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INTRODUCTION

Of all the factors that are important to student achievement in productive schools—and there are many—the most important are what individual teachers believe, know, and can do. The design of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Teacher Professional Growth System (TPGS) recognizes the complexity and importance of teaching in a high-performing school system, one in which there is an emphasis on continuous improvement and shared accountability for student achievement. Good teaching is nurtured in a school and in a school system culture that values constant feedback, analysis, and refinement of the quality of teaching.

The TPGS for MCPS integrates two important components: a qualitative approach to teacher evaluation and professional growth. The essential elements of the system are as follows:

1. Six clear standards for teacher performance, based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, with performance criteria for how the standards are to be met and descriptive examples of observable teaching behaviors.
2. Training for evaluators and teachers that creates not only a common language for the discussion of what good teaching is and is not, but also develops skills of analysis and critique that will make the dialogue a rich and data-driven one.
3. A professional growth cycle that integrates the formal evaluation year into a multi-year process of professional growth, continual reflection on goals and progress meeting those goals, and collegial interaction.
4. Formal evaluation with narrative assessments that provide qualitative feedback to teachers about their work.
5. A Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program that has consulting teachers (CTs) who provide instructional support to novice teachers (teachers new to the profession) and those not performing to standard. The CTs report to a PAR Panel composed of teachers and principals appointed by the unions with the shared responsibility for quality control and improvement.
6. Professional development years that are structured around a collaborative learning culture among teachers in each school, integrating individual growth plans into school plans, and utilizing student achievement and other data about student results.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

A. Performance Standards

Six performance standards endorsed by the Board of Education provide a blueprint for the assessment of teachers' competencies in the TPGS. These standards are used in the evaluation of all classroom-based teachers, including ESOL and special education at all levels, as well as music, art, and physical education at the elementary level. They are as follows:

Standard I: Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

Standard II: Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

Standard III: Teachers are responsible for establishing and managing student learning in a positive learning environment.

Standard IV: Teachers continually assess student progress, analyze the results, and adapt instruction to improve student achievement.

Standard V: Teachers are committed to continuous improvement and professional development.

Standard VI: Teachers exhibit a high degree of professionalism.

Each performance standard is clarified by performance criteria and descriptive examples of observable teaching behaviors (see Appendix A). The purpose of these examples is to provide a sample picture of what teaching looks like when it meets and when it does not meet the MCPS performance standards.

Performance Standards for All Other Teacher-Level Positions

Parallel performance standards, criteria, and descriptive examples have been designed for teacher-level positions not assigned to classrooms. These include counselors, media specialists, speech/language pathologists, school psychologists, pupil personnel workers, staff development teachers, parent educators, assistive technology specialists on the InterACT Team, social workers, instructional specialists, auditory and vision teachers, occupational and physical therapists, reading specialists, and teachers of infants/toddlers. Information about evaluation forms as well as the performance standards, criteria, and descriptive examples is available through the Office of Human Resources (OHR). Each of these groups may have different performance standards, criteria, descriptive examples, and data measures related to unique aspects of their observation/evaluation process.

All staff in the above categories will be evaluated on the same evaluation cycle as teachers, based on years of MCPS experience (see page 6). If a classroom teacher moves from a classroom assignment to one of these positions or vice versa, evaluation will be conducted according to the schedule and processes developed for that assigned position.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

B. Courses to Promote a Common Language About Skillful Teaching

A wide variety of professional development opportunities is available to staff through MCPS courses, workshops, and other staff development opportunities for professional growth. Essential to the success of the Workforce Excellence initiative and the TPGS are the courses Observing and Analyzing Teaching 1 (OAT 1), Observing and Analyzing Teaching 2 (OAT 2), Studying Skillful Teaching (SST), and Studying Skillful Teaching 2 (SST2).

Using the six performance standards, the educational consultant group, Research for Better Teaching, Inc. (RBT) of Acton, Massachusetts, provided courses of study for observers and evaluators, as well as for other MCPS staff. In-district trainers at the MCPS Center for Skillful Teaching have been trained by RBT and continue to assume most of the training responsibilities.

The two six-day courses, OAT 1 and OAT 2, are required for all school leadership staff engaged in observation and evaluation (principal, assistant principal (AP), resource teacher or interdisciplinary resource teacher). These courses are also required for consulting teachers (CT) and all members of the Peer Assistance and Review Panel, who are actively involved in the assessment of teaching performance.

OAT 1 prepares observers and evaluators to collect and analyze evidence about a teacher's work across the standards, including areas such as planning and assessment, capacity to motivate students and communicate consistently high expectations, and repertoire of instructional and classroom management strategies. Participants communicate what they have observed orally and in writing in a balanced manner that addresses claims based on teacher performance, evidence from observations, interpretation of the impact of the evidence on student learning, and judgments of the effectiveness of instruction.

OAT 2 helps participants focus on using multiple sources of data in evaluation. This course emphasizes strategies for dealing with supervisory challenges and means for developing leaders' knowledge and skills in areas such as conferring with teachers and addressing mediocre or ineffective teaching.

SST 1 and 2 are companion courses for teachers. The basic content of SST 1 overlaps with that of OAT 1, but student learning is the focus rather than skills to observe and analyze teaching. Participants are asked to examine the ways in which their research-based instructional strategies, as well as their beliefs about learning and professional community, make a difference for student performance. SST 1 helps teachers expand their repertoire of instructional strategies, match strategies to student needs, and learn skills for effective peer support and collaboration.

In SST 2, the focus is on breaking down the recurring obstacles to student success through the study of common causes of discipline problems, critical attributes of class climate, the use of assessments, and the design of learning experiences.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

C. Schedule for Evaluation and Professional Development

As documented by decades of research, the best strategy for improving teaching and learning is to build the capacity of the school to function as a learning community in which professional development is job embedded. To support the learning community, the TPGS places teachers in a multi-year professional growth cycle. The professional growth cycle provides opportunities and resources for reflection on teaching practices (both individually and collegially) that lead to continuous improvement of teaching practices.

The TPGS was designed to meet the different needs of teachers at various points in their careers in MCPS. More intensive support and supervision are provided for probationary teachers. The focus of teachers in the probationary years must be to develop an effective repertoire of instructional skills and to become knowledgeable about MCPS curricula. Probationary teachers are evaluated each year to provide them in-depth analysis and feedback about their teaching. They are not required, nor should they be encouraged, to engage in the formal Professional Development Plan (PDP) process.

Tenure is granted two years from the date of hire if an employee earns an overall year end evaluation of meets standard in the last year and if Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) requirements for standard or advanced professional certification have been met.

For tenured teachers, formal evaluations are less frequent. As a teacher gains experience and expertise, more time is spent in professional development activities and less time in formal evaluation. Upon receiving tenure, s/he then enters a three-year professional growth cycle. In the third year of the cycle, which is year five of service in MCPS, the principal formally evaluates the teacher. Teachers who successfully complete the three-year professional growth cycle enter a four-year growth cycle. In the fourth year of this cycle, which is year nine of service in MCPS, they are formally evaluated. After successfully completing the four-year cycle, teachers enter a five-year professional growth cycle. In the fifth year of this cycle, which is year 14 of service in MCPS, and every five years thereafter, the principal conducts a formal evaluation of the teacher. (See Schedule for Evaluation and Professional Development, page 6.)

During non-evaluation years, tenured teachers design a multi-year Professional Development Plan (PDP) with outcomes for their continuous improvement. During the evaluation year, tenured teachers collect and prepare information for the formal evaluation process and analyze progress on professional development activities, including those related to the PDP.

SCHEDULE FOR EVALUATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(Based on number of years of MCPS teaching experience)

For teacher continuously meeting standards

Beginning		Tenured			Experienced				Veteran				
2-Year Cycle		3-Year Cycle			4-Year Cycle				5-Year Cycle				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
X	X	P	P	X	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X

Veteran					Veteran					Veteran				
5-Year Cycle					5-Year Cycle					5-Year Cycle				
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X

Veteran					Veteran					Veteran				
5-Year Cycle					5-Year Cycle					5-Year Cycle				
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44
P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	X

X = formal evaluation year

P = professional development year

II. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

D. Observations

All teachers may be observed formally and/or informally at any time. During professional development years, formal observations are not required. However, administrators, resource teachers (RTs) or interdisciplinary resource teachers (IRTs) are expected to do a minimum of two informal observations each professional development year in order to be familiar with teachers' classroom practices. There is no required length or format for these informal observations, although some written documentation is encouraged. Formal observations are required during the evaluation year, and there are required specifications for these formal observations.

Requirements for Formal Observations

Formal observations serve as critical sources of data for the formal evaluation process. The requirements for formal observations are as follows:

1. A formal observation must occur for a minimum of thirty (30) minutes.
2. At least one formal observation must be announced. A pre-observation conference is required for each announced formal observation.
3. All formal observations must include a post-observation conference.
4. Post-observation conferences should be held within three (3) duty days after the formal observation. Conferences may be delayed by mutual agreement due to extenuating circumstances.
5. Teachers may respond to a post-observation conference report by submitting a written response to their file within ten (10) school days of the receipt of the *Post-Observation Conference Report*.
6. The *Post-Observation Conference Report* is considered a stand-alone document. Any notes taken by an observer or evaluator may be shared with the teacher, but they are not considered part of the formal documentation.
7. The *Post-Observation Conference Report* is completed after the conference with the teacher. It is reviewed by the administrator and the teacher and is housed in the local school file. The goal is to return the report to the teacher within ten (10) duty days after the post-observation conference or a reasonable amount of time as agreed upon by the teacher and observer.
8. The term 'qualified observer' refers to Principal, Assistant Principal, Student Support Specialist, Resource Teacher (RT), Interdisciplinary RT, Consulting Teacher (CT), or retired administrator. All qualified observers must have completed OAT 1 or be enrolled in the OAT 1 class and have completed the first four classes. For evaluations resulting in a below standard rating, at least one of the two observers must have successfully completed both the OAT 1 and OAT 2 classes. Central office subject area supervisors are available for consultation, but generally do not serve as qualified observers.
9. An elementary principal in a school without an assistant principal may request the support of a second observer if the principal needs assistance due to a large number of required formal observations and evaluations.
10. If it appears likely that a teacher will receive a "below standard" rating in an evaluation, the observations (serving as the basis for the evaluation) must be completed by **two** different qualified observers.

Classroom Observation Requirements

The number of required observations during the formal evaluation year varies, depending on status and a preliminary assessment of performance status. More observations by **two** different qualified observers are required if the evaluator suspects the final rating may be below standard.

Probationary teachers with CT:

- At least two formal observations are required by principal or qualified observer.
- One of the two required formal observations must be announced.
- At least one of the two required formal observations must be done each semester.
- The CT will complete a minimum of two **additional** formal observations, three if the teacher may be rated below standard. At least one must be announced and at least one is completed each semester. These do not count toward the required number of observations completed by administrators. The minimum number will be completed only for teachers clearly meeting standard with no concerns on the part of the CT or principal.

Probationary teachers without CT (first-year teacher with experience or any second-year teacher):

- At least two formal observations are required by principal or qualified observer, three if the teacher may be rated below standard.
- One of the two required formal observations must be announced.
- At least one of the two required formal observations must be done each semester.

Tenured teachers on regular evaluation cycle:

- At least two formal observations are required by principal or qualified observer, three if the teacher may be rated below standard.
- The principal or assistant principal must observe at least half the required observations.
- The RT, IRT, or other qualified observer may complete a formal observation.
- One of the two required formal observations must be announced.
- At least one of the two required observations must be done each semester.

Tenured teachers with CT:

- At least one formal observation by principal, immediate supervisor or assistant principal is required.
- The CT will complete a minimum of three formal observations, four if the teacher may be rated below standard. At least one must be announced and at least one is completed each semester.

The Post-Observation Conference Report

After the observation conference, the observer prepares a written narrative summary of the class and the conference called the *Post-Observation Conference Report*. (See Appendix C.) This report contains an analysis of the lesson. The report format incorporates an appropriate balance of claims about the teaching observed, evidence to support the claims, and interpretations about the effect on students. Reports may refer to MCPS performance standards. The report includes a summary of the discussion with the teacher as well as any decisions or recommendations that resulted from the conference. Appendix E contains samples of post-observation conference reports. The teacher is expected to review and return a signed copy of the *Post-Observation Conference Report*. The teacher's signature indicates that s/he has received and read the conference report but does not necessarily indicate agreement with the contents of the report.

**SUMMARY OF
MINIMUM REQUIRED FORMAL CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS
DURING AN EVALUATION YEAR**

Type of Teacher	Observer	Minimum Required Yearly Observations	Frequency (minimum each semester)	
Probationary Teacher (with CT)		Meeting Standard	Below Standard	
Novice teacher (new to teaching) and Second-year and Third-year teacher	Principal or Qualified Observer	2	2*	1
	CT	2**	3	1
Total		4	5	2
Probationary Teacher (without CT)				
First-year teacher (new to MCPS—experienced; <u>NOT</u> new to teaching) and second-year teacher	Principal or Qualified Observer	2	3*	1
Tenured Teacher				
	Principal or Qualified Observer	2	3*	1
Tenured Teacher (with CT)				
	CT	3	4	1
	Immediate Administrative Supervisor	1	1	

* The observations must be completed by **two** different qualified observers, at least one of whom must have successfully completed OAT 1 and OAT 2.

** The minimum number of observations is to be done only for teachers clearly meeting standard with no concerns on the part of the CT or principal.

II. THE ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

E. Evaluations

Formal evaluations are not required during professional development years of the professional growth cycle. However, the principal must complete the *Yearly Evaluation Report for MSDE Certification Renewal* (see Appendix C) annually to verify to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) that the certificate holder's performance is satisfactory ("meets standard").

In the TPGS, the formal evaluation process is seen as a tool for continuous improvement for teachers. During the formal evaluation year, both the teacher and administrator gather data from the professional development years as well as from the evaluation year. This data serves as the point of reference for the collaborative evaluation process. The evaluation year is a time when the teacher reflects on progress made and potential areas for future professional growth.

Important details regarding formal evaluations in designated evaluation years of the professional growth cycle are as follows:

- 1. Frequency/Schedule:** Formal evaluations are required—
 - For probationary teachers in their first year when hired before the school year begins or anytime during the first semester. If a first-year probationary teacher is hired during the second semester, the teacher will be formally evaluated for the first time in March of the following year.
 - For probationary teachers in their second year.
 - For tenured teachers: At least once in every professional growth cycle (years 5, 9, 14, and every 5 years thereafter).
- 2. Special Evaluation:** A formal evaluation may be completed any year by placing a teacher on Special Evaluation when there is a concern about performance. (See pages 14–15 on Special Evaluation.)
- 3. Evaluators:** The principal or an AP at the school to which the teacher is assigned is responsible for completing the formal evaluation. The principal must review and sign every evaluation.
- 4. Evaluation of Novice Teachers (teachers new to the profession):** The school administrators, as well as the CT, support novice teachers. The administrator is responsible for writing a final evaluation report. The CT completes a final summative report, which is presented to the PAR Panel.
- 5. Referring Probationary Teachers to PAR:** Experienced teachers who are new to MCPS have probationary status. The principal or an AP evaluates these probationary teachers. If serious instructional concerns are identified early in the first year for an experienced probationary teacher, two formal observations should be completed by November 1, and the principal should contact the director of performance evaluation in the Office of Human Resources (OHR) to request referral for PAR support with an assigned CT. The PAR Panel renders a decision on this request.

6. **Tenured Teachers in PAR:** The evaluation (Evaluation Form for Tenured Teachers in PAR included in Appendix D) will reflect the input of the principal as reported through observation reports and other data sources, the consulting teacher as reported through observation reports, the Mid-year Summative and Final Summative reports, and the recommendations of the principal and the consulting teacher to the PAR panel. The evaluation reflects the finding of the PAR Panel made through its deliberative process following the review of all appropriate data including any appeal by either the teacher or principal, if such an appeal occurs, as detailed on page 20 of this handbook. During the PAR year, the information in this evaluation is compiled by the co-chairs of the PAR Panel. A formal evaluation by the principal is not completed for a tenured teacher supported by the PAR program. The immediate supervisor is required to complete at least one formal observation with a post-observation conference and subsequent report.
7. **Teachers in Multiple Schools:** In the case of teachers who work in multiple schools, the administrator at the school in which the majority of the teacher's time is assigned completes the evaluation. If equal time is spent in two different schools, the administrator of the school in which the teacher's paycheck is received **completes** the evaluation. The administrator completing the evaluation is responsible for gathering data from the principal(s) of the other schools in which the teacher works, for inclusion in the evaluation.

The Final Evaluation Report

The principal or AP is the evaluator responsible for completing the formal *Final Evaluation Report* at the end of the formal evaluation year for all teachers except tenured teachers in the PAR program. The evaluation includes an examination of cumulative performance for an entire professional growth cycle and reviews the teacher's overall performance on each of the six MCPS performance standards.

The evaluator reviews all of the material, including all post-observation conference reports, as well as a variety of other data sources. Teachers are encouraged to assemble a portfolio with evidence of attainment of growth in terms of the six performance standards to serve as a comprehensive record of continuous improvement. Before the final evaluation is completed, the administrator and the teacher will review together the additional sources of data that may include the following:

- Samples of student work, tests, assignments, feedback to students.
- Long- and short-term lesson and unit plans.
- Evidence of communication with parents.
- Publications.
- PDPs, evidence of activities that support PDP outcomes, and additional PDP-related documentation.
- Student results: countywide and state test scores; countywide and department final exams, tests, quizzes, papers and project grades; checklists of skills mastered; attendance; discipline referrals; numbers/percents of students who move on from a teacher's class to the next grade or to a higher level of a subject; other measures of progress or success such as AP or SAT test scores, Gifted and Talented, or Honors enrollment; and customized data reports that document student results over a number of years as part of the system of shared accountability.
- Student and parent surveys: MCPS provides recommended student and parent surveys, but teachers may choose to construct individualized survey instruments to help refine and improve their instructional practice.

Teachers should analyze survey data plus other forms of student and parent feedback from all years in the TPGS cycle to identify issues, patterns, trends, implications, what was done to address concerns in the past, and future professional growth plans. The teacher's analysis of student results is an integral part of the teacher's final evaluation report. The TPGS is designed to focus on many different kinds of student results every year whether or not the formal evaluation is being done. The Board of Education, administrative and supervisory staff, and teachers are ultimately accountable to the public for student performance. Standardized test scores provide one important source of data, but they cannot constitute a judgment, in and of themselves, about the performance of a teacher or the success of a school. The most important use of student results is to contribute to analysis and problem solving for school, teacher, or individual student improvement.

The *Final Evaluation Report* concludes with a summary rating of the teacher's overall performance and is sent to the OHR for inclusion in the teacher's personnel file. The teacher is given a holistic rating of either "Meets Standard" or "Below Standard." Appendix E contains examples of final evaluation reports. Any teacher who receives a rating of "Below Standard" will be referred automatically to the PAR program.

Due Dates for Final Evaluation Reports

It is essential that administrators send evaluations with the rating of "Below Standard" to the OHR within the specified due dates (see chart on page 13). Failure to adhere to timelines may result in postponement of PAR support.

CTs working with novice and tenured teachers are required to submit summative reports to the PAR Panel by specific dates that are aligned with the due dates for administrators' final evaluation reports. Original copies of final summative reports completed by CTs are kept by the Office of Organizational Development (OOD). Attached to each summary is a copy of the letter from the PAR Panel with its recommendation to the superintendent.

DEADLINES FOR EVALUATIONS BY ADMINISTRATORS				
Probationary Teachers		Tenured Teachers		
Meets Standard	Below Standard	Meets Standard	Below Standard	In PAR
June 1	March 1	June 1	March 31*	No formal evaluation is due for tenured teachers in PAR. Administrators should continue to collect data and observe any teacher who is receiving PAR support. Administrator should contact the PAR Panel co-chairs by April 20 only if the administrator disagrees with the recommendation of the CT report, so the administrator can present additional information at the second May PAR Panel meeting.

DEADLINES FOR SUMMATIVE REPORTS BY CONSULTING TEACHERS				
Probationary Teachers		Tenured Teachers in PAR		
Meets Standard	Below Standard	Meets Standard	Below Standard	Recommended for Dismissal
June 1	March 1	June 1	April 30**	April 30**

***Or last workday in March**

**** Or last workday in April**

Special Evaluations for Tenured Teachers not in Formal Evaluation Year

If a principal has concerns about the performance of a tenured teacher who is not currently in a formal evaluation year, s/he may request that OHR place the teacher on a special evaluation. The request for special evaluation removes the teacher from the scheduled professional development year. Special evaluation status is not subject to appeal.







Requesting a special evaluation for the current school year:

- The administrator or a qualified observer must complete a minimum of two formal observations prior to the request for special evaluation.
- The written request for special evaluation should be sent to the director of performance evaluation in OHR no later than the second Friday in January. All relevant documentation should accompany the request.
- OHR must notify the teacher placed on special evaluation by January 31.
- A minimum of one additional formal observation must be completed after January 31.
- The formal evaluation must be sent to the director of performance evaluation in the OHR by March 31 if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘below standard’.
- The formal evaluation must be sent to the director of performance evaluation in the OHR by June 1 if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘meets standard’

Requesting a special evaluation for the following year:

- The administrator or a qualified observer must complete a minimum of two formal observations prior to the request for special evaluation.
- The written request for special evaluation should be sent to the director of performance evaluation in OHR by the last workday in May; all relevant documentation should accompany the request.
- OHR must notify the teacher that s/he will be placed on special evaluation the following year by the last day of the school year;
- The special evaluation is due by March 31 of the following year if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘below standard’ and should be sent to the director of performance evaluation in the OHR; a minimum of three formal observations must be completed during the special evaluation year.
- The special evaluation is due by June 1 of the following year if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘meets standard’ and should be sent to the director of performance evaluation in the OHR; a minimum of two formal observations must be completed during the special evaluation year.

Special Evaluation Due Dates and Process Information

<p>Request for Special Evaluation for the current year</p> <p>Two (2) formal observations completed by an administrator or a qualified observer prior to request</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <p>Written request for special evaluation to OHR (director of performance evaluation) by second Friday in January</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <p>OHR notifies teacher by January 31</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <p>Minimum of one additional formal observation completed after January 31 (more recommended) and formal evaluation completed by March 31 if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘below standard’ or by June 1 if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘meets standard’—Send to OHR (director of performance evaluation)</p>	<p>Request for Special Evaluation for the following year</p> <p>Two (2) formal observations completed by administrator or a qualified observer prior to request</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <p>Written request for special evaluation to OHR (director of performance evaluation) by May 31</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <p>OHR notifies teacher by last day of the school year</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <p>Special evaluation is sent to OHR (director of performance evaluation) by March 31 of the following year if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘below standard’ or by June 1 of the following year if the rating on the special evaluation is ‘meets standard’. The administrator or other qualified observer has completed a minimum of three formal observations.</p>
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II. ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

F. The Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program

Overview of the PAR Program

The Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program is a mechanism for maintaining systemwide quality control and ensuring that all MCPS teachers responsible for teaching students meet MCPS standards of performance. Through this program, intensive, individualized assistance is provided for all novice teachers and experienced teachers who are judged to be “below standard.”

The design of the PAR program is a result of a collaborative relationship between the Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA), the Montgomery County Association of Administrative and Supervisory Personnel (MCAASP), and MCPS regarding teacher evaluation. The focus of the PAR program is to improve instruction by supporting novice and under-performing teachers. Thus, the MCPS administration, MCEA, and MCAASP, as partners in the establishment and implementation of the PAR program, strive to support the recommendations of the PAR Panel to the superintendent regarding the employment status of teachers in the program.

For experienced teachers, the “below standard” rating given by principals during the formal evaluation process and subsequent referral to the PAR program indicate that the teacher is seriously at risk. PAR is not designed for teachers who simply could use some improvement in their teaching techniques. Other supports, such as staff development teachers (SDTs), mentors, team leaders, RTs, IRTs, or other available school resources may be more appropriate for these teachers.

The PAR program addresses issues and concerns that are related to instructional skills. If there are other concerns about employment responsibilities, the principal confers with the teacher and completes written notification of the conference. If the issues continue, the principal notifies the OHR director of performance evaluation to determine who will provide resolution in these cases.

The superintendent and/or his/her designee retain the right to make personnel decisions in rare egregious cases.

The PAR program has two components: the PAR Panel and Consulting Teachers (CTs). The PAR Panel consists of equal numbers of teachers and principals, recommended by their respective employee unions and appointed by the superintendent. CTs provide direct instructional support to teachers and collect data through formal observations. CTs report monthly on the progress of the teachers to the PAR Pair, one teacher and one principal who are members of the PAR Panel, assigned to oversee the work of a small group of CTs. The CT writes a final summative report at the conclusion of the period of support. Based on the data and information gathered through the program, the PAR Panel makes recommendations in March (for probationary teachers) and May (for tenured teachers) to the superintendent regarding contract renewal, recommendation for a second year in PAR, or contract termination.

Components of the PAR Program

The PAR Panel

The PAR Panel consists of sixteen members appointed by the superintendent: eight teacher representatives recommended by MCEA and eight school-based administrators recommended by MCAASP. PAR Panel members are accountable to their respective organizations to ensure organizational and institutional support of the PAR program. The PAR Panel sends its recommendations directly to the superintendent, who reviews and makes all final decisions on matters related to an individual teacher's nonrenewal, dismissal, or continuation of contract.

The duties of the PAR Panel include the following:

- Reviewing all cases referred to the PAR Panel as a result of the formal evaluation process.
- Recruiting, interviewing, and selecting CTs.
- Evaluating the performance of CTs.
- Meeting with CTs to review reports and receive updates on teachers in PAR.
- Advising CTs regarding supports to teachers.
- Reviewing concerns of participating teachers or principals regarding the PAR program.
- Making one of the following personnel recommendations to the superintendent (based on CT reports, the principal's formal evaluation, and other supporting data):
 - Successful completion of the program and return to the regular professional growth cycle.
 - Termination of contract: dismissal (tenured teacher) or nonrenewal (probationary teacher).
 - An additional year of PAR assistance.
 - A third year in nontenured status for probationary teachers (in accord with MSDE regulations).

Consulting Teachers (CTs)

CTs are experienced teaching professionals who are selected by the PAR Panel. A rigorous selection process ensures that they are outstanding teaching professionals and that they are able to communicate their knowledge and strategies about best practices to adult learners. They receive extensive training (including OAT 1 and 2) to develop and refine their observation and analysis of teaching skills.

The duties of a CT include the following:

For novice teachers—

- providing information about strategies for teaching and suggestions about resources;
- offering demonstration lessons, team teaching experiences, informal feedback, etc.;
- making frequent visits with informal support;
- conducting a minimum of three observations with at least one per semester
- preparing and submitting to the PAR Panel a midyear and final summative report regarding the teacher's instructional skills; and
- making a recommendation regarding future employment for the probationary teacher.

For teachers evaluated as “below standard” by their administrators—

- completing the review process;
- reviewing the most recent formal evaluation and soliciting additional information as appropriate;
- making recommendations to the PAR Panel regarding inclusion in the PAR program;
- planning and implementing an intensive program of intervention and support, which includes a minimum of three formal observations, ongoing communication with the teacher, analysis of student data, demonstration lessons, etc.;
- preparing and submitting to the PAR Panel a midyear and final summative report regarding instructional skill levels; and
- making a recommendation regarding future employment.

The Role of the Principal and Other School Staff Related to the PAR Program

Principals, APs, RTs, IRTs, team leaders, and SDTs all have important roles in the multi-year professional growth cycle, the core of the TPGS, in their work with teachers. The PAR program enhances the system by creating an additional, intensive support program for novice and underperforming teachers. The role of the CT in the PAR program is complementary to the roles of school-based personnel. Principals remain responsible for the evaluations of all teachers in their years leading to the granting of tenure.

For tenured teachers in PAR, the evaluation will be written by the co-chairs of the PAR Panel. The immediate supervisor is required to complete at least one formal observation with a post-observation conference and subsequent report. The immediate supervisor is encouraged to document the progress of the teacher by collecting data from a variety of sources. MCPS Evaluation Form 425-39 is not completed by principals for tenured teachers supported by the PAR program.

For both probationary and tenured teachers in PAR, the CT shares formal observation reports and final summative reports with the principal. However, the documentation of the CT and the formal evaluation by the administrator are independent of each other. **No information from CT reports may be used in the administrator’s evaluation.**

While an underperforming or novice teacher is in the PAR program, the principal continues to supervise the teacher. S/he observes, provides feedback, coordinates school support, responds to parent concerns, etc. Communication and coordination among the CT, the principal, and other members of the school’s instructional leadership team are essential. Such collaboration will ensure that the teacher receives complementary, consistent messages about expectations and instructional improvements from all who are providing support. These messages should include information about areas of concern on the part of the CT and/or administration and the possible consequences of these areas of concern resulting in a below standard evaluation.

The principal or immediate supervisor may provide the PAR Panel with additional information to substantiate the CT’s report if s/he feels it is necessary. When the principal or immediate supervisor disagrees with the final summative report of the CT, s/he may appear before the PAR Panel and provide further information with documentation. When this occurs, the teacher will also be invited to appear before the PAR Panel to provide additional information.

The principal or immediate supervisor will be asked to complete a feedback survey on the performance of each CT working in his/her building. This is in addition to the survey that each client teacher completes to provide feedback on the performance of his/her CT.

Teachers Served by the PAR Program

The following categories of teachers will be included in the PAR program:

- Novice teachers.
- Experienced teachers new to MCPS with serious instructional concerns identified (based on a minimum of two formal observations) and reported to OHR **prior to November 1**. After PAR referral, CT support may occur as early as the first year of probation.
- Probationary teachers referred to PAR and included after the formal review process.
- All third-year probationary teachers.
- Tenured teachers referred to PAR and included after the formal review process.

The Review Process

When a teacher who is not currently in the PAR program is given a “below standard” rating on the formal evaluation report, the OHR notifies the PAR Panel co-chairs. A CT is assigned to complete a review of that teacher’s instructional skills. The review consists of the following:

The CT—

- meets with the principal and the teacher;
- completes a minimum of two formal observations (one announced and one unannounced); and
- reports the information and makes a recommendation to the PAR Panel.

The PAR Panel—

- hears the report from the CT;
- decides on inclusion or noninclusion in the program; and
- notifies the teacher and administrator of the decision.

If the PAR Panel recommends inclusion in the PAR program, a CT is assigned to provide a year of instructional support. Inclusion in the PAR program is not voluntary and cannot be appealed by the teacher.

If the CT does not concur that the needs of the teacher are severe enough to warrant the support of the program, the principal may ask to make a presentation to the PAR Panel in order to provide additional data. When considering a presentation by a principal, the PAR Panel always will examine all relevant written documentation, including the most current formal evaluation report and post- observation conference reports. If the principal requests to make a presentation, the PAR Panel also will provide an opportunity for the teacher to present information and documentation. In addition, the CT will be questioned to clarify information in his/her reports and in regard to his/her recommendation. Information from all three sources will be considered before rendering a decision. After reviewing all of the information, the PAR Panel will either recommend inclusion into the PAR program or return to the Professional Growth Cycle with support in the school. If the teacher is not placed in the PAR program, and therefore is determined to “meet standards,” the PAR Panel will notify the principal and the associate superintendent for OHR, who will ensure that the formal evaluation is revised to conform with a “meets standard” rating (this applies to probationary as well as tenured teachers).

Normally, formal evaluations are completed by June 1. Teachers in the PAR program are not permitted to voluntarily transfer to another school. A teacher in the PAR program may be

selected for involuntary transfer, according to the conditions and procedures of the MCEA negotiated agreement.

Late Reviews

Reviews for teachers with "below standard" evaluations not completed in the spring will be assigned to CT's and completed in the fall of the following school year. The review will be completed as soon as possible for decisions at the October or November PAR Panel meeting. The two review observations will count as one of the three required observations for the year. Thus, at least two more observations by the CT are needed.

PAR Support Timelines

The normal period of support in the PAR program is from September to March 1 (probationary teachers) or September to April 30 (tenured teachers). In rare cases, there may be mitigating circumstances that result in a PAR Panel decision recommending a longer or shorter period of PAR support. These decisions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

There is an expectation that the processes of the program will be completed for a teacher in the PAR program, either novice or experienced. This is based on the belief that the feedback provided by the CT and administrator can support the teacher throughout the school year. If a teacher in the PAR program tenders his/her resignation to the OHR to be effective at the end of that school year, the CT cease normal data gathering (formal observation reports, summative reports) but will continue to provide support to the teacher as requested by the teacher or principal. Submission of a notification of intent to retire at the end of the school year will not affect the data gathering or support provided by the CT nor will it affect the PAR Panel's processes.

Decisions

Meets standard

When the CT and Principal rate the client teacher "meets standard", the PAR Panel makes a final recommendation that probationary teacher will enter the PGC or the tenured teacher will return to the PGC.

Below standard

When the CT and/or the principal rate the teacher as "below standard", the CT will present the case to the entire PAR Panel. This will occur at the regular March meeting for probationary teachers and at the regular May meeting for tenured teachers. The PAR Panel will make a tentative recommendation of entrance or return to the PGC, a second year of PAR, or non-renewal (for probationary teachers) or dismissal (for tenured teachers).

The co-chairs will notify the client teacher and his/her principal in writing of the Panel's recommendation. The letter will include the information on the process to appeal the tentative recommendation, including a date by which the client teacher or principal must request to present to the Panel.

Second year in the PAR program

The PAR Panel uses the following criteria when considering a second consecutive year in the PAR program:

- 1- The client teacher demonstrated emerging skills and potential to be successful
- 2- There were external circumstances that made it difficult for the client teacher to be successful (class schedule, no classroom, etc.)
- 3- The client teacher is not certified or not teaching in their area of certification
- 4- The client teacher has no student teaching experience
- 5- The CT reports there are limited resources for support in the building

If a teacher is placed in the PAR program for a second successive year, input will be sought from the principal and the previous CT regarding the assignment of the CT for the second year. Factors that will be considered are the years of experience of the CT, the certification areas, subject knowledge and expertise of the CT, and the specific needs of the client. The assignment of the CT is recommended by the Lead CTs and affirmed by the Panel co-chairs.

The decision of the PAR Panel to continue a client teacher in the PAR program for a second successive year may not be appealed.

The Appeal Process

In any instance in which the client teacher or principal wishes to appeal the tentative recommendation of the PAR Panel, both the teacher and principal involved will each be invited to make a presentation before the Panel.

Principal Appeal Presentations

The principal may appeal the tentative recommendation at a PAR Panel meeting. The presentation will be scheduled for twenty minutes for probationary teachers and thirty for tenured teachers. The first half of the allotted time is a presentation of evidence to support the principal's evaluation. The second half of the allotted time is used for questions from the Panel. The principal may bring written documentation based on the standards to support his/her point of view and will give copies to each PAR Panel member. All documentation presented to the PAR Panel must have been shared with the client teacher in advance of this meeting. The principal may be accompanied by another administrator of the principal's choosing to assist in the presentation.

The principal (or supervisor if the client is not school based) is expected to present in these cases. She/he may be accompanied by the assistant principal or resource teacher as appropriate.

Teacher Appeal Presentations

The client teacher may appeal a tentative recommendation of non-renewal or dismissal at a PAR Panel meeting. The client teacher may not appeal a tentative recommendation of a second year in the PAR program. The presentation is scheduled for twenty minutes for probationary teachers and thirty for tenured teachers. The first half of the allotted time is a presentation of evidence to support the teacher's view of his/her performance. The second half of the allotted time is used for questions from the Panel. The teacher may bring written documentation based on the standards to support his/her point of view and will give copies to each PAR Panel member. The teacher may contact a MCEA Uniserv representative for assistance. The teacher may be accompanied by a MCEA Uniserv representative, an attorney or other guest but the guest may not speak during the proceedings.

Final recommendations

The Panel discusses the case following appeal presentations and re-considers its tentative recommendation without the presence of either the client or the administration. The co-chairs notify the client teacher and his/her principal in writing of the Panel's final recommendation to the Superintendent.

If neither the client teacher nor the principal appeal the PAR panel's tentative recommendation, that recommendation becomes the final recommendation.

Tenured teachers may appeal the Panel's final recommendation to the Superintendent through the process outlined in MCPS and MSDE employment procedures.

Emergency leave while in the PAR program

If a teacher goes on emergency leave while in the PAR program, the process will be completed and the PAR Panel will decide on any adjustments to the process on a case by case basis.

Data gathering involved in the PAR Program

Principals and teachers involved in the PAR program should gather data throughout the year. This data may include any or all of the items mentioned in the Final Evaluation Report section of this handbook.

Presentations to the PAR Panel are strengthened by such data. When possible, grade distributions and test results should include comparable data for like classes or teachers in order to provide a context in which to interpret such data.

Follow-up to Successful Release from the PAR Program

In the year following successful release from PAR, the teacher will have a Special Evaluation to ensure maintenance of skills. If the teacher's skills are rated "below standard" in the next school year, the PAR Panel will reconsider the case. The principal and teacher will be asked to bring documentation and evidence to the PAR Panel meeting in May. At that time, based on the evidence provided, the PAR Panel could recommend a return to the Professional Growth Cycle, additional PAR support, or termination of contract.

If a teacher who has been successfully released from the PAR program receives a "below standard" evaluation for a school year after the year immediately following the successful release, a CT will be assigned to conduct a review as detailed on page 19. The CT will make a recommendation to the PAR Panel as to re-inclusion of the teacher in the PAR program.

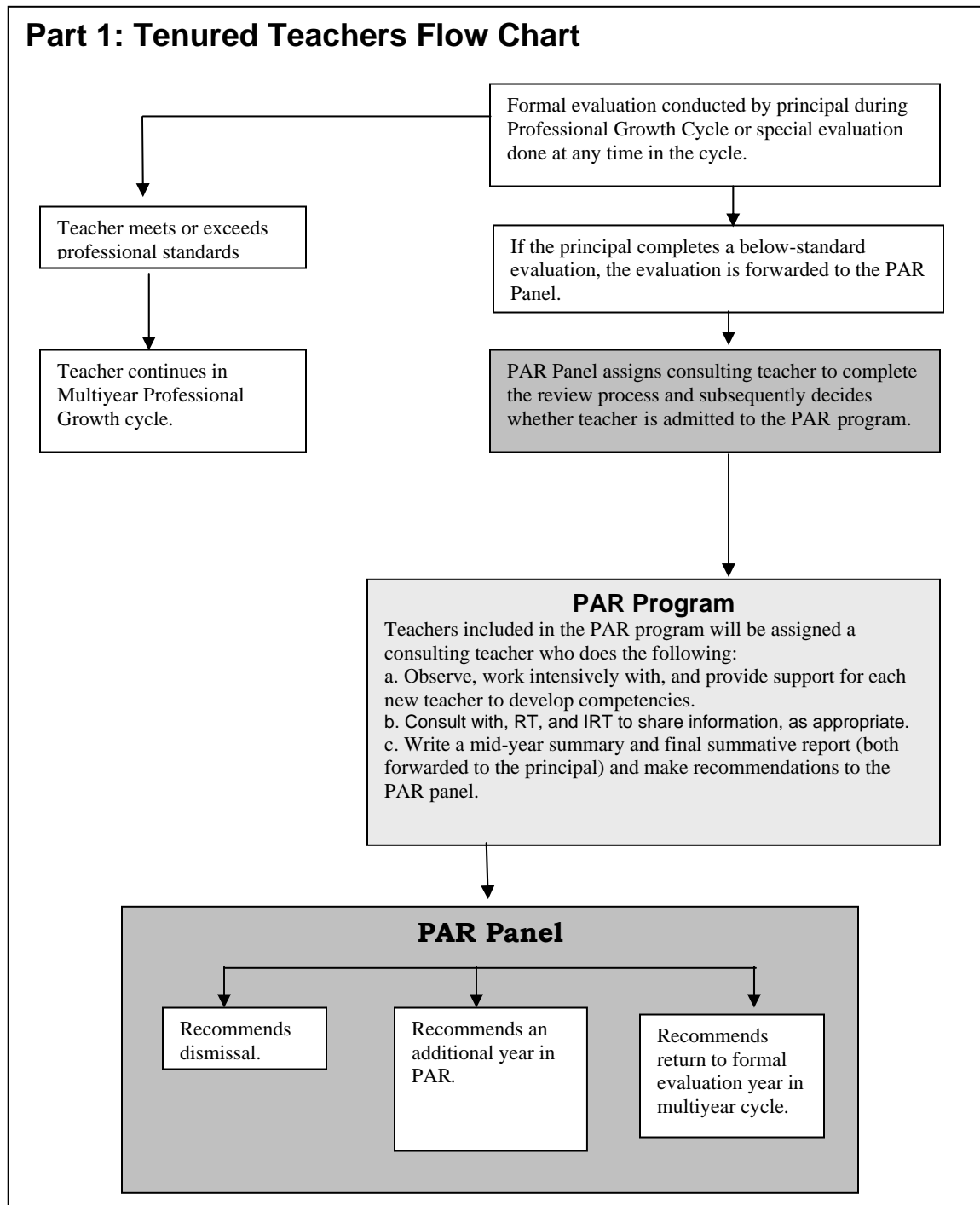
If the CT recommends re-inclusion, the principal will be given the option of agreeing with that recommendation. If the principal agrees, re-inclusion in the PAR program is not voluntary and cannot be appealed by the teacher. If the principal does not agree and requests consideration of dismissal from MCPS employment, the CT, principal, and teacher will each be invited to make a presentation at the June meeting of the PAR Panel. The Panel could recommend a return to the Professional Growth Cycle, re-inclusion in the PAR program, or dismissal from MCPS employment.

If the CT does not recommend re-inclusion, the principal will be given the option of agreeing with that recommendation. If the principal agrees with the recommendation, the teacher will return to the professional growth system. In this circumstance, the principal will re-write the evaluation to demonstrate that the teacher is meeting standard. If the principal disagrees, the CT,

principal, and teacher will each be invited to make a presentation at the June meeting of the PAR Panel. The Panel could recommend a return to the Professional Growth Cycle, re-inclusion in the PAR program, or termination of contract.

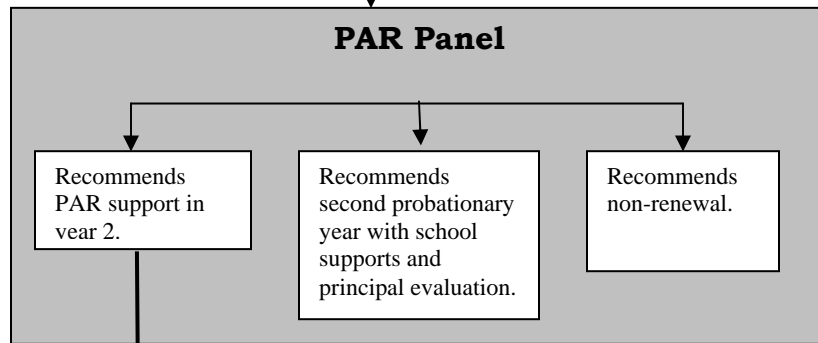
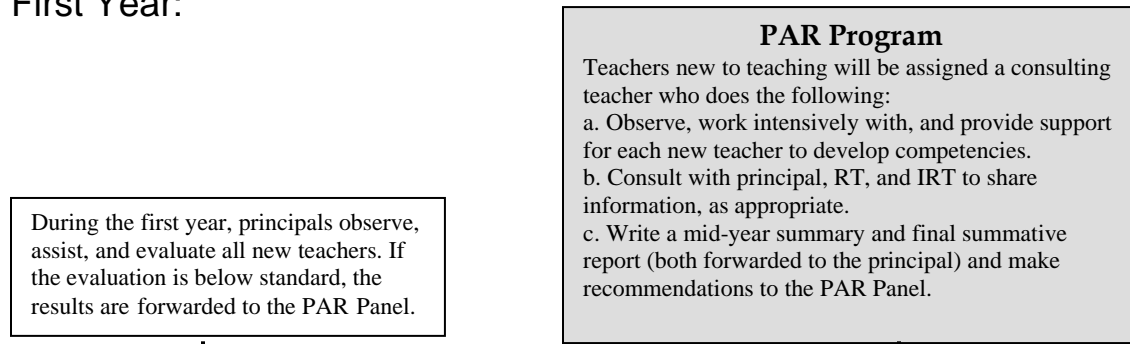
Peer Assistance and Review Program

The purpose of the joint MCEA/MCPS Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program is to assist all teachers to meet standards for proficient teaching. It provides intensive support for experienced teachers who have been identified as performing below MCPS standards of proficiency, experienced teachers new to MCPS who need assistance, and teachers new to teaching. As a result, the PAR program is the MCPS mechanism for maintaining system wide quality control and ensuring that all MCPS teachers are functioning at or above MCPS standards of performance.

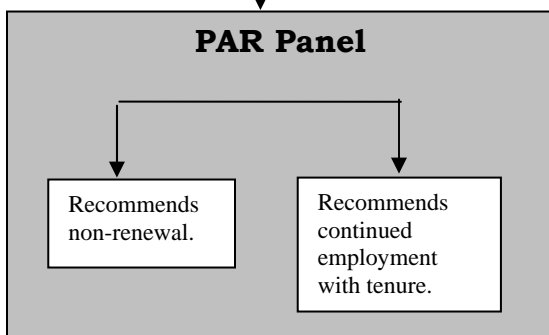


Part 2: Teachers New to Teaching Flow Chart

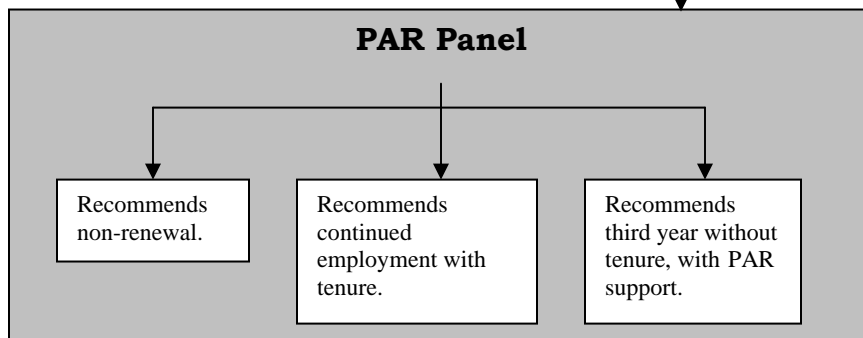
First Year:



Second Year:



Principal's observations and evaluation of all second-year teachers leads to a recommendation for continued employment and tenure or referral to the PAR Panel.



Recommends continued employment with tenure.

Part 3: Experienced Teachers New to MCPS Flow Chart

First Year:

In November:
Principal completes two formal observations by November 1. If serious deficits are found, a request is made for PAR support through OHR and the PAR Panel assigns a consulting teacher.

PAR Program
Teachers included in the PAR program will be assigned a consulting teacher who will do the following:
a. Observe, work intensively with, and provide support for reach new teacher to develop competencies.
b. Consult with principal, RT, and IRT to share information, as appropriate.
c. Write a mid-year summary and final summative report (both forwarded to the principal) and make recommendations to the PAR Panel.

In March:
If the principal completes a below-standard evaluation, the PAR Panel assigns a consulting teacher to complete the review process and subsequently decides whether the teacher is assigned to the PAR Program for the subsequent school year.

PAR Panel

- Recommends non-renewal.
- Recommends continued employment.

PAR Panel

- Recommends placement in the PAR program for the following school year..
- Recommends continued employment.

Second Year

Principal's observations and evaluation of experienced teachers in their second year in MCPS lead to a recommendation for tenure or referral to the PAR Panel. If the principal completes a below-standard evaluation, the PAR Panel assigns a consulting teacher to complete the review process and subsequently decides whether the teacher is assigned to the PAR Program for the subsequent school year.

PAR Panel

- Recommends non-renewal
- Recommends continued employment.
- Recommends third year without tenure, with PAR support.

Recommends continued employment with tenure.

II. ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

G. The Mentoring Program

The Mentoring program is a mechanism for providing intensive, individualized assistance to all experienced teachers who are new to MCPS.

Mentors should be tenured, exemplary, veteran classroom teachers who have been trained and are willing to assume this responsibility. As new teachers are hired, are asked to assign them a school-based peer mentor and to advise the new teacher and mentor of this assignment. The principal, coordinator, or staff development teacher should notify the Office of Organizational Development (OOD) about the assignment. OOD maintains a database of school-based mentors in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

A one-to-one mentor/mentee assignment is optimal. In some cases, the mentor caseload may exceed this one-to-one ratio. However, no new teacher should have more than one mentor. Key to this relationship is meeting the needs of the new teachers without compromising mentor effectiveness.

All mentors will be trained before assuming mentor responsibilities. The New Teacher Induction Program includes summer, fall, and spring offerings of the course, Mentoring the New Teacher (TOT 02), for those who have not received training in mentoring a new teacher. Veteran teachers can take the course concurrently with their first mentoring experience. An additional year-long course, Seminar in Mentoring the New Teacher (TOT 03), will be offered to mentors who have taken TOT 02 to support and supplement their mentoring activities. Mentor and new teacher workshops are also offered during the year. Mentors are asked to encourage their new teacher's participation in the New Teacher training courses and on-going workshops offered for new teachers throughout the year.

Mentors should initiate & maintain weekly/monthly contact with new teacher. The responsibility for the mentoring relationship should not be placed on the shoulders of the new teacher. Mentors should spend one hour a week or four hours monthly with their new teacher. These hours may vary by time of year and needs of each new teacher; however, a weekly contact is strongly recommended. Mentors and their new teachers need dedicated time together.

Mentors should maintain confidentiality. Mentors are advised not to discuss aspects of the mentor relationship with anyone.

Mentors should assess the different needs of each mentee and address the different needs of each individual. The mentor may serve as a coach and may do informal observations, but this should not replace the role of administrators, resource teachers, staff development teachers and consulting teachers in providing support to new staff. The mentor relationship is an additional avenue for the support of new teachers. **The mentor teacher does not have a role in the evaluation of the new teacher.**

Mentors should provide curriculum support. Each mentor and mentee should have the same grade/subject assignment. The mentor is encouraged to provide information to new teachers on current "Best Practices" in teaching, classroom management and discipline, culture of the school/system, and information on how to access other county supports.

II. ELEMENTS OF THE SYSTEM

H. Professional Development Years for Tenured Teachers

Each tenured teacher designs a multi-year Professional Development Plan (PDP) for continuous improvement covering the professional development years (one to four years). The only teachers who are not required to work on a PDP are-

- probationary teachers;
- tenured teachers receiving PAR support; and
- tenured teachers in their formal evaluation year.

The term “senior status” applies only to state renewal of certification.

It **does not** exempt tenured MCPS teachers from the PDP requirement.

The path of activity that teachers choose to undertake in the professional development years of the Professional Growth cycle is reflected in the PDP. The focus of the PDP is to support professional development activities that are of value to teachers and that are planned to improve student and school results. The activities that are listed as options in the professional development cycle are designed to support collaboration among and learning between teachers. The SDT and principal or AP review the plan annually.

The plan—

- provides structure and accountability;
- exhibits clarity, rigor, and substance;
- requires that a support team be identified;
- provides for review of student results as part of the planning process;
- aligns with an aspect of the School Improvement Plan (SIP);
- provides for the integration of the results from the teacher’s formal evaluations;
- can be a long-range plan and may be adjusted annually; and
- requires a minimum of two (2) peer visits with reflection in at least one year in each professional growth cycle.

In a well-developed PDP, it is clear what the teacher intends to do (clarity), what significant expected outcomes that support student learning are targeted (substance), and how time and energy are focused to accomplish the outcomes (rigor). The PDP is meant to be developed by the teacher and implemented collaboratively with colleagues, staff development teachers, resource teachers, administrators, and other key school leaders. The PDP must be meaningful to the teacher and address his/her interests. Each teacher defines a support team consisting of colleagues who can provide assistance and constructive feedback. Continual reflection should be a natural part of this process. The PDP should be aligned with the SIP to the extent that it directly addresses one or more of the school’s improvement plan goals or supports the goals in a related manner. The goal of the PDP is to improve instruction. The SIP should serve as a point of reference rather than a restrictive framework. Greater flexibility in aligning the PDP with the SIP will allow the teacher to develop PDP goals that focus on student learning in that teacher’s classes.

Role of Staff Development Teachers (SDTs)

SDTs are in many ways the linchpins to the professional development process and to the goal of creating a professional learning community in each school. They are the facilitators of job-embedded professional development.

SDTs do the following:

- Work with the administrator(s) and teachers to communicate the value and importance of the PDP.
- Review and monitor the progress of the plan along with the principal, AP, RT, or IRT.
- Facilitate meaningful professional development strategies for teachers.
- Support teachers' professional development by guiding planning, securing resources (including time), and informing teachers of professional development opportunities.
- Offer instructional assistance by building the teachers' knowledge base and increasing the repertoire of teaching skills.
- Support staff in efforts to improve student achievement.
- Ensure that the instructional staff uses data to plan, deliver, and assess instructional practices.
- Engage teachers in collaborative and reflective practice.
- Allocate time for professional development activities by utilizing staff development substitute teachers (SDSTs) to enable teachers to work collaboratively and observe best practices and to provide time for teachers to do so within the normal work day hours;
- Organize and coordinate the schedule of SDSTs.
- Document the utilization of the allocated substitute time.

The role of the SDT is to support teachers. It is not evaluative in nature. SDTs are required to administer staff surveys to assess the needs of staff members as well as to assess the effectiveness and quality of work provided by the SDT. SDTs meet annually with representatives of the staff to discuss the results of the feedback surveys.

Role of the Administrator, IRT, RT

The administrator, IRT, and RT play a critical role in the professional development process of teachers.

The administrator, IRT, and RT work with teachers to:

- reflect on the rationale for their professional development goals;
- share with teachers current educational research and best practices that relate to their PDPs;
- integrate the analysis of student achievement data into the PDP;
- reflect on the impact on teacher practice of PDP goals and data;
- integrate the results from the teachers' formal evaluations into the PDP;
- reflect on the impact on teacher practice of peer visits with reflection;
- discuss PDP goals and data during observation and /or evaluation conferences; and
- discuss peer visit with reflection and impact on teaching practices.

Activities for Professional Development

Activities that improve teaching and learning are critical components of a professional learning community. These activities include team teaching and team planning, new curriculum development, development of instructional materials, review of professional literature, audio/videotape analysis, study groups, networking groups, delivery of workshops or courses,

participation on a task force or committee, participation in a teacher exchange program, professional visits (to visit another teacher or program), action research, or training (school-based workshop, out-of-school workshop, or conference). (See Appendix C, PDP Form: Professional Development Options, page A-17).

A particularly valuable professional development strategy is **peer visits with reflection**. Teachers are encouraged to engage in this activity throughout the professional development cycle. Peer visits with reflection (being observed a minimum of two times at your request) are a required strategy for at least one of the professional development years during each cycle. This process of peer reflective conversations should be commonplace. Training is provided on how to use classroom visits to give useful feedback to colleagues. Peer visits with reflection are not evaluative, and are in no way part of the evaluation process.

A peer visit with reflection is a process that involves inviting a peer to observe a specific aspect of teaching, so together the colleagues may reflect on the teaching and learning taking place. The teacher may ask a teaching peer, RT/IRT, or MCPS educator in another position to do the observing. The teacher chooses a focus that will help him/her meet a particular learning goal, rather than asking a colleague to observe and give general feedback. Peer visits also might become a mutual process in which the teacher is not only observed, but also has an opportunity to observe another teacher in a similarly planned way. Following the peer visit, participants engage in a reflective conversation, in which the teacher, not the observer, does the majority of the talking. These conversations promote authentic professional examination of teaching practices among colleagues in an atmosphere of mutual support, trust, and a belief in the necessity of constant learning and improvement.

III. CONCLUSION

Through the TPGS, the school system provides an environment in which teachers are afforded time, support, and opportunities for continuous growth and improvement. Components of the system include new teacher support, SDTs at each school who facilitate a professional growth process for each teacher, the PAR program, and clear performance standards for teaching within a rigorous evaluation system with supports for teachers who are not meeting MCPS standards. Taken together, the components of the TPGS are designed to improve the quality of teaching and to ensure the success of all students.