MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Supporting Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS): Final Report

Office of Shared Accountability

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Rachel A. Hickson, M.A.
Kathy Zantal-Wiener, Ph.D.

Montgomery County Public Schools

OFFICE OF SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

Dr. Stacy L. Scott, Associate Superintendent
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850
301-279-3925

Dr. Jerry D. Weast   **Dr. Frieda K. Lacey**
Superintendent of Schools   *Deputy Superintendent*
                                                          of Schools

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Executive Summary

The Supporting Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS) is a system of performance evaluation and professional development for support (supporting services) professionals in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). Support professionals include non-administrative and non-teacher employees (for example, building services personnel, food and nutrition personnel, school secretaries, and paraeducators). SSPGS is designed to attract and recruit high-quality supporting services personnel from diverse backgrounds; ensure and document quality performance; and provide feedback and mentoring for continuous professional development, comprehensive professional development opportunities, and performance recognition. Major components of SSPGS include the performance evaluation process, including a set of seven core competencies for performance measurement, a Performance Improvement Process (PIP) to assist underperforming personnel, and activities to support professional development and growth.

This is a final report on the evaluation of the implementation of SSPGS. The purpose of the SSPGS evaluation is to determine the extent to which schools and offices are implementing SSPGS as designed. The evaluation focuses on performance evaluation and professional development in those schools and offices that began implementing SSPGS on July 1, 2006 ("Phase 2" cohort). An interim report (Hickson and Zantal-Wiener, August 2008) focused on findings from individual interviews with Phase 2 school and office supervisors and managers, and findings from focus groups with Professional growth consultants (PGC) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) panelists.

Methodology

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) conducted a mixed-method implementation evaluation of SSPGS in 2007–2008. Data sources included personal interviews with school and office managers, focus groups with PGCs and PAR panelists, a survey of support professionals, a survey of supervisors of support professionals, and program document reviews.

Key Findings

What have been stakeholders' experiences with the implementation of SSPGS?

Supervision. Supervisors reported a number of positive changes resulting from the introduction of SSPGS, including helping them conduct specific conversations about expectations for employees' skills or abilities, having more discussions about developing the long-term professional goals of those they supervise, and addressing problems with staff.

Professional conversations. Supervisors and the support personnel they supervise do not share perceptions about professional conversations. More than 7 out of 10 supervisors say they have talked with their employees about learning new skills or strategies, being certified, or identifying their professional goals; only one fourth of support professionals reported that they have had these kinds of conversations with supervisors.

To what extent has SSPGS been implemented as intended?

Performance evaluation. Most supervisors have evaluation responsibilities. Almost all supervisors say they are expected to know how to evaluate support professionals; however, 6 out of 10 are not mandated by their supervisors to attend evaluator training. More than one half of support professionals do not know the year of their next evaluation.

Performance evaluation criteria. Neither supervisors nor support professionals surveyed are fully knowledgeable about all of the competencies used to evaluate job performance. The one criterion familiar to most personnel is knowledge of the job; the "commitment to students" criterion is least familiar. More than one fourth of supervisors and more than 4 out of 10 support professionals identify skills or abilities other than the core competencies as part of the SSPGS performance evaluation.

Performance Improvement Process (PIP). Supervisors have limited direct experience with PIP. About one out of seven supervisors have referred one or more support professionals to PIP during the past two years. Not surprisingly, supervisors have relatively little knowledge of the details of PIP. Less than one half of supervisors know about Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), and no more than one third of supervisors know about the options of retirement, resignation, reassignment, or 90-day special evaluation. Three out of ten support professionals have not heard about PIP or are not sure if they know about it.   The majority of support professionals who are aware of PIP know that PIP supports those who do not meet one or more SSPGS core competencies. Among those support professionals who are aware of PIP, three out of four know about the option to enter a PAR program to receive the support of a professional growth consultant (PGC). Only a minority of those support professionals who are aware of PIP know about the 90-day evaluation, reassignment, resignation, or retirement.

Training challenges. Training challenges identified by supervisors include not having the types of training available that employees need; having no substitutes if employees are training; not giving support professionals time off to attend training; or that their employees have responsibilities that interfere with training. One third of supervisors say some support professionals are not seeking professional development opportunities.

Impact. A third evaluation question concerning the impact of the program is discussed in the Findings section.

Key Recommendations

Program Guidance and Documentation
- Clarify guidelines about who should evaluate each type of supporting services employee (e.g., paraeducators, building services personnel, school secretaries) and who should participate in evaluation reviews.
- Create opportunities to discuss and provide additional training on core competencies.
- Consider translating written documents about SSPGS (including the evaluation form) into additional languages.

- Provide more information about PIP, stressing its purpose and the potential benefits for those employees who need support. Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of PIP is low among both supervisors and support professionals.

Program Compliance and Evaluation Schedules
- Clarify expectations for supervisors to ensure that they develop their evaluation abilities. A majority of supervisors are not mandated to attend evaluator training.
- Create an annual e-mail to all support professionals due for evaluation during the coming fiscal year, informing them of their evaluation date. Copy supervisors, and include suggestions for supervisors and support professionals about how to prepare for the evaluation. The e-mail should include a copy of the job description for the person being evaluated during the coming year.[1]
- Clarify expectations about the role of particular staff members in evaluating and providing feedback to employees (including clarity about the role of staff development teachers and classroom teachers in SSPGS).

Training and Development
- Fully promote the professional development aspects of SSPGS. Provide written guidance to supervisors about how to discuss professional goals and how to introduce these kinds of conversations to their support professionals. Supervisors and support professionals have very different impressions about whether professional conversations are taking place.
- Provide information, support, and encouragement to support professionals to attend skills training and professional development programs. Supervisors indicate that they are not fully satisfied with the current level of participation by support professionals in MCPS professional development opportunities.
- Identify a larger pool of substitutes who can fill in for support professionals who need to attend additional training to meet all core competencies.
- Train evaluators in how to apply SSPGS competencies to specific job responsibilities.

Supporting a Diverse Culture
- Continue working to establish a culture in which support professionals feel comfortable having conversations with supervisors and asking questions about how to do their job. SSPGS requirements, including understanding competencies and having professional conversations, are new concepts for many support professionals.
- Offer ESOL classes for job-alike positions (e.g., building services, food services).

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[1] Findings indicate a need to strengthen the process for notifying support professionals about the evaluation cycle and about the date of their next evaluation. Supervisors also will benefit from strengthening this process, as some supervisors lack clarity about when and how they notify their employees of upcoming evaluations.

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Background
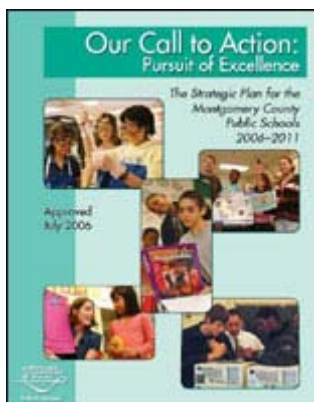
Goal 4 of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) strategic plan is to create a positive work environment in a self-renewing organization. This goal addresses the need for high-quality professional development and the ability "to recruit, support and retain highly qualified and diverse professional and support personnel" (MCPS, 2006), such as building services personnel, food and nutrition personnel, school secretaries, and paraeducators. Supporting services includes all non-administrative and non-teacher employees within MCPS ("support professionals"). This group includes about 8,000 school-based and central services employees who comprise almost 40 percent of the MCPS workforce. SSPGS is designed to attract and recruit high-quality supporting services personnel from diverse backgrounds.

This report examines implementation of the Supporting Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS) as of spring 2008. The program evaluation described in this report focused on performance evaluation and professional development, because these components of SSPGS were most fully implemented and available for examination.   The evaluation included schools and offices that began implementing SSPGS on July 1, 2006 (known as "Phase 2" of the program).   Throughout this report, "performance evaluation" refers to job performance assessments.   "Program evaluation" or "implementation evaluation" refers to the program evaluation of SSPGS conducted by the Office of Shared Accountability (OSA).

An interim report (Hickson and Zantal-Wiener, August 2008) focused on findings from individual interviews with Phase 2 school and office supervisors and managers, and findings from focus groups with professional growth consultants (PGC) and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) panelists. Findings in this report are primarily from spring surveys of supervisors and support professionals. Conclusions and recommendations include additional information from the interim report.

Program Overview

SSPGS is a competency-based model, with seven core competencies and performance criteria for each competency (see Appendix A). It "is a collaborative process that promotes workforce excellence by applying a core competency model in order to encourage personal and systemic growth and focus on performance through continuous improvement." [2]   The goals of SSPGS are

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[2] MCPS *Regulation GJA-RA,* revised August 7, 2006.

to promote personal and organizational excellence, streamline the evaluation process, and focus on improving performance and growth. The competencies inform each of the five components of SSPGS: recruiting, staffing, evaluation, professional development, and retention and recognition. Each of the components of SSPGS is described below.

- *Recruiting; Staffing.* In SSPGS, the process of recruiting includes identifying and encouraging talented personnel who exhibit the core competencies—skills, knowledge, and abilities—required of a support professional.

- *Evaluation.* The evaluation component serves to ensure and document quality performance of support professionals and provide feedback for continuous professional development. Employees new to their position are evaluated after six months. After permanent status is attained, the employee is evaluated 18 months later, at the two-year mark. Scheduled evaluations occur every three years thereafter. Employees who have not met competency on one or more core competencies on a formal evaluation, or who have a period of documented underperformance, are referred to the Performance Improvement Process (PIP). This process is designed to provide underperforming supporting services employees with the professional development opportunities necessary to improve performance and achieve competency on all core criteria. PIP offers several options: a six-month Peer Assistance and Review program (PAR), a 90-day Special Evaluation, the opportunity for reassignment to a previously held position at which the employee was successful, or resignation or retirement.

- *Professional development.* The professional growth cycle begins at the end of the second year of employment in a position. At the beginning of this cycle, each employee collaborates with his/her supervisor to create a Professional Development Plan (PDP). Its objective is to target areas for growth and identify strategies for successful attainment of professional goals.

- *Recognition; Retention.[3]* Opportunities to highlight individual achievements of staff in a positive and supportive manner are consistent with a professional learning community. The role of this component is to identify those practices, performances, and achievements attained by an individual/team that distinguish them and that set a standard for excellence.

Organization of Report

Following this background section are a detailed Methodology section (including evaluation questions, data sources, strengths and limitations of the methodology, and information about the evaluation advisory group); Detailed Findings organized by evaluation question; Conclusions and Recommendations (from both spring data collection and midyear data collection).

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[3] The retention and recognition components are in development.

Methodology

The evaluation utilizes a mixed-method design, including multiple data collection strategies, to triangulate information gathered from multiple stakeholders. According to the Office of Organizational Development (OOD), Phase 2 implementation has been fuller, more consistent, and representative of a wider variety of functions when compared with Phase 1 implementation. Therefore, the target population for data collection is support professionals and supervisors in Phase 2 schools and offices.

Data collection methods included (1) surveys of supervisors and support professionals in a sample of Phase 2 schools and offices; (2) in-person interviews with supervisors in a sample of Phase 2 schools and offices; (3) a group interview with the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) panelists (11 people); a group interview with the professional growth consultants (PGCs) (8 people); and (4) review of existing documents and data from the Office of Human Resources (OHR) and OOD. OSA survey data from the MCPS Surveys of the School Environment and from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) English Language Proficiency Survey were also reviewed.

Evaluation Questions

The following key questions guided the SSPGS implementation evaluation:

1. What have been stakeholders' experiences with the implementation of SSPGS?

2. To what extent has SSPGS been implemented as intended?

3. What impact has SSPGS had on support professionals?

Methods and Sources

Sampling Procedures

A sample of Phase 2 schools and offices was selected to represent the range of experiences with implementing SSPGS. All nine Phase 2 high schools were selected; four middle schools and three elementary schools were selected at random. Two special programs (McKenney Hills and Stephen Knolls) were also part of Phase 2 and were included in data collection activities. Because the number of students in a school building is related to the number of supporting services employees assigned to that school building, different levels of enrollment among middle and elementary school buildings were included by stratifying the sample before random selection. Appendix C displays Phase 2 schools and offices sampled for data collection activities.[4]

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[4] Because MCPS requests that OSA limit burden on schools, MCPS middle schools and elementary schools involved in other major program evaluation initiatives with OSA (Middle School Magnet Consortium, Middle School Reform, and Title I Program) were not considered for the SSPGS program evaluation.

Instrumentation[5]

Two instruments were developed using the evaluation questions, further informed by findings from in-person interviews with principals and managers in Phase 2 schools and offices and through extensive review from the Evaluation Advisory Group (see below). Many questions were the same or similar for both surveys, to allow for comparisons between supervisor and support professional experiences with SSPGS. The instruments were as follows:

- *Survey of support professionals.* Support professionals had a choice between completing a paper and pencil survey or a Web-based survey. The survey instrument asked about personnel involved in performance evaluation; performance evaluation schedules and notification; performance evaluation criteria; English as a second language; Performance Improvement Process (PIP); knowledge of evaluation cycle; SSPGS information and training; changes in supervision and professional conversations; professional development opportunities and challenges; and background questions. A letter encouraging survey participation (from SEIU Local 500 President Merle Cuttitta) accompanied the survey package.

- *Survey of supervisors of support professionals.* Supervisors had a Web-based survey. The survey instrument asked about performance evaluation responsibilities and training; performance evaluation schedules and notification; performance evaluation criteria; English as a second language; Performance Improvement Process (PIP); knowledge of evaluation cycle; SSPGS information and training; changes in supervision and professional conversations; professional development opportunities and challenges; and background questions.

Summary of Survey Participation.

Numbers of eligible personnel in sampled Phase 2 schools and offices were based on a review of information from OHR records, MCPS websites, and contacts with supervisors in sampled divisions. The numbers eligible to participate should be considered as estimates, as should the calculated participation rates. Administrators, directors, managers, and supervisors assigned to supervise one or more staff members evaluating using SSPGS were considered to be eligible supervisors for the purpose of the supervisor survey. All support professionals in the sampled schools and offices were invited to participate in the survey of support professionals.
Background information on survey participants is in Appendix B.

Supervisors.   Findings from the survey of supervisors are based on the responses of 48 employees, for an estimated participation rate of 63.1%. This figure includes both responses displayed in the tables in this report as well as one response received after the deadline for analysis. Among supervisors who identified their work setting, the participation rate is slightly higher for those working in schools (63.8%) than other sites (60.0%). Supervisors at the sampled locations received a personal e-mail invitation to participate, including the link to the survey,

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[5] Copies of survey instruments are in Appendix E.

with two follow-up e-mail reminders. This participation rate is high enough to generalize survey findings to the population of Phase 2 supervisors in the sampled schools and offices.

Support Professionals. Findings from the survey of support professionals are based on the responses of 335 employees, for an estimated participation rate of 20.8%. Please note that this figure includes both responses displayed in the tables in this report as well as responses received after the deadline for analysis.[6] Among support professionals who identified their work setting, the participation rate is higher among support professionals working in schools (21.7%) than at other sites (14.7%). This participation rate is too low for survey findings to be viewed as generalizeable to the entire population of Phase 2 support professionals in the sampled schools and offices. Findings should be viewed as directional.

Key supervisors at the sampled locations (e.g., a school's business manager) received an e-mail message notifying them that survey packages would arrive and asking them to distribute one to each support professional in their school or office. Supervisors also received e-mail reminders. Each package included a return envelope in which support professionals could seal and return their survey directly to OSA without anyone at their work site seeing their responses. So that support professionals did not feel that they were being targeted or tracked, individual names did not appear on survey packages and no identifying information was required on any page of the survey or envelope. Extra survey packages were available as needed.

Evaluation Advisory Group

An advisory group for the evaluation of SSPGS held periodic meetings during 2007–2008. This group included a wide range of stakeholders, including school-based staff, office-based staff, union representatives, and representatives from central offices involved with SSPGS (OOD, OSP, Food and Nutrition, etc.). The Advisory Group contributed to the evaluation plan by reviewing design elements, providing relevant implementation questions, and reviewing survey instruments. Throughout the evaluation, the Advisory Group reviewed proposed data collection instruments and suggested methods of communicating with stakeholder groups. The list of members is in Appendix D.

Strengths and Limitations Associated with the Study

This program evaluation features several strengths with regard to method and reliability of data. First, developmental interviews were conducted with supervisors in Phase 1 schools and offices to develop questions that would properly reference the language and experiences of MCPS personnel working with SSPGS. Second, the sample of schools selected for interviews and surveys was stratified, to ensure that elementary and middle schools of various enrollment sizes were represented. Finally, the findings discussed in this report were based on input from multiple stakeholders (supervisors, support professionals, PGCs, and PAR panelists) who were asked many of the same questions in order to triangulate information.

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[6] Responses of supervisors and support professionals whose surveys were not submitted in time for analysis are not displayed in the Detailed Findings tables.

The limitations of this program evaluation include the following:

1) Findings from the survey of support professionals are based on a participation rate too low to be generalizable to the entire population of support professionals. Therefore, findings should be viewed as directional.

2) The PGCs and PARs interviewed for this study noted that they work only with people who require performance improvement; they are less familiar with the experiences of employees who are meeting performance expectations.

3) The cyclical nature of the performance evaluation process means that support professionals and supervisors have a wide range of experiences with the process (from no experience to completed performance evaluations and possibly PIP experience).

4) Only those components of SSPGS that were rolled out as of the 2007–2008 school year were available for evaluation.

5) The experiences of Phase 1 and Phase 3 personnel are not included in the evaluation design.

Findings

Findings in this section are based on the triangulation of data from surveys of supervisors and support personnel and reviews of program documentation, and are organized by evaluation question.

What have been stakeholders' experiences with the implementation of SSPGS?

Topics used to determine stakeholders' experiences with SSPGS included knowledge of the evaluation cycle; SSPGS information and training; and overall comfort with SSPGS.

Knowledge of the evaluation cycle

The surveys asked both supervisors and support personnel when support professionals new to their position in MCPS receive their evaluation. The response, "six months after starting to work," was selected by about one half (48.9%) of supervisors and about 6 out of 10 (59%) support professionals. One third of supervisors (34%) said they did not know when new personnel receive an evaluation or did not respond to this question; this was a higher proportion than the one fourth of support professionals who did not know or did not respond (22.8%).

Respondents were asked when support professionals who have been in their current position for two or more years receive their evaluation. More than one half of both supervisors (55.3%) and support professionals (50.6%) reported "every three years." Again, more supervisors were not sure how to answer this question than support professionals (36.2% vs. 24.7%, respectively) (Table 1).

Table 1
Expected Schedule for SSPGS
Performance Evaluations

		All Supervisors (*N*=47) %	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
Support professionals new to their position in MCPS receive their evaluation:	One month after starting work	0.0	0.6
	Three months after starting work	6.4	5.4
	Six months after starting work	48.9	59.0
	One year after starting work	10.6	3.5
	I am not new to my position, so I do not know	Not asked	8.7
	Not sure/No response	34.0	22.8
Support professionals in their current position two years or longer receive their evaluation:	Every year	0.0	13.1
	Every two years	8.5	11.5
	Every three years	55.3	50.6
	Not sure	36.2	24.7

Note: Supervisors were asked, "When do you evaluate support professionals new to their position in MCPS?" "When do you evaluate support professionals who have been in their current position for two years or longer?"

SSPGS information and training

All surveyed personnel were asked where they go most often for information about SSPGS. The SSPGS Handbook or other documents about SSPGS were the sources most frequently cited, by 6 out of 10 supervisors (59.6%). Support personnel instead cited the MCPS website as their most frequently used source of SSPGS information (44.7%), followed by the SSPGS Handbook (35.1%). The website was the source for a slightly smaller proportion of supervisors (38.3%).

About one fourth of both supervisors (23.4%) and support professionals (23.7%) reported receiving information about SSPGS from a co-worker, colleague, or other person (e.g., staff developer, SSPGS team/PGC, or school administrative secretary). Less than one out of five in either group identified their own supervisor as their most frequent source of SSPGS information (according to 17% of supervisors and 19.8% of support professionals). Close to one in five supervisors (17.1%) and one fourth of support professionals (25.6%) had not looked for information about SSPGS, or were not sure about SSPGS information sources (Table 2).

Table 2
SSPGS Information Sources

Source	All Supervisors (N=47) %	All Support Professionals (N=314) %
SSPGS Handbook, or other documents about the SSPGS	59.6	35.1
MCPS website	38.3	44.7
My supervisor	17.0	19.8
Co-worker or colleague	10.6	20.8
Some other person or source[a]	12.8	2.9*
Not sure	4.3	8.3
I have not looked for information about SSPGS	12.8	17.3

Note. Multiple responses possible.
[a]Responses included staff developer (4 responses); SSPGS Team/PGC (3); school administrative secretary (1).

With regard to explaining SSPGS to those whose evaluations they conduct, supervisors found several resources most helpful for SSPGS, including the SSPGS Handbook (66%) and the SSPGS evaluation form (44.7%). MCPS colleagues were the most helpful source for about one out of seven supervisors (14.9%). The *Ten Tips* pamphlet, which focuses on PIP, was cited by only 8.5% of supervisors[7] (Table 3).

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[7] Again, only 15% of supervisors have referred an employee to PIP in the past two years (Table 10).

Table 3
Helpful Sources of SSPGS Information for Supervisors

Sources	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
Most helpful source(s) in explaining SSPGS to those whose evaluations I conduct:	
SSPGS Handbook	66.0
SSPGS evaluation form	44.7
My colleagues or others who work for MCPS	14.9
Ten Tips pamphlet	8.5
Learning Opportunities brochure	4.3
Other sources	10.6
Not sure	17.0

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Three fourths of support professionals surveyed (76.0%) have visited the Professional Development Online (PDO) website and registered for training. Another one tenth (9.9%) said they have visited the PDO website but did not register for classes.   Most support professionals have access to a computer; most (85.9%) have visited PDO (Table 4).

Conversely, about one fourth of supervisors have visited PDO to get SSPGS training listings or other information about SSPGS (23.4%) (Table 5).

Table 4
Support Professionals' Experience
with Professional Development Online Website

Experience	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
Visited PDO website; registered for training	76.0
Visited PDO website; have not registered for training	9.9
Have a computer at work, but have not visited PDO	9.3
Do not have a computer at work	1.0
Do not use a computer	0.6
Not sure	0.0

According to personnel surveyed, there is no single or typical way that MCPS personnel receive training or orientation about SSPGS. About one half of supervisors (48.9%) reported that they have attended training for supervisors about SSPGS implementation. About 4 out of 10 support professionals (42.2%) reported attending worksite training about the implementation of SSPGS, led by a professional growth consultant.

In addition, one fourth of supervisors (25.5%) attended some other MCPS job training that included a discussion about SSPGS (such as new hires orientation); this training was attended by a smaller proportion of support personnel (19.2%). One in five supervisors (19.1%) attended an SSPGS worksite meeting intended for support professionals; about one in six support personnel (16.9%) mentioned that they attended this type of meeting, led by a member of their local staff.

A majority of supervisors (61.7%) and one half of support professionals (49.2%) said they have received written information or documents about SSPGS. However, close to one fourth of supervisors and one out of seven support professionals said they have not received any of these trainings or documents, or are not sure (Table 5).

The survey questionnaire included a space to write additional comments about SSPGS. Comments from support professionals indicated an interest in receiving additional information about SSPGS. An illustrative comment from one support professional was, "Although we had someone come to our school to discuss this new evaluation system, I really have not heard any additional information." Another support professional said, "I have the SSPGS handbook, but I'm not really sure how it works, and don't have experience with it. I suggest having a workshop so we can ask questions. I just had an evaluation after a few years of being in this position."

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Table 5
SSPGS Information and Training Experience

Experience	All Supervisors (N=47) %	All Support Professionals (N=314) %
I have attended a worksite training about the implementation of the SSPGS, led by a Professional growth consultant (PGC)	Not asked	42.2
I have attended a training about the implementation of the SSPGS, intended for supervisors	48.9	Not asked
I have attended some other job training or MCPS meeting at which SSPGS was addressed (such as orientation for people with new jobs)	25.5	19.2
I have attended a training or meeting about the SSPGS, intended for support professionals (Supervisors) I have attended a worksite training or meeting about the SSPGS, led by a member of building or office staff (Support Professionals)	19.1	16.9
I have received written information or documents about the SSPGS (SSPGS Handbook, 10 Tips, memos or bulletins about SSPGS)	61.7	49.2
I have visited Professional Development Online (PDO), to get SSPGS training listings or other information about the SSPGS	23.4	Table 4
None of these things	23.4	15.3
Not sure	0.0	6.1

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Note. Multiple responses possible.

Overall comfort level with SSPGS

One way to gauge overall comfort level with SSPGS is to ask MCPS personnel whether they can explain the program to others. Two thirds of supervisors (68.1%) feel comfortable explaining all or some aspects of the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new support professional. Less than one half of support professionals (42%) feel comfortable explaining all or some aspects of SSPGS to new co-workers (Table 6).

Table 6
Comfort Level with Explaining SSPGS to Others

	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
I am comfortable explaining all aspects of the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new support professional (Supervisors)/new co-worker (Support Professionals)	27.7	8.1
I am comfortable explaining some aspects of the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new support professional (Supervisors)/new co-worker (Support Professionals)	40.4	33.9
I am not comfortable explaining the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new support professional (Supervisors)/new co-worker (Support Professionals)	27.7	47.6
Not sure	4.3	10.4

Summary. Those who supervise and evaluate support professionals perceive SSPGS as a positive process. Evaluators like the performance criteria and the simplified schedule for conducting evaluations. One half of supervisors and 4 out of 10 support professionals surveyed say they have attended SSPGS trainings. Data from the Office of Organizational Development (OOD) indicate that training participation is higher than self-reports.

To what extent has SSPGS been implemented as intended?

Survey topics used to determine the extent to which SSPGS has been implemented as intended included performance evaluation responsibilities; performance evaluation schedules and notification; performance evaluation criteria; second-language concerns for evaluations; and the Performance Improvement Process (PIP).

Supervisors' performance evaluation responsibilities

Almost all supervisors (95.7%) said they are expected to know how to evaluate support professionals. However, 6 out of 10 (61.7%) reported that they are not mandated by their supervisor to attend evaluator training (Table 7).

Most supervisors have evaluation responsibilities, including two thirds (66%) assigned to complete evaluations for three or more support professionals. A majority of supervisors (70.2%) reported that this is the first SSPGS evaluation for one or more of the employees they were evaluating in 2007–2008. (For most support professionals meeting competencies, this is the performance evaluation due by June 2008.) Less than one half of supervisors (44.7%) had conducted three or more evaluations using SSPGS at the time of the survey.

Supervisors reported that they directly supervise and have frequent ongoing contact with most of the support professionals they evaluate (85.1%). Very few supervisors surveyed (4.3%) reported that they evaluate support professionals who they do not directly or formally observe (Table 8).

Table 7
Expectations for Supervisors: Evaluator Training
and Knowledge of Evaluation of Support Professionals

Expectations	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
My supervisor expects me to know how to evaluate support professionals as part of my job	95.7
My supervisor does not expect me to know how to evaluate	2.1
Not sure	2.1
My supervisor mandates that I attend evaluator training for the SSPGS	29.8
My supervisor does not mandate	61.7
Not sure	8.5

Table 8
SSPGS Evaluations Assigned to Supervisors

	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
Number of SSPGS evaluations I have already conducted	
None	23.4
One or two evaluations	29.8
Three or more evaluations	44.7
Not sure	2.1
Number of support professionals assigned to me for completion of their evaluations	
None	4.3
One or two	25.5
Three to five	29.8
More than five	36.2
Not sure	4.2
Number of supporting services evaluations I am conducting during the 2007-2008 school year	
None	12.8
One or two	40.4
Three to five	21.3
More than five	23.4
Not sure	2.1
Number of these evaluations that are the employee(s') first evaluation under SSPGS	
One or two evaluations	25.5
Three to five evaluations	29.8
More than five evaluations	14.9
Not sure	17.0
I have not used SSPGS	12.8
My relationship with those whose evaluations I conduct	
I directly supervise all or most of these people; I have frequent ongoing contact	85.1
Someone else supervises them directly; I have some ongoing contact with them	14.9
I will evaluate employees whose evaluations I write who are not observed directly or formally by me	
Yes	4.3
No	93.6
Not sure	2.1

Less than two thirds of support professionals (62.9%) reported that the person who knows and monitors their daily work participates in evaluating their job performance. Close to one half of support professionals (44.7%) also reported that their evaluator's supervisor, manager, office director, or building principal participate in evaluating their job performance (Table 9).

The supervisor survey included space for supervisors of support professionals to make additional comments about SSPGS. Teachers who work with paraeducators are seeking more guidance on their particular role in SSPGS evaluations. One teacher said, "I did not know I was to evaluate a support professional until the paperwork was forwarded to me. A classroom teacher should not be responsible for this. They [paraeducators] should be observed by administration and evaluated that way." One special education resource teacher (RTSE) said training is needed for the supervisor if SSPGS evaluations are part of the work expectation. "I have the responsibility of evaluating paraeducators, but as an RTSE, I have not been trained in doing so. I am guessing my way through, but would feel more confident if I were trained by MCPS." For those in an indirect or less conventional supervisory relationship, more guidance may be needed. As one surveyed supervisor wrote in comments at the end of the survey, "I am in a very awkward position. I am the on-site supervisor for an individual in a supporting services position. However, I am actually not her supervisor."

Table 9
Personnel Involved in the Performance Evaluation Process

		All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
Who participates in evaluating your job performance?	The person who knows and monitors my work on a daily basis ("evaluator")	62.9
	My evaluator's supervisor, manager, office director or building principal) ("reviewer")	44.7
	Someone else	11.5
	Not sure	7.7
Who signs your written evaluation form?	I sign it	80.2
	My immediate supervisor (evaluator) signs it	69.6
	My supervisor's supervisor (reviewer) signs it	45.4
	Someone else signs it	5.5
	Not sure	9.3

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Performance evaluation schedules and notifications

More than one half of support professionals surveyed (57.3%) reported that their most recent evaluation occurred during the past year. More than one half of support professionals (51.2%) indicated not knowing the year of their next evaluation (Table 10).

Notification from the MCPS Office of Human Resources is mentioned as the most frequent way that supervisors learn about the schedule for support professionals' evaluations (44.7%). Another 3 out of 10 supervisors (31.9%) hear about the evaluation due date from their direct

supervisor.   When asked about advanced notification of evaluations due, the majority of supervisors (80.9%) indicated receiving notification one month or more before the due date.

Close to one half of supervisors said they typically notify an employee verbally that an evaluation is upcoming (44.7%).   Three out of 10 supervisors (29.8%) indicated notifying support professionals both verbally and in writing (Table 11).

Table 10
Record of Performance Evaluation Schedules
for Support Professionals

		All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
My most recent evaluation in my current position was . . .	within the past six months	33.3
	within the past year	24.0
	within the past two years	12.2
	within the past three years	8.3
	more than three years ago	4.8
	I have not had an evaluation in my current position	11.9
	Not sure	5.4
My next evaluation is expected:	Overdue (May 2008 or earlier)	1.2
	June 2008	7.9
	July – December 2008 (six months)	8.5
	January 2009 – June 2009 (twelve months)	9.8
	July – December 2009 (eighteen months)	5.3
	In 2010	7.6
	In 2011	1.5
	Year, or month plus year not known[a]	51.2

Note: "No response" omitted.
[a]Includes those who did not supply either month or year.

Comments from surveyed support professionals indicated a need to reinforce information on evaluation cycles.   One support professional said, "My boss has no idea about my evaluation year or what I need to do."   Another said, "I just had an evaluation after a few years of being in this position."   Another support professional commented, "I've not had an evaluation in four-plus years!"   And a fourth commented, "I do not know when my evaluation is or who will perform and complete it!"

Table 11
Methods of Performance Evaluation Notification

		All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
When one of my employees is due for an evaluation, I am notified by . . .	my direct supervisor	31.9
	my supervisor's direct supervisor	6.4
	Human Resources	44.7
	someone else	14.9
	Not sure	2.1
I am notified in advance that one of my staff is due for an evaluation . . .	up to a week before	2.1
	A few weeks before	6.4
	A month or more before	80.9
	It depends	6.4
	Not sure	2.1
	I am not notified in advance	2.1
I usually notify an employee that an evaluation is coming up . . .	in writing	14.9
	verbally/I just tell them	44.7
	both verbally and in writing	29.8
	It depends	4.3
	Not sure	6.4

Performance evaluation criteria

Neither supervisors nor support professionals are fully knowledgeable about the performance evaluation criteria for SSPGS performance evaluations.   Ideally, all personnel surveyed should be able to positively identify all seven criteria from a selected response list as being used to measure job performance. The one criterion familiar to most personnel is knowledge of the job (identified by 95.7% of supervisors and 88.8% of support professionals). More than 9 out of 10 supervisors and more than 8 out of 10 support professionals indicated that performance will be evaluated by professionalism, interpersonal skills, communication skills, organizational skills, and problem-solving ability.   However, the "commitment to students" criterion is familiar to only about three fourths of personnel (76.6% of supervisors and 72.2% of support professionals). (Fully one third of the support professionals surveyed do not work in school buildings.)

Large minorities of both supervisors and support professionals identified "other skills or abilities" beyond the core competencies as factoring into the SSPGS performance evaluation (27.7% of supervisors, 42.2% of support professionals) (Table 12).

It is notable that more than one fourth of support professionals surveyed (27.7%) reported that they have not seen their job description, or are not sure.

Several survey comments from support professionals were highly complimentary of the SSPGS core competencies. One support professional said, "I really like the SSPGS system. It is a great evaluation tool that helps employees see the specifics regarding the core components that allow success in their positions, as well as allows for professional growth and improvements." Another said, "I do believe in all seven core competencies and the performance criteria, and that it is a

healthy way to evaluate a large diverse organization like MCPS . . . I would've loved to have this when I started MCPS back in 1985."

Table 12
Performance Evaluation Criteria:
SSPGS Core Competencies

Criteria[a]	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
Commitment to students (understanding needs, valuing achievements, treating them fairly)	76.6	72.2
Knowledge of the job (understanding my duties, being productive, and learning new skills)	95.7	88.8
Professionalism (being patient, treating people with respect, and sharing responsibility)	93.6	85.6
Interpersonal skills (being polite, working as part of a team, respecting opinions of co-workers)	93.6	82.4
Communication skills (being a good listener, sending clear messages, and keeping others informed)	91.5	81.8
Organizational skills (planning and preparing for work, using time well, keeping good records)	91.5	83.7
Problem solving ability (being able to deal with changes, asking for help, recognizing problems)	91.5	81.5
Other abilities or skills	27.7	42.2
Not sure	4.3	6.4

Note. Multiple responses possible.
[a]Supervisors were asked:, "When the people you supervise are evaluated, how do you measure their performance?" Support professionals were asked:, "When I am evaluated, my performance will be measured by . . . "

Evaluating those for whom English is a second language

Only 13.2% of support professionals surveyed said that English is a second language for them.[8] In contrast, 4 out of 10 supervisors (40.4%) reported that they have employees for whom English is a second language. Supervisors with second-language employees reported that their employees can speak enough English to understand and complete the evaluation process (73.6%) or that supervisors can handle language issues themselves (10.5%) or that supervisors can obtain language support from another person at the work site (10.5%) (Table 13).

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[8] Some support professionals more comfortable in a language other than English may have elected not to participate in the survey. This may be, in part, a methodological effect; MCPS does not have a history of producing documents for employees in languages other than English [a deliberate convention], and the OSA evaluation process respected that convention. Also, some support professionals may choose not to reveal that English is a second language for them.

Table 13
Prevalence of English as a Second Language
for Those Being Evaluated (Supervisors)

		All Supervisors (*N*=47) %	Supervisors with Employees Speaking a Second Language (*N*=19) %
English is a second language for support professional(s) whose evaluations I conduct:	No	59.6	
	Yes	40.4	
Steps I usually take to ensure that my employee can understand and complete the evaluation:	Those I supervise speak enough English that this is not an issue		73.6
	I am able to handle any language issues myself		10.5
	I get language help from another person who works at our worksite		10.5
	Other		5.3

Performance Improvement Process (PIP)

Supervisor experience and knowledge of PIP. According to survey findings, supervisors have had limited direct experience with PIP. About one in seven supervisors (14.9%) have referred one or more support professionals to PIP during the past two years. A small proportion of supervisors (10.6%) reported not being sure if they referred anyone to PIP in the past two years.[9]

In addition to their limited direct experience, supervisors reported relatively low basic awareness of PIP. Less than one half of supervisors (46.8%) indicated that PIP helps support professionals who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies. Survey results revealed that relatively few supervisors know that PIP is available to all support professionals after nine months in the position, whether or not they are evaluated this year (17% of supervisors).

As a group, supervisors also have relatively little knowledge of the details of PIP. For example, less than one half indicated they know about PAR (42.6%), and only one third of supervisors (or less) indicated they know about the options of retirement, resignation, reassignment, or 90-day special evaluation. Among supervisors who have made a referral to PIP, knowledge of PIP is much higher (as expected). However, even these supervisors lack some key knowledge about PIP, for example, the fact that PIP is available to all support professionals after nine months in the position (only 42.9% of referring supervisors know this) (Table 14).

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[9] Three fourths of surveyed supervisors (74.5%) said they have not referred any support professionals to PIP during the past two years.

Table 14
Level of Knowledge of PIP and Performance Improvement Options (Supervisors)

Statements about PIP	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
Basic Awareness of PIP:	
PIP helps support professionals who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies.	46.8
PIP is available to all support professionals after nine months in the position, whether or not they are evaluated this year.	17.0
Details of PIP:	
Support professionals can choose to enter a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program, to receive the support of a professional growth consultant (PGC) to work on their job skills and improve their performance.	42.6
Support professionals eligible for retirement can choose to retire.	34.0
Support professionals can choose to resign.	34.0
Support professionals can choose to be reassigned to a previous position in which they were successful, if available.	31.9
Support professionals can choose to receive a special evaluation, conducted by their supervisor, that will take place over 90 days.	29.8
Not sure (about performance improvement options under PIP).	40.4

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Support professionals' knowledge of PIP. A majority of support professionals (70.7%) have heard about PIP. The majority of support professionals aware of PIP know that PIP supports those who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies (72.3%). Close to two thirds of support professionals in this group know that PIP is a way to help support professionals improve their job performance (64.5%). A much smaller proportion of those aware of PIP know that PIP is available to all support professionals after nine months on the job, whether or not they are in an evaluation year.

Among all support professionals surveyed, just over one half (55.7%) know about the option to enter a PAR program. Among support professionals aware of PIP, three fourths indicated they know about PAR as the way to receive the support of a professional growth consultant (PGC) (75.0%).

About 4 out of 10 support professionals who are aware of PIP know about the 90-day evaluation, reassignment, or resignation as options. Fewer support professionals who are aware of PIP know about the option to retire (36.8%). One fourth of support professionals familiar with PIP, and 4 out of 10 support professionals overall, are not sure what performance improvement options are available through PIP (Table 15).

Table 15
Level of Knowledge of PIP and Performance Improvement Options[a] (Support Professionals)

Statements about PIP	Support Professionals Aware of PIP (*N*=220) %	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
PIP helps support professionals who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies.	72.3	54.1
PIP is a way to help support professionals improve their job performance.	64.5	48.7
PIP is available to all support professionals after nine months in the position, whether or not they are evaluated this year.	27.3	20.7
Support professionals can choose to enter a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program, to receive the support of a professional growth consultant (PGC) to work on their job skills and improve their performance.	75.0	55.7
Support professionals can choose to receive a special evaluation, conducted by their supervisor, that will take place over 90 days.	43.6	32.8
Support professionals can choose to be reassigned to a previous position in which they were successful, if available.	41.8	30.9
Support professionals can choose to resign.	40.9	30.3
Support professionals eligible for retirement can choose to retire.	36.8	27.1
Not sure (about performance improvement options under PIP).	23.2	40.8

Note. Multiple responses possible.
[a]Support professionals selected these responses from statements in two different questions.

Explaining PIP to others. Given the relatively low level of awareness of PIP and its details, it is not surprising that explaining PIP to others is not a comfortable prospect for supervisors or support professionals.   A large minority of supervisors (44.7%) and more than one half of support professionals (56.3%) say they are not comfortable explaining PIP to a new subordinate or co-worker (Table 16).

Table 16
Employee Comfort Level with Explaining PIP to Others

	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
I am not comfortable explaining PIP to a new support professional (Supervisors)/new co-worker (Support Professionals).	44.7	56.3
I am comfortable explaining some aspects of PIP to a new support professional (Supervisors)/new co-worker (Support Professionals).	34.0	27.1
I am comfortable explaining all aspects of PIP to a new support professional (Supervisors)/new co-worker (Support Professionals).	6.4	5.5
Not sure/No response.	14.9	11.0

Summary. Both supervisors and support professionals have a developing though incomplete understanding of SSPGS requirements at this time in the Phase 2 implementation cycle. Their experience with SSPGS has been limited by evaluation cycles, limited access to training for support professionals, and/or no need to interact with PIP. More than one half of support professionals do not know the year of their next evaluation. High schools appear to have a more consistent process for conducting performance evaluations than other work sites, since they use the school business manager to support SSPGS.

What impact has SSPGS had on support professionals?

SSPGS is still developing and evolving as it moves toward full implementation. While it is too soon to measure the overall impact of SSPGS, several aspects of this system have the potential to impact support professionals in the future. Topics used in the 2008 surveys to determine the extent to which SSPGS has had a potential early impact included supervision changes resulting from SSPGS, professional conversations, professional development opportunities to meet core competencies, and training challenges.

Changes in supervision

Supervisors reported a number of positive changes in supervision, resulting from the introduction of SSPGS. Nearly one half of supervisors (46.8%) indicated that SSPGS has helped them conduct specific conversations with employees about expectations related to their skills or abilities. More than one third of supervisors (38.3%) indicated that SSPGS encourages them to have more discussions about developing the long-term professional goals of those they supervise.

Close to one third of supervisors (31.9%) reported that SSPGS makes it easier to address problems with staff. However, the same proportion (31.9%) indicated that SSPGS has not changed the way they supervise employees. A few are not sure if SSPGS has changed their supervision (11%) (Table 17).

Table 17
Supervision Changes Resulting from SSPGS

Supervision Changes	All Supervisors (N=47) %
SSPGS has helped me to be more specific about the skills or abilities I expect from my staff.	46.8
SSPGS has encouraged me to have more conversations with staff about developing long-term professional goals.	38.3
SSPGS has made it easier for me to address difficulties or problems I have with staff members.	31.9
SSPGS has not changed the way I supervise staff.	31.9
Not sure	10.6

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Professional conversations

Supervisors and the support personnel they supervise are not in agreement about professional conversations they may have had about professional growth.

Many supervisors (89.4%) reported that, in the past two years, they have had conversations with their support professionals about taking courses, workshops, or trainings. However, only one half of support professionals (51.3%) reported having similar conversations with their supervisors. Moreover, many supervisors (72.3%) reported having spoken to their employees about learning new skills or strategies, being certified, or their professional goals (such as getting additional certifications, getting a promotion, becoming a supervisor, or other things to help job advancement). However, only one fourth of support professionals (25.8%) reported that they had these kinds of conversations with their supervisors.

Similarly, many supervisors (76.6%) indicated working with their employees to create a professional development plan (PDP) or a professional portfolio, but only 4 out of 10 support professionals (41.7%) reported discussing PDPs or portfolios with their supervisors (Table 18).

Table 18
Professional Conversations

Within the past two years, [we] have talked about . . .	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
taking courses, workshops, or trainings to learn new skills or strategies, or get certified.	89.4	51.3
professional goals (such as getting additional certifications, getting a promotion, becoming a supervisor myself, or other things to help me advance in my job).	72.3	25.8
how to create a professional development plan (PDP).	40.4	22.0
how to create a professional portfolio.	36.2	19.7
I have not talked about these topics with my current supervisor/those I supervise within the past two years.	4.3	34.1
Not sure	2.1	3.2

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Professional development opportunities to meet core competencies

Based on survey findings, supervisors are not clear about whether professional development opportunities offer support personnel the needed support for meeting all core competencies. Only one third of supervisors (34%) agreed that this is the case. Additionally, more than one fourth (27.7%) indicated that they believe the professional development opportunities available to support professionals is providing support only for selected competencies or skills. Finally, another one third of supervisors (34%) are not sure whether professional development is providing the needed support, and a few supervisors (4.3%) say it generally does not (Table 19).

Table 19
Professional Development Opportunities to Meet Core Competencies

Professional development opportunities offer the needed support toward [support personnel] meeting all core competencies . . .	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
Yes, for the most part.	34.0
Yes, but only for selected competencies/skills or topics.	27.7
No, generally not.	4.3
Not sure/No response	34.0

Some support professionals and supervisors took the opportunity to provide comments on professional development experiences at the end of their survey questionnaire. A support professional who has taken advantage of professional development opportunities complimented MCPS on the offerings. "I would like to comment [on] the training (PDO) classes. They have all been excellent [and] were led by highly trained and experienced professionals." A supervisor said, "SSPGS has been a good vehicle to encourage training and updating of knowledge and skills on a regular basis by all employees."

Training challenges

Supervisors were asked about challenges they may encounter when sending support professionals to trainings or workshops. About one fourth of supervisors do not experience these kinds of challenges (23.4%). The challenge indicated most often by supervisors is that the types of training needed by employees are not always available (40.4% of supervisors). Three out of 10 supervisors reported that there are no substitutes if employees are training (31.9%). About one in eight supervisors (12.8%) reported that they cannot give support professionals time off to attend training.

In open-ended survey comments, several support professionals mentioned the challenge of getting time off to attend training. One said, "Most twelve month employees don't get the chance to attend classes due to workload." Another said, "We would never be given time to take courses. Who would do our job?!"

Other challenges reported have more to do with employees' choices. Two out of 10 supervisors (21.3%) indicated that their employees have other responsibilities away from work that interfere with attending training. And according to one third of supervisors (31.9%), some support professionals are not seeking professional growth opportunities (Table 20).

Several support professionals surveyed commented on the need for more sections of popular classes to be offered. One said, "I have applied to take courses given by MCPS. However, the classes are always filled very quickly. Please offer courses more than once a year." Another said, "I would like to be trained in all the classes. Not enough room. Many times by the time I see them, the classes are full."

Table 20
Supervisors' Views on Training Challenges Facing Support Professionals

Challenges	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
No, I do not face challenges if I want to send employees to training.	23.4
The types of training needed for my employees are not always offered .	40.4
I do not have substitutes who can fill in for them while they are at training.	31.9
I cannot give them time off from work to attend training.	12.8
My workers have other responsibilities when they are not at their MCPS job (child care, attending school, second job, etc.).	21.3
Some of the people I supervise are not seeking professional growth opportunities.	31.9
Not sure	6.4

Note. Multiple responses possible.

Summary. SSPGS is still developing and evolving as it moves toward full implementation. Several aspects of SSPGS have the potential to impact support professionals in the future. These will include a broadening perspective of the value of planning and achieving long-term professional goals and the training to support goals.

Summary and Conclusions

Partial, rather than full, implementation is expected at this moment in the introduction of SSPGS to the Phase 2 schools and offices. Interview and survey findings are in line with this expectation. It is particularly important to acknowledge this expectation of partial implementation because many support personnel had their first SSPGS performance evaluation during 2007–2008. Even some supervisors just recently had their first experience conducting SSPGS evaluations. MCPS personnel have been taking advantage of SSPGS-related training and training participation appears to be increasing since Phase 2 began (see SSPGS interim report, Hickson and Zantal-Wiener, 2008).

The following conclusions are based on the findings from multiple data collection activities during 2007–2008.

What have been stakeholders' experiences with the implementation of SSPGS?

Program overview

From interviews. Those who supervise and evaluate support professionals perceive SSPGS as a positive process. In particular, expectations for employees are clearer than prior to SSPGS implementation, and expectations are consistent school- and district-wide. Evaluators like the simplified schedule for conducting evaluations.

Knowledge of evaluation schedules

From surveys. The evaluation schedule for support professionals new to their position in MCPS is known to only one half of supervisors and 6 out of 10 support personnel. For support professionals who have been in their current position for two or more years, one half of both supervisors and support professionals are aware of the three-year cycle for performance evaluations.

SSPGS information and training

From surveys. The SSPGS Handbook is the primary information source for supervisors, and a secondary source for support professionals. Support professionals cite the MCPS website as their most frequently used source of SSPGS information.

From surveys. There is no single or typical way that MCPS personnel are receiving training or orientation about SSPGS. One half of supervisors say they have attended training for supervisors about SSPGS implementation. Four out of 10 support professionals reported attending worksite training about the implementation of SSPGS.

From surveys. About one fourth of both supervisors and support professionals say they have not received any training or documents about SSPGS, or are not sure.

To what extent has SSPGS been implemented as intended?

Performance evaluation

From interviews. Supervisors' experience with SSPGS has been limited to date by intermittent evaluation cycles and/or no experience with underperforming employees. Findings indicate that the focus for supervisors has been on discharging the duty to complete performance evaluations, not on employees' professional development.   High schools appear to have a more consistent process for conducting performance evaluations than other work sites, utilizing the business manager position to support SSPGS.

From surveys. Most supervisors have evaluation responsibilities. Almost all supervisors said they were expected to know how to evaluate support professionals. However, 6 out of 10 said they were not mandated by their supervisor to attend evaluator training.

From surveys. Support professionals have had similarly limited experience with the program, due to evaluation cycles, limited training access, or no need to interact with PIP. Less than two thirds of support professionals reported that the person who knows and monitors their daily work participates in evaluating their job performance. More than one half of support professionals said they did not know the year of their next evaluation.

Performance evaluation criteria

From surveys. Ideally, all personnel who evaluate or receive evaluations using SSPGS will be able to positively identify all seven evaluation criteria from a selected response list. Though awareness is generally high, supervisors and support professionals are still developing their knowledge about the seven competencies used to evaluate job performance. The one criterion familiar to most personnel is knowledge of the job. Just over 9 out of 10 supervisors and just over 8 out of 10 support professionals said performance will be evaluated by professionalism, interpersonal skills, communication skills, organizational skills, and problem-solving ability. The "commitment to students" criterion was familiar to about three fourths of personnel.

From surveys. Large minorities of both supervisors and support professionals identified other skills or abilities beyond the core competencies as factoring into the SSPGS performance evaluation.

Performance Improvement Process (PIP)—supervisors

From surveys. Supervisors have limited direct experience with PIP. About one out of seven supervisors has referred one or more support professionals to PIP during the past two years. A small proportion of supervisors said they were not sure if they referred anyone to PIP in the past two years.

From surveys. Not surprisingly, given little experience with PIP, supervisors have relatively little knowledge of PIP or its details. Less than one half of supervisors said PIP helps support professionals who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies. Less

than one half knew about PAR, and only one third of supervisors (or less) knew about the options of retirement, resignation, reassignment, or 90-day special evaluation.

Performance Improvement Process (PIP)—support professionals

From surveys. Three out of 10 support professionals have not heard about PIP or were not sure if they know about it.

From surveys. The majority of support professionals who were aware of PIP knew that PIP supports those who do not meet one or more SSPGS core competencies. Among support professionals who were aware of PIP, three out of four knew about the option to enter a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program to receive the support of a professional growth consultant (PGC). About 4 out of 10 support professionals who were aware of PIP knew about the 90-day evaluation, reassignment, or resignation as options. Fewer support professionals who were aware of PIP knew about the option to retire.

What impact has SSPGS had on support professionals?

SSPGS is still developing and evolving as it moves toward full implementation. It is appropriate to create indicators of impact after a program is known to have been fully implemented and with a level of quality matching the intended design.

Several aspects of SSPGS have the potential to impact support professionals in the future. These will include a broadening perspective of the value of planning and achieving long-term professional goals and the training to support goals. Some of these aspects were explored in the surveys, as discussed below.

Changes in supervision

From surveys. Supervisors reported a number of positive changes in supervision resulting from the introduction of SSPGS. Nearly one half of supervisors said SSPGS has helped them conduct specific conversations about expectations for employees' skills or abilities. Close to 4 out of 10 supervisors said SSPGS encourages them to have more discussions about developing the long-term professional goals of those they supervise. One out of 3 supervisors said SSPGS makes it easier to address problems with staff.

From surveys. Three out of 10 supervisors said SSPGS has not changed the way they supervise employees. A few were not sure if SSPGS changed their style of supervision.

Professional conversations

From surveys. Supervisors and the support personnel they supervise were not in agreement about professional growth conversations. More than 7 out of 10 supervisors said they have spoken with their employees about learning new skills or strategies, being certified, or pursing their professional goals. Only one fourth of support professionals reported that they have had these kinds of conversations with their supervisors.

Professional development opportunities to meet core competencies

From surveys. Only one third of supervisors agreed that professional development opportunities offer support personnel the needed support for meeting all core competencies. An additional one fourth felt that the professional development opportunities available to support professionals was providing support only for selected competencies or skills.

Training challenges

From surveys. Supervisors who experience challenges with sending support professionals to training point out most frequently that the types of training needed by employees are not always available. Three out of 10 supervisors said no substitutes are available if employees attend training; about one in eight supervisors say they cannot give support professionals time off for training. Two out of 10 supervisors say their employees have other responsibilities that interfere with attending training. One third of supervisors say some support professionals are not seeking professional development opportunities.

Summary of Knowledge and Awareness Needs in Implementing SSPGS

The following table summarizes the areas where guidance is strongly indicated in attaining a more thorough understanding of the SSPGS evaluation process, performance criteria, and PIP. It is intended to be helpful in monitoring SSPGS over time (Table 21).

Table 21
Summary: Knowledge and Awareness Needs in Implementing SSPGS

	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
Evaluation Process		
Supervisor **does not mandate** that I (supervisor) attend evaluator training.	62	Not asked
Not aware that support professionals new to their position in MCPS receive their evaluation six months after starting work, or not sure.	51	41
Not aware that support professionals in their current position two years or longer receive their evaluation every three years, or not sure.	45	49
Do not know year of next scheduled evaluation (or did not supply either month or year).	Not asked	51
Evaluation Criteria		
Have not seen a job description for my position, or not sure.	Not asked	28
Not aware that commitment to students is among the performance criteria for evaluation.	23	28
Believe that **other abilities or skills** besides core competencies are among the performance criteria for evaluation.	28	42
Performance Improvement Process (PIP)[a]		
Have not heard about PIP, or not sure.	Not asked	29
Not aware that PIP helps support professionals who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies.	53	46
Not aware that PIP is available to all support professionals after nine months .	83	79
Not aware that PIP is a way to help support professionals improve their job performance.	35	51
Not aware of performance improvement options available under PIP (e.g., PAR, 90-day evaluation, reassignment, resignation, retirement).	25–63	44–73

[a]Includes all supervisors, not only those who have made a referral to PIP.

Recommendations

The following recommendations on improving the clarity, implementation, and outcomes of SSPGS emerged from the supervisor and support professional surveys.   Where applicable, recommendations from the interim report (individual and group interviews) are included.

Program Guidance and Documentation

- Clarify guidelines about who should evaluate each type of supporting services employee (e.g., paraeducators, building services, school secretaries) and who should participate in evaluation reviews.   Updated guidelines should be disseminated to all support professionals and to their supervisors. Survey findings indicate that less than two thirds of support professionals are evaluated by their daily manager. Clearer guidelines will help to encourage compliance with desired evaluation models.
- Create opportunities to discuss and provide refresher training on performance evaluation criteria.   One fourth of both supervisors and support professionals are not aware that a commitment to students is an evaluation criterion. A large minority of both groups think that abilities or skills beyond the core criteria are used to evaluate performance.
- Consider translating written documents about SSPGS, including the evaluation form, into additional languages. Support professionals with English as a second language may not understand some aspects of SSPGS that their supervisors think they do. The specialized vocabulary associated with SSPGS (e.g., "core competencies") may not be familiar to some support professionals. Having documents available in multiple languages may help to foster better communication.
- Provide more information on PIP, stressing its purpose and the potential benefits for employees in need of support. More than one fourth of support professionals do not know about PIP. Both supervisors and support professionals have a low level of awareness of the details of PIP.

From the Interim Report:

- Provide a detailed breakdown of competencies in the SSPGS Handbook, with very specific examples of how competencies relate to specific MCPS positions (e.g., food services, building services, security, paraeducators).
- Add material to the handbook that outlines expectations for supervisors.
- Incorporate competencies into job descriptions and requirements advertised by MCPS. This will lay a foundation for SSPGS, from the job interview process right through to performance evaluations.

Program Compliance and Evaluation Schedules

- Clarify expectations for supervisors to ensure that they develop their evaluation abilities. While supervisors are expected to evaluate support professionals, survey findings revealed that the majority were not mandated by their own supervisor to attend evaluator training.
- Create an annual e-mail to all support professionals due for evaluation during the upcoming year, informing them of their evaluation date. Include suggestions for support professionals to help them prepare for the evaluation. This effort would demonstrate MCPS' commitment to evaluating support personnel, and would eliminate some of the concern among support professionals about when evaluations are due. The job description for the person being evaluated during the coming year should be attached to the e-mail. Provide a related mailing for supervisors with information on preparing for evaluations.

From the Interim Report:

- Create explicit guidance on expectations for the timely completion of performance evaluations (by support professionals, supervisors, and administrators). Guidance should include steps to be taken if performance evaluations are not completed on time and with the needed information. Information should include consequences for noncompliance.
- Clarify expectations about the role of particular staff members in evaluating and providing feedback to employees (e.g., should staff development teachers coach employees on SSPGS and PDPs? Should classroom teachers evaluate paraeducators?).

Training and Development

- Provide more training and information on the "commitment to students" competency. Based on survey results, this competency is less familiar to support professionals and supervisors than other criteria.
- Increase building-specific attendance at meetings about SSPGS by disseminating job-specific PowerPoint presentations and promoting the benefits of broader participation. These efforts will increase the capacity of support professionals and supervisors to work with and explain SSPGS to others.
- Fully promote the professional development aspects of SSPGS. Provide written guidance to supervisors about how to discuss professional goals and how to introduce these kinds of conversations to their support professionals. While many supervisors think they have had conversations on professional growth and development topics with their employees, far fewer support professionals report that these kinds of conversations are going on. Survey findings support the need to deliver the planned information and training about PDP and creating a portfolio (summer 2008 for Phase 2 schools and offices).
- Provide information, support, and encouragement to support professionals to attend skills training and professional development programs. Supervisors indicate that they are not fully satisfied with the current level of participation by support professionals in MCPS professional development opportunities.
- Identify a larger pool of substitutes who can fill in for support professionals who need to attend additional training to meet all core competencies.

- Clarify training information on PDO and elsewhere to help support professionals match their training needs successfully with the content of trainings offered.

From the Interim Report:

- Publicize training opportunities early, often, and widely. Coordinate efforts to publicize with the relevant offices or departments. Provide additional information to employees about tuition reimbursement and courses offered.
- Train evaluators in how to apply SSPGS competencies to specific job responsibilities. This training should include teachers and media specialists who evaluate paraeducators, if relevant. Offer multiple training times and dates for all trainings involving personnel subject to SSPGS, so that employees on staggered schedules can attend.
- Continue to publicize that both Evaluator A and overview presentations are joint training opportunities for supervisors and support personnel to develop a common knowledge base and increase collaboration among supervisors, managers, and support professionals. Provide school-based refresher training for teachers, managers, and administrators together, so that personnel in various roles within a school will receive the same information.
- Determine goals for training on SSPGS overall and for specific competencies. Communicate training expectations. Segment records on training registration and attendance by cohort group and work site, and track the extent to which goals are being met.
- Provide learning opportunities listings in noncomputer formats for employees without access to a computer.

Additional Recommendations from the Interim Report

Job Coaching

- Increase opportunities for job coaching as a training tool; this supports the manager. Support professionals also benefit from leadership coaching.
- Create a larger pool of job-alike coaches. Building Services personnel in particular need more on-site job coaching. Practicing managers, not consultants, should provide coaching.

Supporting a Diverse Culture

- Continue working to establish a culture in which support professionals feel comfortable having conversations with supervisors and asking questions about how to do their job. SSPGS requirements, including understanding competencies and having professional conversations, are new concepts for many support professionals.
- Offer ESOL classes for job-alike positions (e.g., building services, food services).

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Appendix A
SSPGS Core Competencies and Performance Criteria

The competencies inform each of the five components of SSPGS: recruiting, staffing, performance evaluation, professional development, and retention and recognition.

Core Competency 1: Commitment to Students.
Performance Criteria: The employee—
- understands how the job contributes to success for every student;
- cares genuinely about the overall learning environment to ensure student success;
- acts with the student in mind;
- is dedicated to meeting the expectations of principals, supervisors, staff, parents, and students; and
- is dedicated to supporting high-quality education for students.

Core Competency 2: Knowledge of Job.
Performance Criteria: The employee—
- understands assigned job duties;
- is knowledgeable about current and new practices and methods;
- uses appropriate materials, equipment, and resources;
- implements and completes work assignments;
- learns new skills and procedures; and
- knows appropriate policies, procedures, and regulations.

Core Competency 3: Professionalism.
Performance Criteria: The employee—
- is patient to hear the entire story;
- is calm under pressure;
- is timely with information;
- is positive, reliable, and trustworthy;
- responds to all people equitably;
- is proactive when handling all situations; and
- posesses the ability to handle all matters in a professional and confidential manner.

Core Competency 4: Interpersonal. Performance Criteria: The employee—
- is polite and approachable;
- is able to be a team member/player;
- cares about people;
- is available and ready to help;
- treats people with respect;
- acts as a mentor and a student advocate;
- attempts to understand other perspectives; and
- relates well to others.

Core Competency 5: Communication.
Performance Criteria: The employee—
- understands how to be an active listener;
- is effective in oral and written skills;
- is able to communicate well to manage conflict an deal effectively with problem situations; and
- is tactful when handling situations and difficulties, making the least possible disruption.

Core Competency 6: Organization.
Performance Criteria: The employee—
- knows how to get things done in the classroom, school, office, or other work location;
- assists as needed to organize meetings and tasks;
- anticipates needs of principals, supervisors, staff, parents, and students;
- gets things done in a timely manner; and
- manages a broad range of activities.

Core Competency 7: Problem Solving.
Performance Criteria: The employee—
- changes routines to fit the needs of the situation;
- accesses and uses resources effectively and efficiently;
- identifies process improvements;
- explores beyond the obvious when solving problems;
- asks appropriate questions to clarify situations;
- is logical when discussing the pros and cons of situations; and
- recognizes issues and their implications quickly.

Appendix B
Background of Surveyed Supervisors and Support Professionals

Table B1
Job Classification of Surveyed Supervisors

Job Classification	All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
Central Services Administrator or Supervisor	31.9
School-based Administrator	14.9
School Business Manager	6.4
Other identified classifications[a]	23.3
Some other category/None of the above	23.4

[a]Identified classification with less than 5% of respondents identifying in each classification. Classifications include Buildings and Grounds Maintenance, Instructional Support and Student Services, Security, Energy Management, Facilities and Construction, Food Services, Information Technology and Support, Multimedia, Supporting Services Supervision.

Table B2
Job Classification of Surveyed Support Professionals

Job Classification	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
Instructional Support and Student Services	33.5
Clerical and Executive Support	22.0
Facilities and Construction	8.0
Security	7.0
Other identified classifications[a]	20.0
Some other category/None of the above	7.7

[a]Identified classification with less than 5% of respondents identifying in each category. Categories include Information Technology and Support, Supporting Services Supervision, Financial Support, Food Services, Multimedia, Transportation Management, Transportation, Energy Management, Procurement and Supply Services, Buildings and Grounds Maintenance, Maintenance and Mechanic, Staff Development and Training, and "Not sure."

Table B3
Primary Place of Work (Support Professionals)

	All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
An MCPS school	65.3
An MCPS office	25.7
An MCPS depot	4.0
Some other setting	5.0

Table B4
MCPS Position and Tenure (Supervisors)

		All Supervisors (*N*=47) %
My current position is . . .	school based	48.9
	not school based	51.1
Have worked for MCPS . . .	more than one year, up to two years	2.1
	more than two years, up to three years	6.4
	more than three years, to five years	8.5
	six to ten years	6.4
	more than ten years	76.6
Have been in charge of evaluating support professionals . . .	more than six months, up to one year	4.3
	more than one year, up to two years	10.6
	more than two years, up to three years	17.0
	more than three years, up to five years	14.9
	more than five years, up to ten years	21.3
	more than ten years	29.8
	No response	2.1
Am, myself, evaluated under SSPGS:	Yes	27.7
	No	66.0
	Not sure/No response	6.4

Table B5
MCPS Position and Tenure (Support Professionals)

		All Support Professionals (*N*=314) %
Have worked for MCPS . . .	up to one year	3.2
	more than one year, up to two years	5.4
	more than two years, up to three years	5.4
	three to five years	12.5
	six to ten years	21.4
	more than ten years	50.8
Have worked in current position . . .	six months or less	2.6
	more than six months, up to one year	11.2
	more than one year, up to two years	14.1
	more than two years, up to three years	10.6
	more than three years, up to five years	16.3
	more than five years, up to ten years	22.4
	more than ten years	21.8
Employee category:	Permanent full-time employee	84.6
	Permanent part-time employee	12.9
	Probationary employee	0.3
	Something else	0.3
MCPS annual schedule:	12-month employee	41.9
	10-month employee	55.2
	9-month employee	2.3
	Some other schedule	0.6

Note. "Not sure" for each of these questions not shown.

Appendix C
SSPGS Phase 2 Schools and Offices

School Clusters: Clarksburg, Damascus, Gaithersburg, Col. Zadok Magruder, Watkins Mill, Montgomery Blair, Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, and Northwood.

Special Programs: McKenney Hills Center and Stephen Knolls School.

Offices and Departments: Offices of the Chief Operating Officer, Special Education and Student Services, Information and Organizational Systems (reconfigured since SSPGS began); Departments of School Safety and Security, Association Relations, Materials Management, certain divisions within Facilities Management; Division of Controller; and Clarksburg Transportation Depot.

SSPGS Phase 2 Schools Sampled for Interviews and Surveys	SSPGS Phase 2 Offices, Departments and Divisions Sampled for Interviews and/or Surveys
Montgomery Blair High School	Association Relations
Eastern Middle School	Chief Operating Officer
Albert Einstein High School	Clarksburg Transportation Depot
Rock View Elementary School	Controller
John F. Kennedy High School	Facilities Management:
Northwood High School	• Construction
Clarksburg High School	• Long-range Planning
Clearspring Elementary School	• Energy Resources Team
Damascus High School	• Indoor Air Quality/Environmental Safety Team
Forest Oak Middle School	• Real Estate Management Team
Gaithersburg High School	• Safety Management Team
Gaithersburg Middle School	Materials Management
Col. Zadok Magruder High School	Central office staff of the former Office of Information and Organizational Systems
Mill Creek Towne Elementary School	School Safety and Security
Redland Middle School	Special Education and Student Services
Watkins Mill High School	Technology Consulting and Communication Systems
McKenney Hills Center	Technology Implementation and Support
Stephen Knolls School	

Note. Other work units within Facilities Management were not part of the SSPGS Phase 2 cohort.

Figure 1. Schools and offices selected for data collection activities.

Appendix D

Supporting Services Professional Growth System
Evaluation Advisory Committee 2007–2008

Mary Belin	SEIU Local 500 Sligo Middle School
Debbie Camp	MCBOA Paint Branch High School
Albert DuPont	MCAASP College Gardens Elementary School
William Gregory	MCAASP Sherwood High School
Dale Horos	MCPS Office of Human Resources
Jacqueline Klein	MCPS Employee & Retiree Service Center
Beverle Kowalchick	MCPS Office of School Performance
Moriah Martin	MCEA Blake High School
Donald Ruehle	MCPS Division of Food & Nutrition Services
Jean Sherer	SEIU Local 500 IT Systems
Robert Tarpley	SEIU Local 500 Stone Mill ES

Office of Organizational Development:
Inger Swimpson, Kim Bishop, Linda Gray (Trustee, SEIU Local 500), Betty Montgomery (Executive Vice President, SEIU Local 500), Ruth Musicante (Treasurer, SEIU Local 500)

Office of Shared Accountability:
Rachel Hickson, Shahpar Modarresi

Appendix E
Survey Instruments

- **Survey of Support Professionals**
- **Survey of Supervisors (Web-based)**

May 2008

Dear MCPS Supporting Services Professional:

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) is conducting an evaluation of the Supporting Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS) in MCPS. We want to find out how well this system is working to support employees, and what MCPS can do to make it work better.

This survey is your chance to tell us about your experiences with the SSPGS. Your answers will help MCPS improve SSPGS.

All of your answers to this survey are **confidential**. Your answers will be reported along with all of the answers we receive. Please do not include your name or other personal information.

Please circle the number to the left of the answer choice(s) closest to your experience. At the end of the survey there is a space for you to ask questions or write comments about SSPGS.

The survey takes just a few minutes to complete. If you need help completing this survey, please let your supervisor know. Thank you for helping with this important project!

Sincerely,

Rachel Hickson
Office of Shared Accountability

If you prefer to complete the survey online, please paste this web address into your browser:

http://tpilot.mcps.k12.md.us/tpilot/departments/accountability/SSPGS_Employee08.tp3

The User ID is: **SSPGS** (all caps)

Thank you very much for participating in this survey!

When you have completed your survey, please put it in the labeled envelope provided, seal it, and return it through Pony Mail to:

Rachel Hickson, CESC Room 11

Please turn the page to begin.

The first few questions are about SSPGS information and training.

1. When you want information about the SSPGS, where do you go? (Please select two.)

1   To a co-worker or colleague

5   To some other person or source not listed here (please specify that source):
    _____

2   To my supervisor (manager, principal, office director, etc.)

6   I have not looked for information about the SSPGS

3   To the SSPGS Handbook, or other documents about the SSPGS

0   Not sure

4   To the MCPS website

2. PDO (Professional Development Online) is a website for MCPS staff, about professional development such as trainings, workshops, and information sessions. You can find information to fit the position you have now. You can also find information about training for new positions and new job skills.

   Which of the following choices best fits your experience with the PDO website? (Please select one.)

1   Yes, I have visited PDO website, and have registered for training

4   I do not have a computer to use at work

2   Yes, I have visited PDO website, but have not registered for training

5   I do not use a computer

3   I have a computer to use at work, but I have not visited PDO website

0   Not sure

3. Which of these things apply to you? (Please select all that apply.)

1   I have attended a worksite training about the implementation of the SSPGS, led by a Professional growth consultant (PGC)

4   I have received written information or documents about SSPGS, such as the SSPGS Handbook (green magazine-size book), 10 Tips To Understanding the Performance Improvement Process (green pamphlet), or other memos or bulletins about the SSPGS

2   I have attended a worksite training or meeting about the SSPGS, led by a member of my building or office staff

5   None of these things

3   I have attended some other job training or MCPS meeting at which the SSPGS was addressed (such as at an orientation for people with new jobs)

0   Not sure

The next few questions are about the performance evaluation process.

4. Have you seen a job description for your position?

1	Yes
2	No
0	Not sure

5. In your current position, when was your most recent evaluation? (Please select one.)

1	I have not had an evaluation in my current position
2	Within the past six months
3	Within the past year
4	Within the past two years
5	Within the past three years
6	More than three years ago
0	Not sure

6. When I am evaluated, my performance will be measured by: (Please select all that apply.)

1	My commitment to students (such as understanding their needs, valuing their achievements, and treating them fairly)
2	My knowledge of my job (such as understanding my duties, being productive, and learning new skills needed for my job)
3	My professionalism (such as being patient with people at work, treating people with respect, and sharing responsibility)
4	My interpersonal skills (such as being polite, working as part of a team, and respecting the opinions of co-workers)
5	My communication skills (such as being a good listener, sending clear messages, and keeping others informed)
6	My organizational skills (such as planning and preparing for work, using time well, and keeping good records)
7	My problem solving ability (such as being able to deal with changes at work, asking for help when needed, and recognizing when problems need to be fixed)
8	Other abilities or skills not listed here
0	Not sure

Please turn the page to continue.

7. When do you expect to have your next evaluation? Please write the month and year below:

      Month: _____   Year: _____

8. Think about the position you have right now. When you have your evaluation, who participates in evaluating your job performance? (Please select all that apply.)

    1   The person who knows and monitors my work on a daily basis (SSPGS calls this person your "evaluator")

    2   The supervisor of the person who knows and monitors my work on a daily basis (my evaluator's supervisor, manager, office director or building principal) (SSPGS calls this person your "reviewer")

    3   Someone else (what is that person's title or position?):

    _____

    0   Not sure

9. Once your evaluation has been prepared and written on the evaluation form, who signs your evaluation form? (Please select all that apply.)

    1   I sign it

    2   My immediate supervisor (evaluator) signs it

    3   My supervisor's supervisor (reviewer) signs it

    4   Someone else signs it (what is that person's title or position?):

    _____

    0   Not sure

10. Within the past two years, have you and your current supervisor talked about any of the following? (Please select all that apply.)

    1   Taking courses, workshops, or trainings to learn new skills or strategies, or get certified

    2   How to create a professional development plan (PDP)

    3   How to create a professional portfolio

    4   My professional goals (such as getting additional certifications, getting a promotion, becoming a supervisor myself, or other things to help me advance in my job)

    5   I have not talked about these topics with my current supervisor within the past two years

    0   Not sure

11. As far as you know, when do support professionals new to their position in MCPS receive their first evaluation? (Please select one.)

      1   One month after starting work

      2   Three months after starting work

      3   Six months after starting work

      4   One year after starting work

      5   I am not new to my position, so I do not know

      0   Not sure

12. As far as you know, when do support professionals who have been in their current position for two years or longer receive their evaluation?   (Please select one.)

      1   Every year

      2   Every two years

      3   Every three years

      0   Not sure

Performance Improvement Process

13. The Performance Improvement Process (PIP) gives underperforming supporting services employees options to help them improve their job performance. Have you heard about PIP? (Please select one.)

      1   Yes, I have heard about PIP

      2   No, I have not heard about PIP

      0   Not sure

14. Based on what you know about PIP, which of the following is true? (Please select all that apply.)

      1   PIP is a way to help employees improve their job performance

      2   PIP helps employees who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies

      3   PIP is available to all supporting services employees after nine months in the position, whether or not they are evaluated this year

      0   Not sure

Please turn the page to continue.

15. Based on what you know about PIP, which of the following options are available for underperforming employees? (Please select all that apply.)

1   Employees can choose to enter a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program, to receive the support of a Professional growth consultant (PGC) to work on their job skills and improve their performance

4   Employees eligible for retirement can choose to retire

2   Employees can choose to receive a special evaluation, conducted by their supervisor, that will take place over 90 days

5   Employees can choose to resign

3   Employees can choose to be reassigned to a previous position in which they were successful, if available

6   Not sure

16. Which of the following best fits your ability to explain the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new co-worker?

1   I am comfortable explaining all aspects of the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new co-worker

2   I am comfortable explaining some aspects of the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new co-worker

3   I am not comfortable explaining the SSPGS performance evaluation process to a new co-worker

0   Not sure

17. Which of the following best fits your ability to explain the SSPGS performance improvement process (PIP) to a new co-worker?

1   I am comfortable explaining all aspects of PIP to a new co-worker

2   I am comfortable explaining some aspects of PIP to a new co-worker

3   I am not comfortable explaining PIP to a new co-worker

0   Not sure

These questions help us understand who is completing this survey. Please remember that your answers are confidential.

18. Which of the following broad Job Classification Groups best fits your current position? (Please select one.)

1	Buildings and Grounds Maintenance	10	Maintenance and Mechanic
2	Clerical and Executive Support	11	Multimedia
3	Energy Management	12	Procurement and Supply Services
4	Facilities and Construction	13	Security
5	Financial Support	14	Staff Development and Training
6	Food Services	15	Supporting Services Supervision
7	Human Resources, Payroll, and Benefits	16	Transportation
8	Information Technology and Support	17	Transportation Management
9	Instructional Support and Student Services	99	Some other category/None of the above
		00	Not sure

19. How long have you worked for MCPS? (Please select one.)

1	Six months or less	5	Three to five years
2	More than six months and up to one year	6	Six to ten years
3	More than one year and up to two years	7	More than ten years
4	More than two years and up to three years	0	Not sure

20. Are you considered a permanent employee, a temporary employee, or something else?

1   Permanent full-time employee

2   Permanent part-time employee

3   Probationary employee

4   Something else (describe):

0   Not sure

Please turn the page to continue.

21. How long have you worked in your current position? (Please select one.)

1	Six months or less	5	More than three years and up to five years
2	More than six months and up to one year	6	More than five years and up to ten years
3	More than one year and up to two years	7	More than ten years
4	More than two years and up to three years	0	Not sure

22. What is your primary place of work? (Please select one.)

1   An MCPS school

2   An MCPS office

3   An MCPS warehouse

4   An MCPS depot

5   Some other setting (please specify that setting):

_____

23. Is English a second language for you?

1   Yes

2   No

24. How many months a year do you work for MCPS?

1   I am a 12-month employee

2   I am a 10-month employee

3   I am a 9-month employee

4   Some other schedule (please specify that schedule)

_____

25. Do you have any comments or questions about the SSPGS? Please print them below.

_____

_____

_____

THIS IS THE END OF THE SURVEY. Please put your completed survey in the labeled envelope provided, seal it, and return it through Pony Mail to Rachel Hickson, CESC Room 11. **Thank you!**

Supporting Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS)
Survey of Supervisors of Support Professionals 2008

May 2008

Dear MCPS Supervisor/Manager of Supporting Services Professionals:

We need your help in order to provide better services to MCPS support professionals and their supervisors.

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) is conducting an evaluation of the Supporting Services Professional Growth System (SSPGS) in MCPS. We want to find out how well this system is working to support supervisors and employees, and what MCPS should be doing to make it work better.

This survey is your chance to tell us about your experiences with the SSPGS. Responses from all supervisors will be compiled and reported to MCPS management to help make the program work better and make program communications more effective.

All of your answers to this survey are confidential. Your responses will be reported along with all that we receive. Please do not include your name or other personal information. Your responses come directly to OSA and your supervisor will not see them.

Please click the answer button to the left of the answer choice(s) closest to your experience. There are several places for you to type additional comments or information about the SSPGS.

The survey takes about fifteen (15) minutes to complete. Thank you for helping with this important project!

Sincerely,

Rachel Hickson
Office of Shared Accountability

The first few questions are about the SSPGS information and training. When you want information about the SSPGS, where do you go most often? Please select two.

- ☐ To a co-worker or colleague
- ☐ To a supervisor (manager, principal, office director, field supervisor, etc.)
- ☐ To the SSPGS Handbook, or other documents about the SSPGS
- ☐ To the MCPS website
- ☐ To some other person or source not listed here
- ☐ I have not looked for information about SSPGS
- ☐ Not sure

Which of the following apply to you? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ I have attended a training about the implementation of the SSPGS, intended for supervisors
- ☐ I have attended a training or meeting about the SSPGS, intended for support professionals
- ☐ I have attended some other job training or MCPS meeting at which the SSPGS was addressed (such as orientation for people with new jobs)
- ☐ I have received written information or documents about the SSPGS, such as the SSPGS Handbook (green magazine-sized book), 10 Tips To Understanding the Performance Improvement Process (green pamphlet), or other memos or bulletins about the SSPGS
- ☐ I have visited Professional Development Online (PDO), to get SSPGS training information
- ☐ None of these things
- ☐ Not sure

Does your supervisor mandate that you attend evaluator training for the SSPGS?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Does your supervisor expect you to know how to evaluate support professionals as part of your job?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

The next set of questions is about the support professionals whose evaluations you conduct.
How many support professionals (supporting services employees) are assigned to you for completion of their evaluations?

- None
- One or two
- Three to five
- More than five
- Not sure

How many supporting services evaluations are you conducting during the 2007-2008 school year?

- None
- One or two
- Three to five
- More than five
- Not sure

Have you already conducted evaluations using the SSPGS?

- ☐ Yes -- one or two
- ☐ Yes -- three or more
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

If you have used SSPGS to conduct one or more evaluations, how many of these were the support professionals' first evaluation under the SSPGS?

- ☐ I have not used SSPGS
- ☐ One or two
- ☐ Three to five
- ☐ More than five
- ☐ Not sure

Are there any support professionals whose evaluations you will write who are not observed directly or formally by you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Who notifies you that one of the support professionals you supervise is due for an evaluation?

- ☐ My direct supervisor
- ☐ My supervisor's direct supervisor
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Someone else
- ☐ Not sure

How far in advance are you notified that one of the support professionals you supervise is due for an evaluation?

- I am not notified in advance
- Up to a week before
- A few weeks before
- A month or more before
- It depends
- Not sure

How do you usually notify a support professional(s) that an evaluation is coming up?

- In writing
- Verbally/I just tell them
- Both verbally and in writing
- It depends
- Not sure

In general, how would you characterize your relationship with those whose evaluations you conduct? Please select one.

- I directly supervise all or most of these people; I have frequent ongoing contact
- Someone else supervises them directly; I have some ongoing contact with them
- Someone else supervises them directly; I have little or no ongoing contact with them
- Some other relationship

Is English a second language for any of the support professionals whose evaluations you conduct?

- Yes, for one or more of them
- No
- Not sure

If English is a second language for one or more, what steps do you usually take to ensure that the support professional(s) can understand and complete the evaluation?

- ☐ The support professionals I supervise speak enough English that this is not an issue
- ☐ I am able to handle any language issues myself
- ☐ I get language help from another person who works at our worksite
- ☐ I get language help from someone outside my building
- ☐ I do not have a support professional(s) with English as a second language
- ☐ Not sure

Which of the following sources do you think are most helpful in explaining the SSPGS to those whose evaluations you conduct? Please select two.

- ☐ SSPGS Handbook
- ☐ Ten Tips Pamphlet
- ☐ SSPGS evaluation form
- ☐ Learning Opportunities brochure
- ☐ My colleagues or others who work for MCPS
- ☐ Other sources
- ☐ Not sure

If you selected "other sources" in the question above, please indicate them here:

When the support professionals you supervise are evaluated, how do you measure their performance? Please select all that apply.

☐ Their commitment to students (such as understanding their needs, valuing their achievements, and treating them fairly)

☐ Their knowledge of their job (such as understanding their duties, being productive, and learning new skills needed for their job)

☐ Their professionalism (such as being patient with people at work, treating people with respect, and sharing responsibility)

☐ Their interpersonal skills (such as being polite, working as part of a team, and respecting the opinions of co-workers)

☐ Their communication skills (such as being a good listener, sending clear messages, and keeping others informed)

☐ Their organizational skills (such as planning and preparing for work, using time well, and keeping good records)

☐ Their problem solving ability (such as being able to deal with changes at work, asking for help when needed, and recognizing when problems need to be fixed)

☐ Other abilities or skills not listed here

☐ Not sure

Which of the following best describes your ability to explain the SSPGS evaluation process to a new support professional reporting to you? Please select one.

○ I am comfortable explaining all aspects of the SSPGS evaluation process to a new support professional

○ I am comfortable explaining some aspects of the SSPGS evaluation process to a new support professional

○ I am not comfortable explaining the SSPGS evaluation process to a new support professional

○ Not sure

When do you evaluate support professionals new to their position in MCPS?

☐ One month after starting work

☐ Three months after starting work

☐ Six months after starting work

☐ One year after starting work

☐ Not sure

When do you evaluate support professionals who have been in their current position for two years or longer?

☐ Every year

☐ Every two years

☐ Every three years

☐ Not sure

Within the past two years, have you talked about any of the following with any of the support professionals you supervise? Please select all that apply.

☐ Taking courses, workshops, or trainings to learn new skills or strategies, or get certified

☐ How to create a Professional Development Plan (PDP)

☐ How to create a professional portfolio

☐ Their professional goals (such as getting additional certifications, getting a promotion, becoming a supervisor, or other things to help them advance in their job)

☐ I have not talked about these topics with those I supervise within the past two years

☐ Not sure

Do you think there are challenges for supervisors who would like the support professionals they supervise to attend trainings or workshops? What are those challenges? Please select all that apply.

☐ Yes, it is a challenge because the types of training needed for the support professionals I supervise are not always offered

☐ Yes, it is a challenge because I cannot give them time off from work to attend training

☐ Yes, it is a challenge because I do not have substitutes who can fill in for them while them are at training

☐ Yes, it is a challenge because the support professionals I supervise have other responsibilities when they are not at their MCPS job (child care, attending school, second job, etc.)

☐ Yes, because some of the support professionals I supervise are not seeking professional growth opportunities

☐ No, I do not face challenges if I want to send support professionals to training

☐ Not sure

Do the professional development opportunities available to support professionals in MCPS offer the needed support toward meeting all core competencies?

◯ Yes, for the most part

◯ Yes, but only for selected competencies, skills, or topics

◯ No, generally not

◯ Not sure

If training topics are needed that have not been available, please note them here:

The next few questions are about the Performance Improvement Process (PIP). PIP gives underperforming support professionals options to help them improve on the job.

Based on what you know, which of the following options is available for underperforming support professionals through the PIP process? Please select all that apply.

☐ PIP helps support professionals who do not meet competency on one or more SSPGS core competencies

☐ PIP is available to all support professionals after nine months on the job, whether or not they are evaluated this year

☐ Support professionals can choose to enter a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program, to receive the support of a Professional growth consultant (PGC) to work on their job skills and improve their performance

☐ Support professionals can choose to receive a special evaluation, conducted by their supervisor, that will take place over 90 days

☐ Support professionals can choose to be reassigned to a previous position in which they were successful, if available

☐ Support professionals eligible for retirement can choose to retire

☐ Support professionals can choose to resign

☐ Not sure

Which of the following best describes your ability to explain the SSPGS Performance Improvement Process (PIP)to a new support professional? Please select one.

○ I am comfortable explaining all aspects of PIP to a new support professional

○ I am comfortable explaining some aspects of PIP to a new support professional

○ I am not comfortable explaining PIP to a new support professional

○ Not sure

Have any of the support professionals you supervise been referred to PIP during the past two years?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Not sure

A final question about the SSPGS. How has the SSPGS changed the way you supervise support professionals? Please select all that apply.

☐ SSPGS has helped me to be more specific about the skills or abilities I expect from support professionals

☐ SSPGS has made it easier for me to address difficulties or problems I have with support professionals

☐ SSPGS has encouraged me to have more conversations with support professionals about developing long-term professional goals

☐ SSPGS has not changed the way I supervise support professionals

☐ Not sure

About You

These questions help us understand who is completing this survey. Please remember that your answers are confidential. Please do not include your name or other personal information. Your answers will only be reported along with all of the answers we receive.

Which of the following broad Job Classification Groups best fits your current position? Please select one.

○ Buildings and Grounds Maintenance

○ Clerical and Executive Support

○ Energy Management

○ Facilities and Construction

○ Financial Support

○ Food Services

○ Human Resources, Payroll, and Benefits

○ Information Technology and Support

○ Instructional Support and Student Services

○ Maintenance and Mechanic

○ Multimedia

○ Procurement and Supply Services

○ Security

○ Staff Development and Training

○ Supporting Services Supervision

○ Transportation

○ Transportation Management

- School based Administrator
- School Business Manager
- Central Services Administrator or Supervisor
- Some other category/None of the above
- Not sure

Is your current position . . .?

- School based
- Non-school based

How long have you worked for MCPS? Please select one.

- Six months or less
- More than six months and up to one year
- More than one year and up to two years
- More than two years and up to three years
- More than three years and up to five years
- More than five years and up to ten years
- More than ten years
- Not sure

How long have you been in charge of evaluating one or more support professionals? Please select one.

- ☐ Six months or less
- ☐ More than six months and up to one year
- ☐ More than one year and up to two years
- ☐ More than two years and up to three years
- ☐ More than three years and up to five years
- ☐ More than five years and up to ten years
- ☐ More than ten years
- ☐ None/Do not evaluate support professionals
- ☐ Not sure

Are you, yourself, evaluated under the SSPGS?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Do you have additional comments about the SSPGS? Please type them in the box below.