

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Brian Lassiter, Minnesota Council for Quality 612-868-3519
James Crannell, Chaska High School 952-556-7232

CHASKA CHEMISTRY CLASS WINS ADVANCEMENT LEVEL OF THE MINNESOTA QUALITY AWARD

The General Chemistry class at Chaska High School won the Advancement/Silver Level of the 2001 Minnesota Quality Award. General Chemistry is taught by James Crannell and Chris Lenius.

The Award was presented at the February 7 Chaska District 112 School Board meeting. Jamie Crannell states: "this process has certainly helped me to understand our strengths and opportunities to improve. In my opinion, not only does this program recognize our past achievements, but it will also help us to continue to improve the quality of education in the classroom. In particular, I've found the assessment process to be helpful because it forces us to determine the actual results of education what we are trying to accomplish and to figure out ways to measure the progress toward those results."

Founded in the early 1990's, the primary objective of the Minnesota Quality Award is to help organizations improve their results and competitiveness and to recognize performance excellence throughout the state. The Minnesota Quality Award is given at four levels and is the culmination of a rigorous assessment process that uses the Criteria for Performance Excellence of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

Organizations that participate in the process receive comprehensive feedback that outlines their strengths and improvement opportunities along several categories: leadership, strategic planning, customer and market (student and stakeholder) focus, information and analysis, human resource (faculty and staff) focus, process management, and results. This feedback is used for learning, planning, and improvement. Recently, educational institutions have begun using the process to improve outcomes and academic results; in fact, the first three Baldrige winners from the Education sector were announced in late 2001.

However, Chaska Chemistry's use of the Criteria in a classroom setting is unique and may be first application of its type in the country. "I believe the effort of these two teachers should commended and publicized," says Brian Lassiter, president of the Minnesota Council for Quality. "While this approach has proven valuable at the district- and school-levels in numerous institutions across the state and country, with only two employees, this is by far the smallest organization I know that has used the process."

Mr. Crannell adds, "This assessment has proven to be useful at understanding our processes at the classroom level. But the real value is in improved quality of instruction and results. I believe that any educational organization could benefit from that."