. Encourages schools to make commitment	611	39%	832	53%	86	5%	41	3%
2. Teachers more focused	285	18%	931	59%	295	19%	57	4%
3. Encourages districts to provide support	309	20%	990	63%	221	14%	45	3%
4. Focuses on standards and target outcomes	455	29%	1001	64%	80	5%	30	2%
5. Allows schools to include local goals	330	21%	979	62%	201	13%	60	4%
6. Continuous improvement is an effective strategy	405	26%	950	61%	177	11%	24	2%
7. Helps increase student learning	170	11%	832	53%	448	29%	108	7%
8. Keeps schools focused on what is important to learn	192	12%	884	57%	400	26%	88	6%
9. Produced improvement in conditionally accredited schools	87	6%	830	60%	411	30%	52	4%
10. Encourages educators to use data to make decisions	321	20%	969	62%	230	15%	46	3%

**QPA Survey Item Frequencies Continued**

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
11. Documents impact instruction has on performance	161	10%	892	58%	423	27%	73	5%
12. Has raised educator level of expectation	190	12%	733	47%	547	35%	93	6%
13. Designed to include all students	273	18%	1050	68%	191	12%	40	3%
14. Brings entire staff together	227	15%	876	56%	371	24%	88	6%
15. Forms a resource link between KSDE and schools	117	8%	856	55%	484	31%	95	6%
16. Parent and community involvement important	210	13%	848	54%	444	28%	61	4%
17. Visiting team review has positive influence	186	12%	922	60%	369	24%	69	4%
18. Teachers understand process	92	6%	811	52%	537	34%	128	8%
19. Administrators understand process	222	14%	988	63%	296	19%	50	3%
20. Is consistency among on-site chairs, KSDE, and local staff	40	3%	529	35%	662	44%	265	18%

**QPA Survey Item Frequencies Continued**

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
21. Role of district office staff is clear	50	3%	567	37%	760	50%	151	10%
22. Role of local boards of education clear	40	3%	535	35%	770	50%	184	12%
23. Expected LEA involvement is clear	49	3%	500	33%	791	52%	172	11%
24. Expected local board involvement is clear	34	2%	472	31%	850	56%	163	11%
25. Expectations for the site visit are clearly defined	168	11%	960	62%	346	22%	73	5%
26. Definitions of improvement are clear	111	7%	834	54%	517	33%	83	5%
27. Improvement of student achievement is a goal	260	17%	949	61%	280	18%	69	4%
28. Program improvement is a goal	299	19%	1152	74%	84	5%	25	2%
29. Alignment of standards, curriculum & assessment is goal	332	21%	1070	69%	121	8%	25	2%
30. On-site visits create positive tension	131	8%	764	49%	501	32%	154	10%

### QPA Survey Item Frequencies Continued

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
31. On-site visit reaffirms efforts for improving student perf.	166	11%	1023	67%	277	18%	70	5%
32. On-site visit encourages staff to continue school improvement	187	12%	1022	66%	266	17%	67	4%
33. Site visit team assists school with school improvement	145	9%	967	63%	350	23%	66	4%
34. Site visit team monitors school's progress	94	6%	987	65%	380	25%	56	4%
35. Process should include more site visits	119	8%	366	24%	765	50%	279	18%
36. Visit should be required only if lack of progress	229	15%	466	30%	658	43%	186	12%
37. Process requires schools to select impartial visiting team	104	7%	918	62%	367	25%	93	6%
38. Is difficult to find qualified site chairs	237	17%	600	42%	568	40%	31	2%
39. Chairpersons have to consistently update their knowledge	442	29%	987	66%	61	4%	13	1%
40. It is difficult to find qualified team members	178	12%	621	43%	605	42%	28	2%

### QPA Survey Item Frequencies Continued

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
41. Team members have training	54	4%	905	62%	450	31%	62	4%
42. Team members have reviewed materials	117	8%	1094	76%	205	14%	29	2%
43. Turnover in district creates difficulties	421	28%	672	45%	379	25%	37	2%
44. Turnover in bldg. creates difficulties	490	32%	704	47%	275	18%	40	3%
45. Final visit needs to be more standardized	208	14%	668	46%	526	36%	54	4%
46. Process needs to be more standardized	248	17%	618	42%	545	37%	76	5%
47. Site visit comes too far into cycle	76	5%	406	28%	923	63%	51	4%
48. Changes in state assessments create difficulties	900	60%	497	33%	92	6%	21	1%
49. More teachers need to participate	240	16%	712	47%	483	32%	74	5%
50. More teachers need to be involved	200	13%	752	50%	442	30%	99	7%

**Frequencies of Responses for Leadership Items**

	Provides leadership & resources		Some support		Awareness only		No support or awareness	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Level of support from district leadership	783	51%	586	38%	143	9%	21	1%
Level of support from building leadership	1117	73%	355	23%	53	3%	7	0%

**Frequencies of Responses for Teacher Involvement Item**

	All teachers extensively involved		Majority of teachers extensively involved		Majority of teachers involved in limited way		Majority of teachers not at all involved	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Level of teacher involvement	239	16%	603	39%	617	40%	71	5%

### Frequencies of Responses for Strategy Items

	Highest Importance(1&2)		Important (3&4)		So so (5&6)		Unimportant (7&8)		Lowest Importance (9&10)	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Increase the training requirements	197	13%	254	17%	272	19%	309	21%	437	30%
Put more responsibility at school district	218	15%	250	17%	272	19%	320	22%	407	28%
Develop uniform criteria and procedures	471	32%	317	22%	296	20%	226	15%	162	11%
Improve the template	209	14%	282	19%	282	19%	279	19%	402	28%
Provide resources to schools	515	35%	393	27%	273	18%	164	11%	134	9%
Define role of KSDE as resource	259	18%	274	19%	289	20%	303	21%	344	23%
Use KSDE staff to coordinate partnerships	245	16%	296	20%	276	19%	308	21%	365	24%
Identify and share successful approaches	405	27%	441	30%	300	20%	185	12%	160	11%
Clarify and communicate expectations	647	44%	341	23%	218	15%	151	10%	126	8%
Publish a list of paperwork required	438	30%	307	21%	209	14%	209	14%	320	22%

**APPENDIX B  
COMMENTS**

## QPA SURVEY COMMENTS

1. Quit playing around and just give us a state curriculum. This process should be value-added. A production function formula should be established that would allow for differences in ability, parent involvement, socio-economic status, teacher quality, school quality and peer group. The State Board of Education and the state legislature should take the assessments. Post the results in all major newspapers in the state. No comparisons will be made. Remove tenure or otherwise weaken teacher due process procedures in order to get the attention of classroom teachers who believe accountability is a passing fad.
2. Having not had a "course" in surveying recently, I am disappointed that there is no "middle ground" section on any of the questions. I would point out that, as an example, in Section B, there are several questions in which words such as "encouraged" or "designed" are used. To these one must answer "strongly agree" because, of course, QPA is "designed" to do what is stated in the particular question and districts are "encouraged" to commit to school improvement. A "middle ground" response on later questions, however, would let us more fairly indicate whether we feel there is not necessarily agreement or disagreement with the statement. Personally, I feel the site visitation teams could be eliminated with a stronger emphasis on state-level requirements. I do not mean to indicate a removal of local control of certain things, but have long felt that, if we are to be compared to other states in the nation and our nation compared to the world, the state must have a greater involvement in just what is taught in our schools in Kansas--and in turn, the nation. I would be glad to help additionally in any way possible in improving the process. I think QPA is much more positive than it is negative, but it needs some major "tweaking" and needs it soon before teachers and administrators in our smaller schools are totally burned out on the process!
3. I was getting along in my experience and decided to allow the principals more power or authority in the process. I have been involved earlier in what was called District Wide Accreditation. We also were one of the first and few districts to have that accreditation. I felt in that process we had better coordination in curriculum alignment. I also felt I had more control perhaps that is possibly why I feel we had better alignment and teacher involvement. We never did develop scope and sequence or alignment for K through 12 social science and still feel it is not being done today. Many of the questions I felt neutral and left a couple blank. The state is doing a good job and you have some good people on your accreditation team. It is going to take awhile and people always resist change but you need to continue and also have visitations as if you do not have someone from the outside checking or looking at what you are doing. It would be like having a ball team that practiced all the time and never played a game. How would you know how well you are doing? I felt a little disenfranchised from our QPA process but feel QPA or similar process is necessary and we need continuous improvement.
4. One of my concerns regarding the QPA process is that it doesn't consider the apathetic student who lacks support from home and refuses support from school and community. I agree all students can improve, but due to the circumstances, improvement is not an issue to them. I don't feel it is fair to hold teachers accountable for the failures or inadequacies of

parents. Unfortunately our communities see many more of these types of students. It is a reflection on our society. It, in most cases, is not something an intervention or academic strategy is going to impact. In my small school setting, one or two of this type of student can prevent our data from showing improvement. Because of this, the school is subject to scrutiny. Perhaps the parents who show little support and concern should be scrutinized rather than the school.

5. I feel that our present form of QPA hurts both the students and the teachers in the long run. We are too worried about how we teach the kids instead of what we teach them. I think that each teacher is different and they are successful in their own ways. When things become too standardized I think that American education suffers. Teachers are strapped for time as it is and can become discouraged when the state adds all of the extra paperwork. I think we do need some sort of way to hold both teachers and school districts accountable but the current way is not the best way.
6. I am not familiar with...
  - #9. Conditionally accredited schools
  - #37, 38, 40, 41. The selection and training of team members and chairs.
7. It seems that a small number of teachers--reading, writing, math committee chairs--are required to spend a lot of their own time collecting and compiling data. This is not fair. We are not given time during the school day to do this extensive task. This also places the responsibility of the entire building on a few people. Yes, almost all of the staff is involved in carrying out the strategies, but only a small number are burdened with the number crunching. It's so bad that no one wants to take the position of reading, writing, math committee chair because they know they will be "stuck" with it forever.
8. What makes a great school? Conscientious teachers who make kids work. QPA has not helped our school one bit. We've maintained high scores in spite of QPA. Even our best teachers scorn QPA. It's nothing more than a pain in the derriere. QPA will "standardize" our students and schools into mediocrity.
9. I believe that QPA has done a great job getting "poor and mediocre" schools out of their rut and forcing them to improve. I believe QPA has piled a ton of paper work on all schools and has taken time away from good teachers that instinctively know what students need and forced the teachers/schools to PROVE that they are doing a good job with data collection and different tests. Where does professionalism in the educational process come into play with QPA? When a good teach recommends something that needs to be done with a student program, etc., why must they prove their professional judgment? It seems that we are second guessing what the QPA process wants and striving the "please" process. I believe teachers are being bombarded with additional tests, data collection, and additional time that takes away from the time that they can plan and deliver more meaningful lessons to the students. With the current shortage of educational personnel, why throw additional burdens into the mix. Involvement of parents and community is a great idea if they take ownership of their responsibilities of the student's educational process and not "dump" it all on the school. They are partners in this process, aren't they? As I feel we are a good school, and yes we can

improve, that we are being "saddled" with a bunch of paper work to make the schools that aren't as good improve.

10. It is my feeling that the State Department wants to have the assessments written for all students in the state at several levels, then the state should mandate the curriculum and teaching methods so all students have the same chance of scoring well. It has been a sham trying to make sense of the data since the assessments have changed so often. All State Department employees should have to be a part of a site team to determine if a school has improved scores over the five-year period. The state should also mandate the algebraic assessments instead of leaving that judgment to individual schools and districts. What is the standard for elementary algebraic success? I do believe all schools try hard to do the best they can for their students. Some do better than others. Some communities expect lower standards than others. Should the teachers and administrators be expected to have similar scores as those who work in communities that have much higher expectations? Getting rid of teacher tenure would allow administrators to expect more of their teachers. Bad teachers create a problem for the whole system. Overall, QPA is a good process which I support. As in all programs, there are some glitches that still need to be worked out.
11. I appreciate your asking for my input in the QPA process. I personally have many reservations about the way the KSDE is trying to implement change in the educational process in Kansas. Having experienced several educational systems in Europe, I take the liberty to disagree. Allow me a few suggestions to raise the standards of education in Kansas. 1) Provide a rigorous and inclusive curriculum (especially in science) for all schools in Kansas. Be specific about what you expect students to know. This will make it easier for educators to raise their standards in trying to comply. 2) Provide rigorous testing that is monitored strictly by the state. Expect students to perform at a minimum level. If a student fails to reach the specified standard, he should not be allowed to move on or he should be denied a, let us say, honors diploma that would make him eligible for a Regents school. 3) At present there is no incentive for a student to do well in the Kansas Assessment Tests. Create incentives. Many students refuse to even give a serious effort. Give feedback ASAP so the test serves a purpose for the student. 4) Respect classroom time. At present there are no limits on how much time a student may miss due to school sponsored activities. Any limits would help. 5) It is my belief that it is up to the KSDE to raise academic standards in Kansas. Create the standards and the rest of us will do our best to reach them.
12. The "jumping through a hoop" nature of QPA may look good on paper and to some political committees; however, the QPA process has not improved the quality of education in the five school districts where I have worked. Sure, Kansas Assessment scores have improved, but only because schools are forced to jump through the hoop of "improved test scores." This is accomplished by teaching to the test. Practices of this nature only erode the educational process. A process that should be preparing Kansas students for work and community responsibilities not training our students to become "Master Kansas Assessment Test Takers." Kansas has bought into the hype and polls that compare different states' educational systems on the basis of said educational systems accountability to the state. A better indicator of our school's success would be to see how successful our students are in the real world of life (e.g., are the students from Kansas more employable than students from other

states? Are the interpersonal skills of Kansas students more advanced than other states? Are our graduates happy with the education?). A post graduate or high school exit survey might be of more value than the current testing strategy. An employer or collegiate survey would also be of value. I'm not saying tie these instruments to school accreditation. Merely, that this kind of data would be valuable in determining if schools are truly preparing our students for life after public school. Let's spend our time teaching worthwhile subject matter. Let's not squander precious time teaching material that is only valuable on one test on one day of a student's life. If anyone wonders why students become disillusioned consider the amount of throwaway knowledge we expect them to learn. Kansas has become mired in the accountability trap of measuring what is easy to test and ignoring what is important to our students' success. The time has come for Kansas to be a new kind of leader. Kansas's students deserve more than being pawns in a political competition to see which state has the best accountability system. Kansas needs to take a risk and be a true educational leader. Times have changed. Education is constantly evolving. Eliminate the HOOPS.

13. I hear both presidential contenders contend that we need more testing at every level, in every arena, to improve education. I do not believe this is true. I understand that QPA (more recently changed to OE and I believe your forms should reflect that change or else the name should be changed back) was birthed out of the best of intentions: to improve the process of education, to improve the delivery system, to equalize the playing field, to get results from America's public school system. I happen to believe, strongly believe, that what is worth knowing is not measurable and what is measurable is not worth knowing. (In its raw form, I realize that is an untenable position, for math and other quantitative processes are worth knowing, yes, but it is the spirit of the injunction to which I subscribe.) There has got to be a better way to improve education than to mandate change from the top down, and I suspect that if it is to happen it is going to have to go back to the parents. If the parents are not supportive of the process, then it is rare, indeed, that the child is, and in order to get the system fixed, we need to stop enabling children because we are afraid of some inane law suit filed by an idiot adult who has not a clue what is supposed to be happening in the schools; to, for, at, with his or her child. If the parents are not willing to comply, it is time to have QPA stand for Quality Parenting Accreditation. In the event the parents will not comply, sue them and send them to prison and leave us alone. Or go ahead and test away. But make the test have some clout. Either Ralphie passes the thing at the end of eighth grade, or he doesn't. If he does, he moves on up the road, and if he doesn't, he does eighth grade again. And regardless as to what Ralphie's parents have to say or law suits threatened, we do not back down. If Ralphie is incompetent, Ralphie does not get promoted. That test would need to be excellently crafted, culturally non biased, economically fair, and truly significant meaningful. If the students are required to have skills, the acquisition of those skills should have some meaning. It cannot be a trivia test, nor can it be too difficult nor dumbed down so as to be meaningless. Good luck and just do it.
14. QPA has forced teachers to spend so much time on documentation and improvement that we do not have enough time to implement the improvement, let alone perfect it. Improvements can always be made, but various components of QPA have continually robbed me of class preparation time and even instructional time. QPA is destroying the very thing it is trying to improve. Yes, make the teachers accountable. But let them teach.

15. Education would benefit if the state of Kansas would terminate or greatly restructure the QPA system as it is now. More control should be given to the local leaders--too many times have I witnessed educators just trying to get through the QPA/NCA requirements because it is something "we have to do" and "we just want to look good because that's all the state really seems to care about anyway." Local leaders know what their school needs to improve on--the school improvement plans often make a mockery out of doing what we really need to do--i.e., we make certain plans simply because we're told we have to AND because we're told we have to do it a certain way--reducing or eliminating the state yolk would allow us to make more efficient, more appropriate, and better adapted decisions for our LOCAL educational process. The system we have now does not work for every district and every building in every situation--the mold is too big--let teachers teach and let administrators and school boards work with teachers to form their own plans for improving their schools!
16. I believe that the on-site visit should be made less formal. Schools should be given specific guidelines for what they are to do on the day of the visit and these things only should be stressed. It should be emphasized that "extras" are not necessary and not be accepted. I feel like our school went so far beyond what was expected that it will be hard to "out do" ourselves for the next visit. I think it is nice to provide breakfast for the visiting members but to be honest a great amount of staff time was spent preparing the decorations for this event which all seems unnecessary.
17. In regard to Section C, item 6: I don't think that defining the role of the KSDE staff as resources for the QPA process will cause that to happen -- it will require much more than a definition. It will require a change in the roles of the staff member, and it will require money to bring about the change. I find it a difficult task to change the perception from monitors to resource staff. The state originally set the process up for KSDE staff to be monitors and the state has a difficult time sufficiently funding the QPA process in general. I find it difficult to believe the state is willing to fund charges of this nature. I would prefer the KSDE staff actually be resources -- I just think it will take a great effort to make it happen. In regard to Section B, items 11 and 12: I found these two items difficult to respond to. I think the QPA process has raised educators' level of concern for how students perform on specific assessment items, but I don't think that translates to raising the level of expectation for student performance. I think most educators have a high level of expectation for student performance that goes beyond the scope of what QPA assesses. I believe the QPA process documents student performance, but I don't know how well QPA documents the impact of instruction. If it does it is probably only to working within the scope of what is assessed. There is such a focus on assessment and data that I think attention to instruction is short changed. I don't think throwing assessment scores in front of educators necessarily cause effective or desired changes in instruction. If the KSDE were able to become resource staff for the QPA process, then they could be catalysts for the kind of changes in instruction we wish to see. I also believe there is much talent to pull from among very dedicated teachers in our state that could help KSDE staff work to improve instruction in a private way. In general: I think there ought to be ways to make QPA paper work and documentation less burdensome -- please address this concern. I have been a part of our school's Continuing Improvement Team for 7 years or more and I worry that the amount of time I spent

documenting what we do and accomplish really takes away from how much we could accomplish. There must be a way to improve this. I think the QPA process is so concerned and focused with how schools look on paper that we lose sight of the fact teachers need time to prepare for the real live people they work with day to day -- this process can really dig into that time.

18. It is extremely unfair and demoralizing to come up with this new weighted method of telling us how we do or do not measure up. We thought we were progressing well and then we see this. I hope the day doesn't come in Kansas where all we do is test and become obsessed with the results. I also hope jobs aren't threatened because of test scores. This has been mentioned in our district and it really hurts morale. We are working hard and when the state changes and shifts its goals, it makes life very difficult. Sometimes I wonder if all this is truly making us a better school district?
19. I think it is important for your committee to know how QPA is perceived. Many of the teachers, including myself, have a difficult time justifying to students why we are doing activities that are totally irrelevant to our subject matter. A specific example is doing math in band or art. It is difficult to motivate the students toward success. Many students will not work on the task because they know they do not receive a grade for their efforts. Also, QPA is very time consuming and tedious in regards to paper work. It takes a significant amount of time out of our day to complete the paper work that accompanies this process. I don't feel as though QPA has motivated my students or myself toward improvement. Finally, please realize this process is steering teachers away from Kansas. Many new teachers educated in our state are moving away or electing not to take a teaching position in Kansas. As you already know, we are experiencing a teacher shortage. Imagine how QPA will affect hiring in ten years.
20. I know you are striving to make Kansas children among the best educated in the world, but I honestly feel teachers are being bombarded with things to be accountable for without sufficient time and resources. Our district has great expectations, and rightly so, but we lack time, finances, training, and commitment to truly achieve what we all aspire to. I am sure that you have been told to up the pay and lengthen the day. (Personal note: PLEASE don't make us teach year round without sufficient breaks to rejuvenate the spirit.) We really do want to teach but so many things come into play during the day it is so difficult to get class work covered and mastered. Our teachers have even opted out of some recesses to teach longer.
21. We had good people on our on-site visit team. Unfortunately, they did not visit often enough--which was our fault, not theirs. They all offered to come at any time to help us, but we didn't know what we were doing until it was too late. As a result of our lack of understanding, we were provisionally accredited. During that year we had wonderful help from the state people and from Greenbush. If there had been more on-site visits, we probably would not have had the problems we had. Staff would benefit from more QPA training that focuses on the "nuts and bolts" of the process: strategies that really work. We got the "big picture," but didn't really know how to color in the blanks. There needs to be a regular cycle of training experiences every year for staff. Most of the time, inservices are "dump truck"

situations where we have tons of stuff dumped on us without time to figure out how to develop materials from the information. As a classroom teacher, I would rather have a few good ideas that work at my teaching level and content area than anything else. Although I wholeheartedly agree that improvement needs to cross the curriculum and district wide, we need time to work on the details. QPA is supposed to be teacher directed and data driven with student improvement the goal. Many teachers perceive QPA as administrator driven. Perhaps there needs to be some process to set up staff teams that would ensure more genuine faculty input.

22. 5) Schools have mandated target areas. If a school wants to add local goals in addition, it is impossible to address all of them. 6) Continuous improvement is not a strategy; it's a goal. Improvement does not equate with aligning all components. 7) Teachers do not teach only target area goals; they teach their content. Other factors are more important to student learning such as student/teacher relationships, student motivation, and societal issues that undermine student learning. 11) State assessments and national standardized tests are not valid indicators of student learning when apathetic students don't apply themselves when taking the tests. 13) These specialized groups of students cannot be served or assessed with the same techniques and assessments as the regular population. 14) Teachers often resent being forced to follow a state-mandated process with little local input. 15) The State Department of Education has always been a resource link. The QPA process hasn't created that link. 16) Parents and community are a component only through Site Council, which is advisory in nature. They have input, but most of them do not have the opportunity to become familiar enough with the process that they can make educated decisions. 21-24) We are unfamiliar with the roles and expected level of involvement. 27) QPA wants improvement across the board with all students; individual students cannot be singled out. 29) It's probably a goal, but if this is adhered to, schools are limited in making local curriculum decisions appropriate for their individual schools. 30) More negative than positive. 33) The local team has had to take responsibilities that could and should have been done by the Visiting Chair. 47) The Second Site Visit should be spaced farther from the First Visit. There is too much time between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> visits. Those questions left blank were ones I felt I was not qualified to answer.
23. I am including this letter in addition to my survey responses. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express some of my concerns. I have been a teacher for 23 years, both as a Title I Reading Specialist, and currently as a second grade classroom teacher. Having grown up in Nebraska, including graduating from the University of Nebraska Teacher's College, I have always been appalled at how "backwards" and "behind the times" Kansas schools are. QPA is not helping to remedy that. QPA strategies and methods that we are being forced to use are watering down and therefore "dumbing down" our educational system. In particular the strategy known as "QAR" is a simplified, and not nearly as effective, version of the very effective questioning techniques I learned using the 1970's Houghton Mifflin Reading series. We are being forced to teach things too early, and usually out of sequence in order to meet the requirements of various QPA assessments. If you want children to truly succeed, should they not be learning at a level appropriate to their cognitive development? Make up your mind. Students need to have the building blocks of basic information BEFORE they can achieve higher level thinking skills. QPA is not allowing us to teach this way. The pressure

is one to make teachers accountable. In my experience, teachers have far less influence on the student than the family and environment that they grew up in. When is the issue of community influence going to be addressed? My school has a 66% rate of "free and reduced." It seems to me that we should not be compared to a metropolitan, high-income, suburban school. It also seems to me that our goal should be a level of "competence" for some rather than an expectation of "excellence" for all. Furthermore, if a teacher is not being supported by the administration, they have very little chance of having a positive influence. When your principal contradicts you in front of students and parents, tells you to break rules because a parent throws a fit, orders you to "give her good grades," overlooks infractions because "it would be like rubbing salt in the wound," bullies you in front of students over petty issues, it is pretty hard to have a positive influence. (I will not be able to sign this letter for fear of reprisals from my principal. We have already been to court once. I "won," but I do not want to repeat the experience.) When is the issue of administrative accountability going to be addressed? QPA is treating teachers like fools that do not know what they are doing. Is this the message you want to continue to send? Give us a little credit. We are among the highest educated people in the state. We would not have become teachers if we did not have some aspirations of helping children. Let us use our own brains, our own hearts, and our own training to make appropriate decisions for the students in our care.

24. This has been the most frustrating item I have dealt with as a board member. The overwhelming requirements to conform to a set formula have forced our already overworked staff to seek ways to get this all done and still have time to teach. As a smaller district, we have very limited resources to pay people for the extra time it takes to complete QPA requirements. This has created hard feelings and resentment. Children in the classroom are suffering when teachers are so tired from attending meetings and documenting every darn thing that they do that the lessons are not always fresh and inspired. When an administrator steps in and tries to shoulder more of the load, visiting teams criticize them for not involving the teachers more. We spend great amounts of time creating wonderful school profiles, and proudly presenting them, and who the heck looks at them? What good does 50 pages of disaggregated data do to the at-risk kid who can't get one-on-one help? And, every year (it seems) the state standards change anyway. We also force our children into taking so many tests that many do not care anymore, especially at the upper grade levels. Teachers lose huge amounts of teaching time due to required testing. Every teacher must now teaching to the tests being administered or face severe criticism. QPA has become a beast that is fueling itself. Can't stop now, because someone will lose a job. A whole testing industry will be out of business. Our local teachers who have participated in writing state tests have not felt their suggestions were heeded; only the experts and professionals who are not even in the classroom seem to have much input. This whole mess needs attention. The local districts need less meddling and more freedom to be creative. No school district is actually trying to fail. Don't people believe that?
25. 8) QPA has mostly required a lot of focus on the process of trying to figure out what the state wants. Some of the things that QPA should be about then trickles down to influence the students. 9) I don't think most teachers/schools know the affect on schools other than their own.. 12) Mostly it raises the teacher anxiety level of the process. 15) It is more like a wedge. As teachers, we often feel that we have an ax hanging over our head from the DOE

instead of a resource link. 35) I would agree with this IF those site visits were considered a helping hand instead of a "nit-picking" about the method of reporting. 42) I have no way of knowing this information. As for what QPA stands for, I agree schools need to improve. I do not know the answer to the problems, but the major fallacy of the present stance of QPA is the threat of some sort of retaliation if the schools do not have everything in line, and if everything is not as the visiting team wants it. I remember our first on-site visit. We were given guidelines before the visit, and to the best of our ability we had everything that they wanted. According to the chairperson, everything we did was wrong, and we were told major changes had to be made or accreditation could be revoked. The things that were wrong had no impact on the students. It was not the data collected, it was not the focus areas we targeted, it was the "appearance" of the document. As far as I can see, that has not really changed; it appears the document is the important part of the process. If everything "looks good," then we pass, if not then. I feel that real changes are not being made. Part of the problem is that teachers do not have the time to really plan and implement change, and part of the problem is that too much time is spent on the paper work of the reporting process. We spend more time trying to run down and collect data than we do on learning new ways of implementing change in the classroom. It would be nice if those who demand the accountability of teachers and education were required to teach for a year in our schools. Maybe they could explain to us how we improve the levels of those kids who are on drugs, those who do not have a home life, those who work 20 to 30 hours a week and those who don't care and whose parents don't care either. The list of the problems we see is much longer, but you get the point. Now QPA tells us you will improve, or else. I think I am lucky to be retired at the end of this year.

26. It is wrong for test scores to be released to the media and for school districts to be compared. However, QPA has forced us to compete and that is what we must do.
27. Answers left blank indicate that I do not feel I have the knowledge to answer. Some teachers in our building are really involved in the entire QPA process to a great degree. Many of us -- including me -- are involved periodically. I do not feel that I have a good handle on the details of QPA, but do what I am asked to do by those who do. I know that all teachers are to be involved, but there are too many demands on our time to do everything.
28. While most of the original intent of QPA was worthwhile and honorable, things have gone astray somewhere in the process and it has become just another burdensome bureaucracy that our already spread thin administrators and teachers have to contend with. First, most school board members really have no idea what QPA entails. As a board member, I have more knowledge than most because my wife is a teacher and QPA team member at our school. Only one other member on our board is in the same situation. School board members being uninformed is somewhat to be expected, but this unfortunately carries over into the administration and teaching staff because of a lack of a consistent, uniform and clearly defined list of rules and expectations. Consistent expectations and guidance from KSDE are lacking. In our small school, where we cannot afford to hire and adequately pay a QPA team to provide the endless documentation required. Teacher time with the students suffers and our teacher morale declines. We currently have a part-time counselor in our school that just recently retired as an administrator of a nearby school because of QPA. Children and the

state of Kansas are the losers here because an excellent administrator could not see where QPA is worth the time required. We are losing good people because of QPA and it is painfully clear that replacing them is a challenge or impossibility most of the time. The QPA process needs clearness, consistency and consequences that are simple and easy to implement; otherwise, quit wasting our teachers and administrators time and let them educate our children.

29. The QPA process is very important to school improvement. It makes schools be accountable for student learning. My frustrations with QPA/NCA is the number of days our teachers miss to receive training and information on QPA/NCA process. Whenever you take a regular teacher out of the classroom, the students lose. **IS THIS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT?** Another frustration: All of our inservice days are spent on working on QPA and NCA. We do not have time to provide inservice in other needed areas - teaching techniques, technology, motivational speakers, information on drug and alcohol prevention, etc. QPA requires for teachers to be out of the classroom for training or to get information. Substitute teachers have to be hired which is an expense. Another problem is that substitute teachers are hard to find. It would be interesting to see how many days teachers miss school to be a QPA chair, QPA review team, or to receive training for classroom teachers.
30. Teaching is a very rewarding, yet frustrating career. I can't imagine doing anything else with my life. Lately, however, I find myself feeling more and more overwhelmed. This feeling is coming from the mountains of paperwork that are now required to teach young children the love of learning that will be the foundation of their adult life. Yes, a fair amount of paperwork is required. How else would one be able to keep track of her students' growth, needs and appropriate expectations and report them back to the parents with the knowledge required? While some people love to organize things and put them in lists and charts and graphs, others would rather spend their time working with the students and getting to know them. Otherwise, all the charts and graphs in the world would be meaningless when it comes time to talk to parents, seek out appropriate levels of additional instruction and work out a plan to fit a child's educational needs. I know this because I have worked seven years in special education and now five years in regular education, the last eight trying to figure out and implement QPA. As an experienced teacher with a Master's Degree, I am a firm believer in continually improving one's teaching skills to better serve the needs of the students. It's their future, and we hold it in our hands. My own lifelong love of learning has led me to this belief. Though I am grateful to have leadership in my quest to improve, I am angered when I perceive that I am not being treated as a professional. This comes in many forms. When someone who has never taught tells me what I should be doing or not be doing in my classroom, I am angered. Until one has taught, he will never understand the time constraints and the choices that must be made daily to educate our future teachers, doctors, police officers and truck drivers. When someone says, "It must be nice to have the whole summer off and only work from 8:00 to 3:00 each day," I am angered. I know of no teacher who leaves work at 3:00. It is more like 6:00 or later. As for summers off, yes, it's nice to have the time to take the classes I must pay for and need to keep my job or to work a second job to make up for the low pay that I receive as an educated professional. When the so-called school report cards are published and schools "graded" without any explanation to the public that will be trying to interpret the results, I am angered. The public must be educated! They

do not understand that American schools include everyone in their standardized tests that are then compared to other countries who only test the best and brightest. They do not understand that public education is for everyone, and no one is turned away. Private schools have the right to reject anyone who does not fit their criteria or may be considered a behavior problem. Tell that to the teacher that must give a standardized test to a class that has had instructional time interrupted by the behavior of one or two students on a consistent basis, who finally makes contact with the absent parents who say, "You deal with it!" All of this is on top of the mountains of paperwork required to educate a special needs child, meet state standards and satisfy a visiting NCA team. Much of the paperwork dealt with by teachers is strictly to guard against this "sue-happy" world we live in. The majority is to satisfy the need to be able to pull out a file and find a paper trail that explains why Johnny can't read. I know why Johnny can't read. His teacher had to choose between one-on-one time with Johnny or filling out the paperwork required by an IEP, QPA and NCA and all the other initials out there that are designed to improve our schools. As much as teachers love their jobs, when it comes down to spending personal time with Johnny or your own child, your own child comes first. Too bad that many times Johnny's mother or father didn't make the same choice. Is school improvement necessary? Yes. Do schools need guidance in the quest to improve? Yes. Will consistent evaluation determine if the needs of children are being met? Yes. Is a standardized test the best indicator of improvement? Not necessarily. Is keeping track of all the little behavior plans or tickets by marking a checklist every single time you write one beneficial to behavioral improvements? No. Is keeping a record of every single minute you read to your students or allow them to have silent reading time going to improve reading scores? No. Will allotting time for these activities improve reading scores? Yes. Will mandating changes in classroom instruction without proper funding, time, space or materials improve test scores? No. It only manages to magnify what's missing in education and scare off potentially great teachers. Who wants to work in a profession that is blamed for everything and has its failures published to those uneducated in the demands of the teaching profession? Are there teachers or administrators out there that could be better or who should find another profession? Yes, as there are in **any** profession. Are there teachers or administrators out there who lack professionalism? Yes, as there are in **any** profession. Should the whole be held hostage by the actions of a few? No. That is why school districts have periodic evaluations of staff and their performance in the classroom and the right to dismiss if a teacher or administrator is unwilling to make improvements. Will teachers have a year where no matter what they do test scores are low? Yes. Should that determine their worth as a teacher? No. Test scores should never make or break a career. There are too many uncontrollable factors to take into account, mainly the personal lives of the children. Would it make a difference if parents were more involved? YES! Can I, as a teacher, make a parent become more involved with his/her child's education? No. I can find ways to make it easier, but the decision is theirs to make. Do I, as a teacher, have the right to be treated as a professional and not have to constantly prove, in writing to those who have never taught, how I am working to improve the teaching that goes on in my classroom? YES! Save some trees! Find a better way to assess how well our children are being educated. Treat your hardworking, dedicated teachers with respect and as the professionals they are. Spend some time in our schools. Get to know the teachers and the kids and the communities where they live and work. Attend a school play or program, a school board meeting, a PTO meeting, a Site Council meeting and see all the effort made by the teachers and parents to educate our

children. Trade places with a teacher for a day so that there is a better understanding of what it's like to do the jobs you and I do. Make sure that those evaluating the schools and their teachers have been teachers themselves and know what it's like to cry because they know Johnny will not be having supper tonight before he goes to sleep on the couch in the same clothes he wore to school that day and will wear to school tomorrow. End the needless paperwork so that Johnny gets the quality time he needs from his teacher who would rather give up some of her time with him to fill out the forms required than take the chance that she not be there for him at all. And maybe, some day, Johnny will choose to teach and share his experience with another child in need. I appreciate the opportunity to share with you the frustration I feel as a public school elementary teacher. Please, know that I do not envy your job or position. There are many tough choices you must make in being the caretakers of all our schools. Just be aware that there are those of us who take our jobs seriously and are always looking for ways we can better meet the needs of our children. Requiring more and more paperwork from us and not taking any away leaves us with less time to plan and in the position of making tough decisions about where our time is best spent.

As a teacher, I find it very frustrating for all the extra paperwork and documentation. I feel we record plenty of things without doing all the extra testing and recording. This time could be used researching and actually teaching kids. Also, I have only taught 4 years and never have we just started the school year without some new curriculum. Don't you think we should get a chance to perfect something before changing it right away?

31. I left some questions blank on page 33 because I honestly don't know whether or not there is a problem with finding leadership for visiting site teams. I did not visit with any team members who visited our school, and don't know anyone outside of our principal who has been on a visiting team. Overall, I think the QPA process is good for our school and teachers to all work and pull together to increase student achievement. My one complaint is the fact that our district is docked because our students consistently perform so well that we are not able to show enough gain on our scores. I don't believe we are given enough credit for having those consistently high averages. And because they are high, our percent of gain will naturally be smaller than those schools with low scores. After each site visit, it has been reported back to us that the team members were very impressed by what they saw, and that several intended to take back ideas for their schools that they saw here. If that is so, then it seems to me that several of our staff members should be on visiting teams and making suggestions to other schools.
32. My concern with QPA or any major evaluation in which the results are published in the paper and comparisons between schools made is that too much time is spent teaching to just these goals. There are so many more areas that need to be addressed in the classroom that change with each group that enters the door. By putting so much emphasis on the evaluation results, a district's vision ceases to be panoramic and becomes tunnel.
33. The idea of QPA, to improve the education of children, is a good concept. I believe it to be just a concept at this time. There are a lot of flaws in the QPA system. For one, there are no standards to model district programs by. If a team member calls the KSDE asking questions as to the direction they need to take, they have gotten conflicting information from different

people they have talked with. Not having standards to follow is like trying to find a destination without a map. There is not a level of achievement that when it is reached and maintained, then you have an acceptable program. The way it is now, accreditation would be lost if continued improvement isn't maintained. I feel there will come a time when, for one reason or another, the level of education quality will not improve. There are a lot of outside influences on children that affect the outcomes of their education. There are no guidelines for factoring in such outcomes. Also, the QPA program was mandated without additional funding to support its implementation. To properly maintain a QPA program requires an enormous amount of time and work from staff members. In order to pay for this time spent, district general funds, which are already inadequate, must be used. It also takes teachers out of classrooms, extends contracts, or shortens student contact days (requiring inservice days). Is this in the best interest of our students? I feel QPA was implemented before it was fully ready to be implemented. This is not a quality performance! Maybe KSDE needs to utilize some of the same strategies districts are expected to use to make QPA successful!

34. Let me start by listing the positive impact. It has forced our teachers, support personnel and all involved with the curriculum to work together to fill gaps and eliminate redundancies in our curriculum. On the downside, the expense and time involved to continually rework curriculum, has been huge. It is also impossible to establish meaningful data from the state tests, given the fact that they are not written by a competent team. Our data is basically useless for comparison of year to year because the "professionals" who write the tests, change them so often. I have no confidence in the state tests. Until they are written by a knowledgeable competent team, they will continue to be meaningless, but required. I am also concerned that some very good teachers are resigning because the schedule of curriculum writing, validating, and resource selection is so time consuming. Sometimes I see our better educators avoiding curriculum committees, which leaves some very important decisions to a less competent group. Often the more experienced teachers are supplementing the actual curriculum with their own tried and true techniques and resources. This is a huge concern because it gives the school a false sense of security. Everywhere that has this happening, will be in trouble when those educators leave or retire. Our schools are being asked to write tests to check how well our curriculum is working in our school with our students. This all sounds very good, but actually following through is very costly and time consuming, not to mention the time it takes to administer so many tests. Let me state here, I am not an advocate of longer school years. Unfortunately good teachers are not paid for doing an outstanding job, and unskilled tenured teachers are allowed to drag everyone down. The only way to remove a tenured teacher is if they get caught doing something illegal, while at school. And it is always an expensive legal battle. The KNEA has done a great job of protecting some very marginal individuals at the cost of our outstanding educators. I doubt if QPA could ever be tied into teacher performance and merit pay, and I suspect the KNEA would fight it to the bitter end. But it could be useful if outstanding educators were rewarded with money. For small schools, where we all know each other, the best way to let us excel is to give us adequate funding, and let us decide locally how to spend it, NO STRINGS ATTACHED. I realize some districts are too selfish and self-serving to do what is best for their students, but in rural districts we are qualified and ready to decide what our schools should be, and how best our tax dollars could be spent to ensure our children a quality education. QPA should not be discarded. Schools need a model and a measure for

accountability. It does need to be very clear what the requirements are for accreditation. Rewarding schools who do a good job would be helpful. Thank you for taking the time to let us tell you how we believe QPA is affecting our schools.

- 35 I do not have a solution, but for the present process is too subjective--too time consuming and takes away from student class time when the assessments are graded. Big government is not good for student learning.
36. I feel that the entire QPA process should be reevaluated for several reasons. I believe that this survey is an attempt, but I do not believe that it goes far enough. The Kansas State Assessments are a joke educationally. They are neither reliable nor valid by any standards I have learned in thirty years of involvement in education. The number of hours spent by each person involved in this process does not appear to have an equal effect on increased student learning. The thousands of hours spent on this process by educational staff are overwhelmingly expensive. The thousands of hours spent on this process by educational staff could be used for lesson planning and direct instruction for the children of Kansas. I believe that we, as educators, should continually strive to improve the educational process and student learning in our schools. However, I also believe that the time, energy and money this QPA process takes away from our primary focus, students, is absurd.
37. I believe that this process should be continued in schools that are conditionally accredited. In other Kansas schools, I believe the focus should be placed on rewarding the efforts of the educational staff.
38. QPA is a time consuming process which is difficult for small schools to complete due to lack of time to complete all the paper work, record and compare all the scores, and devise strategies for improvement. Districts with large administrative staffs and curriculum directors are better able to address the process and complete the reports. QPA was designed for school improvement, and I am not sure that has been accomplished. I see a few teachers (as always) doing all the QPA work as well as every other job in the district, such as coaching, sponsoring activities, and trying to be active in the community to increase the level of appreciation of education, school staff, and schools in our town. Our school has worked well in the QPA process, and I believe we have achieved improvement, but many have chosen only to do what the dedicated and educated leaders of the team have asked them to do each year. I do not believe it should be such a difficult and time consuming task for such a few people in the rural areas. Our scores are fine compared to the larger districts. If I were to leave education after thirty years of successful teaching it would be because of the high demands placed on educators with needless paperwork. Money has never been a factor in my staying in the field of education, but since QPA, I certainly feel I am even more underpaid for the work I am asked to do in order to keep our school accredited. Perhaps I have been too critical of QPA, but I would like you to know that I have been one of the leaders in our school's two cycles and have served on on-site teams at other schools, and I have often doubted the value of the entire process.
39. 1) QPA focuses on creating a set of statistics, assuming that statistics equal learning. Strongly agree. 2) Statistics are proof of learning and are always valid. Strongly disagree.

3) Teachers involved in QPA are involved with learning rather than record keeping. Strongly disagree. 4) QPA stifles creativity, cuts time spent with kids that is just developmental. Strongly agree. 5) QPA does not enhance standards; it lowers them so that everyone can attain them. Strongly agree. 6) QPA does not recognize that while all children can learn, they do not learn at the same level or degree. Strongly agree. 7) QPA does not recognize differences in children, schools, and communities. Strongly agree. 8) Because Kansas set the standards so high as not to be attainable, this is an exercise in frustration. Strongly agree. 9) Frustration is a recognized, valid, effective teaching-learning technique. Strongly disagree. 10) QPA has been a good thing for education. Strongly disagree. 11) The new Kansas standards and QPA are going to encourage real growth instead of time consuming statistical gathering and statistical gymnastics. Strongly disagree. I have taught for a great many years. I spend my time record keeping, accounting, etc. My real planning time, my chance to really talk to kids and work with them, has been drastically cut. I have to prove everything, account for everything. Classes are rushed while trying to work in and document every little part of all the standards. QPA is bound up in all of this. I teach less. Students learn less. The quality of what is taught and learned has diminished. The standards that I had for my students were better than QPA. But now everyone has to be wonderful and the burden is on the teacher not the student. Students know that they don't have to be responsible. They are not under the pressure to perform. The teacher is under the pressure to assure that everyone meet the standard, and only the teacher is responsible. Now I have students who have no intention of making any effort. The number of students that fall into this group is growing. It will not get better. Students know that they are off the hook. They are out of the equation. Only the schools and teachers are responsible for meeting standards. Students have no incentives or consequences in regard to meeting standards. Our society says today that if a student fails, he is blameless. It is the public school and the teacher at fault. Nothing will solve the problems; no program will be effective until students are back in the equation and are accountable for their part of the learning process. Until then, statistics will be more important than actual learning or effort and Kansas Standards and QPA will be exercises in frustration.

40. I became an elementary school principal in the Fall of 1984. In my first year we started a school improvement plan. As a school staff, we determined in what areas we needed to improve. As we achieved our goals, we added new ones. We felt very much in control of our destiny as a school. Then along came QPA. I thought that this would be an easy transition, as our school was on the right track. We started our building profile. We determined several areas that we needed to improve. Then the State let us know that our first two goals would be to improve reading and math scores. We had been doing quite well in those areas. The many alterations in the QPA process that have been handed down has changed a "grassroots" process into a lock-step, authoritarian mandate. The problems we deal with in the public school are societal problems in nature, not specifically school problems. Our public schools have always reflected society. QPA was started due to business and industry demands. Public schools were scapegoats to explain the economic woes in our country. I have not noticed the public school bashing over the last few years, as our economy has improved. Yet we are still entrenched in the QPA process. This process is labor intensive. We spend a good deal of time on the process. This mandate has added a mountain of paperwork. Our school has always scored above the State average on State

Assessments. The school improvement process needs to be in the hands of each school. To assume that we all need to improve in the same areas is absurd. We know our problem areas better than the legislature or the State Department of Education. Let us do our jobs. Hold us accountable with assessments, but let us determine the areas in which we need to improve.

41. The GOOD part of QPA is that it has forced schools to formalize a five-year improvement program, put the plan in place, and monitor student progress. The amount of paperwork we receive from the state is sometimes so frivolous -- work that committees are doing, standards, and revisions upon revisions. We don't have time to read it and sometimes it does not pertain to our levels. The Kansas Assessments are ridiculous! Changing them from year to year gives us no good data, confuses teachers, and creates a lot of anxiety. Someone is making A LOT of money by continuing to "revise" these tests, change the grade levels tested, etc. Getting ready for your school's on-site visit means spending time getting ready to "present," just like we did for our thesis. It is not a helpful process and should be reserved for schools who ask for or need the assistance. Finding people to be on teams is difficult because in most cases the visit is not needed. We should: 1) Set the assessment tests and stick with them. 2) Make sure each school has a five-year plan for improvement (on file with district and/or state). 3) Turn in a report/template every year or 5 years to monitor improvement. 4) Cancel the parts of the QPA process that are not needed (School Site Council, on-site visits).
  
42. The research on school restructuring is fairly dismal. Generally, schools are "changing but unchanged." Many systemic reform efforts have resulted in "change without difference." Not surprisingly, the state's forward-thinking improvement and accreditation process has had it's share of external critics, and most disheartening have been the many Kansas educators who have neither understood nor supported the Quality Performance Accreditation Process. Why have we not come as far as needed during the past decade when our access to educational research, ideas, and resources has expanded so rapidly? The cartoon character Pago said, "We have met the enemy and it is us." Educators want full-fledged status as professionals, and yet we largely ignore solid educational research in ways that true professions would not dismiss. The literature on educational change would suggest that an insufficient amount of leadership and resources have been devoted to making this statewide initiative successful. The vision embedded in the QPA process remains sound. School improvement must first and foremost be an internal, rather than external, improvement process. It seems that many educators still do not understand this basic premise, and so schools dance every so often when an onsite team is about to visit without taking seriously the notion of continuous improvement. After more than a decade of QPA, the state is still not geared up to successfully implement the process in all Kansas schools. The number of KSDE staff committed to making QPA successful has never been adequate, nor the training sufficient. The idea was good from the start, but leadership and a well thought out implementation strategy was lacking from the start. Targets keep changing and standards have never been established. As a result, there have been many false starts and frustrating experiences by hard-working, well-intended educators. When our best and brightest get discouraged from the lack of ongoing resources and assistance, it's predictable that the many educators who have little interest in substantially changing how we teach and test kids will give QPA less of a chance. The QPA process continues to hold promise as one piece for improving all Kansas' student learning opportunities and results. However, significant

progress will not be made without a great investment in leadership -- starting from KSDE. "Doing the right thing" for students must be more an educational than political issue. Educational research needs to be taken seriously. QPA advisory committees must become more active and the state's most progressive educational leaders must be listened to better. Even the best of Kansas' educators become cynical when state assessments keep changing with the political wind and criteria and standards for acceptable performance and accreditation remain fuzzy at best. There are currently no clear standards for accrediting schools, so accreditation judgments vary by onsite teams. The greatest tragedy within the past decade has been the demise of a very promising statewide performance assessment process that got the plug pulled for all of the wrong reasons. Now we're back to testing and emphasizing mostly what kids know, although we have long known that what folks do with knowledge is what schooling should be about. "Use it or lose it" is accepted in most circles outside of the educational community, which renders many of our current educational efforts as well-intended but fairly useless. The recent reversal of the types of student learning that will be valued, measured, and monitored by the KSDE is profound and will have far-reaching negative effects on the preparation of Kansas students. Compared to many other states, Kansas education has traditionally provided students with a solid education. The QPA process, as the concluding part of a larger internal improvement process, still offers much promise. What is needed is a greater commitment of support and assistance with less indifference to the process. A full commitment is needed. When implemented well, QPA and school improvement are about teaching and assessing differently and getting better results. Saying that QPA requires extreme paperwork and bureaucracy and takes away local control is a misunderstanding of its purpose; it should be about becoming more accountable to our stated educational missions.

43. Administrative change at the local level has disrupted the QPA process in our small (2A) school district. With an administrator hired from out of state, and a new superintendent, the QPA process has been put in the background. QPA will only work effectively at the local level if there is commitment, continuity, and understanding of the process from the top down. I don't think it (QPA) was or is a priority with our School Board, therefore, it isn't a priority with administrators or teachers. There is one question that keeps popping up among teachers in our district, "Who's in charge of QPA?" When past administration was committed to the process and involved teachers, things got done and students benefited. When administration "jumps through the hoops" to get through the process, both teachers and students suffer. All levels must be on the same page for the process to work. The left hand must know what the right hand is doing. It's not happening in our district.
44. Question #4 -- Why didn't you explain what NCA means? And I don't think we are a member of NCA. What do you mean by question #6? I do not feel qualified to answer question #9 since I have not been directly involved with this type of school. Question #13 -- I think it is designed to include all students, but in reality it does not. Question #14 -- Once again, in theory, QPA is supposed to bring us together. But in reality, it has actually started pitting some teachers vs. teachers and teachers vs. administrators. I think in many schools, a majority of the staff still has the mentality that "there is a committee in charge of that stuff, so it's not my problem." And of course, the English and mathematics teachers haven't taken most of the pressure. Question #16 -- Parents and community members do need to be part of

the process; however, they can become counterproductive. Question #33 -- The site visit team gives recommendations, but they do not assist the staff with implementation. Question #34 -- The site visit team does not monitor often enough. Question #42 -- Some members are better prepared than others. Question #43 & 44 -- Turnover in the administration (either district or building level) and/or the teaching staff creates a huge problem with the QPA process. One of the most frustrating aspects of the QPA process is that is not always consistent. Do not change the rules in the middle of the game! It is also frustrating when the majority of the public does not understand the QPA process and/or the state assessments, yet they see the scores published in the local newspaper. I wish part of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Kansas Mathematics Assessment was also published in the newspaper, because I believe a majority of the public would have a difficult time reaching the Standard of Excellence.

45. Your survey was tough to complete. 1) Most of what I'd heard--as a community member unconnected to the school--wasn't specified as QPA. I've come to understand that much of what the site council does is driven by QPA, so profoundly that school personnel don't even mention it. 2) I didn't know acronyms such as NCA, LEA, LEP, Title I 504, etc. 3) Even as an alert community member, it is difficult for me to see such nuances such as if the district supports the QPA process, if most administrators understand the QPA process, and other insider perspectives. There should have been an "I don't know" or "neutral" column. Finally, there should have been an area for comments. My particular concern was question #8. As a dietitian, health activist and mom of four USD 259 graduates, I personally would like to see K-12 students learn more about nutrition, self-care and health; to be required/invited to daily physical education; and to learn volunteerism, getting along with others, neatness, responsibility, environmentalism and other citizen values. Practical or not, these concepts are also "important for students to learn."
46. The time and energy spent on preparing for our on-site visits would be much better spent on planning our units of study or working to tutor a child who doesn't get help at home. Teachers rarely got treated, if ever, to coffee and donuts and such. It should be the visiting teams treating us and rewarding us for all our hard work rather than us treating them. We have devoted many early release days and faculty meetings to our site visit already this year and the visit is still 6 months away. Luckily, our principal does a lot of the data gathering so we can be free to do what we're supposed to be doing -- teaching!
47. My true opinion of QPA is that it wastes the time of the administrators and teachers (not to mention the wasted \$). Also the commandment stating all children will be successful only causes the dumbing down of the curriculum. Whatever you say (or try to implement) children who do not wish to learn, will not learn.
48. If there are changes made they should not require a lot of paperwork. Teachers need time to plan good lessons to keep students interested in learning. The concept of QPA and improved instruction is good. However, we have no support from the district or the state at our building for the entire staff. One or two teachers are allowed to attend a QPA training session, but the rest of the staff are not involved. The committee responsible for the implementation plan must try to get everything in place, and still teach their classes. It puts a tremendous pressure on 2 or 3 teachers. The final result is a paper game but not enough

change of lasting benefit to students. Teachers are providing direct instruction for test purposes but not connecting the information to a total curriculum. I'm sorry to sound so negative about QPA -- there is a real need to improve instruction. Without district support, intervention on a regular (and frequent level) basis, and good communication from the state - district -- building to all teachers, QPA will remain a paper game.

49. I think school improvement is essential. However, I believe local districts should be allowed to set their own criteria for school improvement. The current QPA process has created tremendous stress on teachers and principals. It has become a formidable task with hours spent on paperwork and committees. Since districts don't have large amounts of time set aside for this purpose, it leaves the burden on the teacher to find time. Fancy diagrams and graphs in our QPA notebooks mean hours taken away from children. We need to set our own criteria as a district and keep our focus on our children.
50. The QPA process in its current form takes away too much instructional and planning time. Make the process easy, state expectations. Keep it short. Most valuable data is collected at the building level and imbedded in the curriculum. Strong building support of QPA, no district support of QPA process. QPA process is unclear - lacks clear expectations. Local alignment and assessment is most meaningful. QPA process should not include more site visits - perhaps more frequent communication through technology - e-mails, fax. Good to include teachers on site teams, however time involvement may not be realistic.

#### **ONSITE CHAIRS QPA COMMENTS**

51. Overall, QPA has been a positive improvement process for the schools in which I have worked. It has not been easy, but more and more people understand what it is about and why it is needed. I have a few concerns I would like to share, some of which were addressed on the survey, some of which were not.
52. 1) Forcing schools to address reading and mathematics, regardless of what their data showed, stole the thunder out of the QPA process. In terms of understanding data-driven decision making, I believe that one action did severe harm to the process! 2) Targets that don't hold still (state standards, state assessments, QPA processes and lingo, etc.) are frustrating for those of us in the field. Moving targets create a sense of apathy and a lack of trust with the whole system. I understand why it is necessary for standards and assessments to be updated but surely statisticians should be able to equate assessments so school improvement efforts are not interrupted. 3) There is too much variability in the accreditation visit. Again, what is the target? 4) KSDE cannot provide the level of support and direction needed for the whole state! KSBE burns out the good people which has a devastating effect on the process. We must move to a model (like many other states) which uses our service centers to disseminate information, train, and provide support and assistance as an arm of KSDE. Currently the service centers are trying to do this without state funding to pull it off. Doesn't it make sense to have a more localized base of support? Wouldn't it be more effective to replicate our efforts rather than try to orchestrate it all from Topeka? We already have the structure in place. Let's use it to our advantage!!!

53. STOP trying to solve society's problems through testing! Focus on the REAL society problem...the lack of parenting and support for the public school. What are you doing to address the REAL problem in our society? We know more and are teaching better now than any other time in American History. Send us WILLING learners and more important, SUPPORTIVE PARENTS, and we can get the job done. We wonder why we're beginning to notice a shortage in teacher education? Why would you want to go into something where all you heard is what a BAD job you're doing? Testing is absurd. MANY students are not test takers and do not do their best work under such pressure. We spend a GREAT deal of teaching time taking local assessments, state assessments, performance assessments, etc. to prove to the public that we're already doing a good job! We could do an even BETTER job if we didn't have to spend so much time testing! If you insist on this process, allow the school to determine their own goals. Don't tell them where their weaknesses are. They can best determine how they're doing in reading and math. The software for making reports is very unfriendly to users. Calling the state department for assistance usually results in being told how simple it really is. Why then, do so many people struggle with using it? I will not chair any more school visits because of the time commitment. The visits, phone calls, report filing is VERY time consuming. I have a paid job to do as well. Teachers and administrators, for the most part, are very compliant people. MANY around the state consider this process to be nothing more than "hoop jumping" to satisfy legislators and KSDE. It's time to be willing to admit it...THE PROCESS ISN'T WORKING VERY WELL AT ALL!!! Oh yes, I know what the reports say about students' achievement in Kansas and I know how data can be manipulated to say just about whatever the state wants it to say. WE LOVE OUR JOBS AND ENJOY DOING THEM. PLEASE ALLOW US TO DO OUR JOB WITHOUT THIS THREAT! Brain research tells us that students AND adults do not perform well in a threatening environment. YES, I believe in school improvement and accountability. Let us take care of this at the local level where we feel we know what is best for our students. These comments are very blunt but it is important for you to know MANY of us are tired of the "hoop jumping" contest! **PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE! ALLOW US TO GO ABOUT TEACHING IN THE MANNER WE FEEL IS BEST FOR OUR LOCAL STUDENTS!!! WE ARE AND WILL CONTINUE TO STRIVE TO DO OUR BEST. HOW ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES CRITICISM FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE IN THE TRENCHES EVERYDAY WORKING TO DO OUR VERY BEST!**

54. I had a hard time answering some of the questions on the survey because the answer depended on which building I was thinking about when I answered the question. I realize the instructions said to base the answers on my most recent experience as a chair, but my most recent chair experience involved five buildings in a district, and the buildings were as different as night and day. I chaired the accreditation team for a district (5 buildings) and I also served on a team last year for a district with 5 buildings. In addition, I served on a team for another district with four buildings. Consequently, I have had experience serving on accreditation teams. I also served as QPA district coordinator for my own district for Cycle I for all buildings with one of those buildings getting conditional accreditation and having to complete an extra year in the process before being granted accreditation in Cycle I. Also, I will be serving as chair for one school in Cycle III. I share this information to give you some information about my background before you read the next paragraph. In my experience as

chair for the district with 5 schools, I was quite disillusioned with the process of school improvement by the reactions of administrators in two of the buildings. We saw some definite problems with the high school and we addressed the need for considerable work as that building begins Cycle III. My team had met with representatives from all of the buildings about 14 months prior to the accreditation visit, and we discussed what they were doing well and concerns we had that needed to be addressed before the accreditation visit. When we met for the accreditation visit, we felt that the building personnel still did not have a grasp of what they needed to do to improve learning for all students, and we made some strong recommendations for Cycle III. Since that time, members of my team and I have been openly criticized for doing the job we were asked to perform. Also, after the visit one of the elementary principals called me and told me that he was disappointed that my team did not **"praise"** his school more in our report because he knew that **"his elementary school was better than one of the other elementary schools in the district, and my team had praised that school too much."** (quote from the principal) It is situations like this that make me wonder why some of us are willing to donate our time and efforts to assist schools when we are treated as my team was treated in this situation. These comments may not be pertinent to the information you wanted addressed, but I thought that they might give some guidelines for training chairs because I'm sure it will happen at other visits.

55. The first concern is my perception that the implementation of the QPA process has moved away from its intended purpose of letting individual buildings choose the areas from the five Student Outcomes that need addressing. In recent years we have seen an increase of pressure to move away from the higher level thinking skills and replace them with narrowly defined targets that seem to me to be politically motivated. I am speaking specifically of the pressure to concentrate on math computation and reading comprehension rather than allowing buildings to choose from QPA Student Outcomes that address analytical and communication skills. I am not implying that basic skills are not necessary. I am stating that I think these will have to become better when students increase in their ability to function at the higher level. It is certainly appropriate to examine this as part of the data supplied to the accreditation team. However, when we allow ourselves to be driven almost solely on the basis of one set of test scores we set ourselves up for not actually preparing students to participate in the society that they will encounter as adults. The second concern that I have is related to the first. I am concerned about where the QPA process is going. Cycle I was intended as an introduction to the process. Cycle II was stated to focus on integration but I feel has become more of an implementation of the process with emphasis on staff development. I would like to see Cycle II and the future work toward true integration. I feel that this can be done through emphasis on the five Student Outcomes, continuing to allow buildings to make the decisions on what to target, proving it needs targeting, devising strategies that will increase student performance, and defending the results with data; and continuing to strengthen the process with onsite team and chair training, LEA team training, and increased support (through models and best practice examples) from the Kansas Department of Education. I believe strongly in the QPA philosophy and process. I am hopeful that we will not change this emphasis.
56. Thank you for taking the time to listen to those of us out here working with children. I have served on 4 visiting teams and when my present commitments are complete, I will not serve

on any others because of the time commitment and because I believe it, QPA, is becoming more and more punitive, rather than collegial. I was a strong advocate for QPA when it first began because I appreciated the local control--I am now a very strong opponent because the local control has eroded and it is no longer about student improvement but is centered on school accountability and insuring legislators they are getting some "bang for their buck." The time commitment for QPA has become cumbersome. Instead of working on teacher improvement (by the way, teacher quality is still the predominant factor in improving education) during after-school meetings and inservice workshops, we are "crunching numbers" and reviewing the paper trail for QPA. The "what-is and what-isn't" an intervention debate is ridiculous. Our school identified vocabulary as a limiting factor for student improvement for Cycle 2 and were told this is not an intervention. I have a staff of teachers who average over 15 years of service in this building and we are told we don't know what to do to insure student improvement. The triangulation of data is extremely difficult. Research is very clear on the limitations of norm-referenced testing; yet the other form of data is the state assessments--yet we are mid-cycle and will have to establish a new baseline because of the changes in some of the state assessments. If state assessments are going to be changed every 5 or 6 years, it would probably be wise to make everyone align with the assessment development change to insure a beginning of cycle and ending of cycle comparability. The third piece of data is a local piece. Development of local assessment that is both valid and reliable is very difficult and very time-consuming. To do this across the curriculum is virtually impossible for smaller districts. In this age of anticipated teacher and administrator shortages, putting more pressures and accountabilities will be extremely counterproductive in luring our finest high school students into education and will make retaining these qualified educators difficult. There seems to be no research that indicates that QPA has done one thing for education in the state of Kansas except some limited improvements in state assessment scores. Are students leaving our high schools and finding better jobs because of QPA? I can't find any research that supports this. The whole premise of QPA is faulty. Quality performance is not an educational term--it is a business term used for accountability. QPA is not about education--it is about accountability and presupposes that schools are not interested in improvement unless they are forced to do so. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one I know became an educator to get rich. They are in education because they want to work with young people and have an intrinsic desire to improve. From my building of 210 students I will lose approximately 70-80 teacher days this year due to QPA. Although our substitute teachers are very qualified, they are not as good as having the regular classroom teacher in the classroom. As I said earlier, I began as a major proponent of QPA. I felt that the flexibility and the focus on students had a real potential to improve the learning process. Since that time, I have been told what subject areas I had to improve in, what interventions I could use to improve, to maintain records of overtime I did anything that was "QPA-ish," and have literally kept boxes of records and lost days and days of time I could have used to work with kids. I will continue to do QPA to the best of my ability because it is a necessary evil if I want to work with kids. I will not look forward to doing it, and I hope that it doesn't become cumbersome to the point that it substantially limits student learning. I think the best description of QPA I have heard is: "QPA is simply spending so much time taking care of the tricks of the trade, we don't have time to take care of the trade." We can either work with QPA or we can work with kids.

57. Section B, #5, 6 and 7. I don't believe the QPA process improves student learning. I do believe it forces some 'reluctant' faculty to teach quality to all students, which increases student learning. #21, 22. I'm not sure what you are asking for here, but in the four schools that I serve and the two that I'm personally on, here is how it usually works. In my school district, the central office and BOE understand that this is a requirement and they support most things that need to be done in order for the buildings to be accredited. In a couple of schools that I serve, the level of assistance to make change is sometimes limited. #30. In three of the four schools I serve, I'd say this is true, because those schools have very strong leadership from administration, the BOE, and superintendent. The other school struggles because leadership from local administration is weak. #34. The teams I serve on monitor progress minimally once every year. We are always available to advise. #35. I do not believe the QPA process needs more visits, that would be a waste of teacher time. It takes weeks to prepare for a visit, and that pulls teachers out of the classroom, where they need to be in order to make a difference! #44. Turnover in teacher leadership doesn't seem to make a difference. If the turnover is a building principal, if he/she isn't committed to the QPA process and teacher support, it becomes a huge stumbling block. #49. In three of the four schools I serve, the whole faculty is present and shows evidence of their involvement. #50. Having more teachers being on visiting teams might increase their awareness of the process, but it is a tremendous time out of the classroom and takes many hours to review the yearly profile. I don't think all teachers would be reliable enough to serve on teams.