



**Montgomery County Public Schools  
Staff Development Teacher Program  
Final Report**

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## ***Executive Summary***

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of George Washington University was invited by the Montgomery County Public School System in the fall of 2000 to participate in the evaluation of its innovative professional growth program, with a special focus on the staff development teachers (SDTs). Working with MCPS, a GWU team formulated an evaluation design involving both surveys and qualitative methods (Section I ) and began its observations in January of 2001. This report first looks at the perspectives of three key stake-holders, principals (Section II), teachers (Section III), and SDTs (Section IV). It then highlights selected cross-cutting findings in Section V, and in the final section, drawing on the voices of these stake-holders, introduces several areas that could be reviewed.

The GWU team finds overwhelming support from all of the stakeholders for the Staff Development Teacher Program and the related professional development components reviewed including the development of Professional Development Plans (PDPs) and the use of substitute teachers to free up teacher time for professional development. In the space of one short year, the program has been introduced throughout the county, and has had considerable impact. Most of the participants in this study believed it would take a few years before the innovation was fully in place and accomplishing all that was intended. At this stage, there is considerable variation in the involvement of teachers with SDTs, with the greatest involvement by novice teachers, teachers in elementary schools, and teachers in phase one schools. Much of the involvement thus far is around the development of PDPs, workshops on teaching methods, the provision to teachers of resources and materials necessary for their teaching activities, and some observation and coaching by SDTs. SDTs now believe they are well trained in most of the necessary skills; they and their principals stated their main shortcoming was in the use of data analysis to help teachers reach the goals expressed in both the individual PDPs and the school-wide plans.

While the impact thus far of the SDT program is impressive, this study highlights difficulties in large schools where the teacher to SDT ratio is high and where the Shared SDT Model is used. Also novice teachers seem more partial to the innovation than veterans. Both principals and SDTs hope that the SDTs will spend less time in training in the second year of the program and more time on site working with their colleagues. Teachers express an interest in having more time to both observe other teachers and to be observed, and they also express an interest in more opportunities for team teaching and other collegial activities. High school teachers especially stress the need for attention to subject matter along with teaching methods. Even over the course of the first year, there has been some shift in the role of SDTs, and it is projected by all stakeholders that the SDTs contributions will become progressively more useful as the program develops.

In conclusion, it should be noted that there is overwhelming approval for the continuation of the program. Every principal surveyed indicated his/her conviction that the program should be continued and 86.4% of the teachers also indicated the program should be continued. The challenge for the future is to refine the program, to have it focus on activities where SDTs can be most helpful, to augment the number of SDTs in large schools, to clearly delineate the responsibilities of SDTs, and to provide adequate training and incentives so that SDTs continue to be highly motivated, to provide

outstanding service to their fellow teachers, and to work together to build professional learning communities.

## **Montgomery County Public Schools**

### **Staff Development Teacher Program**

#### **Final Report**

## **I. Introduction**

For School Year 2000-2001 the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) initiated an innovative approach to teacher staff development. The Workforce Excellence Initiative was designed to reflect the most recent research in how to improve instruction, resting on the fundamental belief that the knowledge, skills and beliefs of teachers are the most important elements in providing a quality education for students, leading to their improved achievement.

In December of 2000, George Washington University (GWU) entered into agreement with MCPS to evaluate a major component of that initiative, the newly-introduced Staff Development Teacher (SDT) program, which placed an equivalent of a full-time SDT in virtually every Montgomery County public school. The program leaders held the view that the value of job-embedded and on-going staff development – practices strongly recommended by research – could not be accomplished without an experienced, well-trained, and highly capable fellow teacher on-site to work with teachers.

The agreement between MCPS and GWU was viewed as a partnership, with the expectation that GWU would share all meaningful findings as data were received to assist program leaders in decision-making for program improvement. GWU would also investigate issues of program impact to determine if the SDT activities were assisting teachers in improving their instructional activities. Though involved as a partner and participant in many planning and coordinating meetings including those conducted by the Professional Growth Oversight Committee, GWU was also expected to maintain an objective perspective, accurately reporting the findings of the data. By painting as true a picture as possible of what teachers, principals and SDTs reported, GWU would be able to provide the greatest service to MCPS and its stakeholders. This report highlights the key findings of the research on SDT activities focusing respectively on the views of principals, SDTs, and teachers.<sup>1</sup>

## **Sources of Information**

The initial activity of the evaluation was an analysis of logs kept by the SDTs in the early months of the program. Of the 304 SDTs, 180, or 59% of them, maintained

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<sup>1</sup> GWU's monthly reports to MCPS provide a complete explanation of the research methodology as well as additional analysis of the information highlighted in this final report.

logs of their first experiences from mid-September through mid-November, an average 40 days. Although the SDTs used a variety of formats, the logs could be analyzed using qualitative methods. A random sample of 30 logs provided a picture of what the SDTs did during their initial months.<sup>2</sup>

A survey was developed with a basic set of questions to be used by the three target groups: principals, SDTs and teachers. The survey to principals was distributed at their country-wide February 14 Trend Benders meeting. They completed the survey during a ten minute interval allocated for the survey. Of the 189 schools in the school system, 161, or 85%, of the principals completed and turned in the survey.<sup>3</sup>

The surveys to be completed by the SDTs were sent in February by mail to each SDT with a stamped envelope addressed to GWU. Combined with a second mailing, 268 SDTs, or 87%, of the SDTs returned the survey.<sup>4</sup>

A ten percent sample, or 718 teachers, was selected for the teachers' survey. This survey was developed as a cooperative effort with the Office of Shared Accountability at MCPS.<sup>5</sup> It was sent in April with a return envelope addressed to GWU at an address which took advantage of MCPS' internal mail system. With a second mailing in May, 356, or 50% of the teachers, returned the completed survey.<sup>6</sup>

Case studies were conducted in a sample of schools to gain a more holistic understanding of the SDT program as it operated in those schools, and to gain a fuller appreciation of some of the issues involved. The initial round of case studies, conducted in February and March, consisted of 16 schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels. In these schools teams of two to four, depending on the size of the school, met for a full day and interviewed the principal, the SDT(s) and teachers using a prescribed set of questions.<sup>7</sup> Later, in early June, a second set of case studies was conducted in six secondary schools – two high schools and one middle school with full time (1.0) SDTs, and two high schools and one middle school with shared responsibility SDTs who share the position, usually with 0.2 of their time allocated to the SDT program. These visits were limited to a half-day with two interviewers who asked, "How is the SDT program functioning in this school?" as an opening question and followed up with questions asking why.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The George Washington University. (January, 2001). Staff Development Teacher Activity, Fall 2000; and, The George Washington University. (January 30, 2001), Reflection on the Shared Accountability Model.

<sup>3</sup> The George Washington University. (February, 2001). Perspectives of Principals and Staff Development Teachers; and, The George Washington University. (March, 2001). Principals' Recommendations for Staff Development and support of SDTs.

<sup>4</sup> The George Washington University. (March 25, 2001). Survey of MCPS Staff Development Teachers: Updated and Final Report.

<sup>5</sup> The joint survey was sent to 1035 teachers. The sampling design included proportionally more responses from Phase I schools than from the remaining schools. The GWU sampling design was a subset of the full sample intended to equalize the proportion of teachers from the three phases.

<sup>6</sup> The George Washington University. (July, 2001). Perspectives of Teachers.

<sup>7</sup> The George Washington University. (April, 2001). Perspectives of Teachers, Principals, Staff Development Teachers Documented Through Case Studies.

<sup>8</sup> The George Washington University. (June, 2001). Perspectives of Secondary Teachers, Principals and Staff Development Teaches Documented Through Case Studies in Selected High and Middle Schools.

Focus groups of teachers, SDTs and principals, were convened to gain a separate perspective on issues raised in the case studies, and, if confirmed, to allow the generalization of the case study findings to other schools. The focus groups were held in March with randomly selected representatives at the elementary and secondary levels, for a total of six focus groups. Eleven (11) teachers, 13 SDTs, and 11 principals participated. The groups were led by faculty from GWU, who followed a general sequence of inquiry questions. Notes were taken by graduate students for later analysis.<sup>9</sup>

## **II. Perspectives of the Principals on the Role and Contribution of Staff Development Teachers**

The Principals are key to the success of the SDT Program. They were consulted on this innovation at the inception, and helped shape its guiding principles. They identified the candidates and established the working rules in their respective institutions. And the support they offer to the SDT's will surely have a major bearing on the program's success. So what do principals think about this innovation?

### **1. SDT-related activities are perceived as having the potential to improve student achievement.**

The major purpose of the SDT innovation is to transform the school culture so that students have a greater opportunity to achieve the outcomes stated in the curriculum. Every principal who responded to this survey indicated their conviction that the SDT program and its related activities “can result in improved student achievement of outcomes.” That is, ***100 percent of the principals who responded to the survey have faith in the SDT innovation.***

The principals highlighted several links between the SDT innovation and student achievement:

- The SDTs provide focus in aligning instruction with the Maryland Learning Objectives.
- The SDTs help teachers relate teaching activities to data—so they can assess what works for their students and what does not.
- The SDTs work with individual teachers, especially the new ones, so they can gain confidence in their teaching approaches.
- The Modeling and Coaching on technique is very helpful
- The provision of subs to teachers so they can spend time with the SDT as well as on visits to observe other teachers is an excellent way to facilitate learning best practices.

While all the principals are enthusiastic about the potential of the innovation, there is interesting variation in their thinking about its implementation to date.

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<sup>9</sup> The George Washington University. (May, 2001). Perspectives of Teachers, Principals, and Staff Development Teachers Documented Through Focus Groups.

## 2. SDTs are said to help teachers in their professional development.

Principals were asked to assess the effectiveness of SDTs in helping the teaching staff develop their interest and capabilities in several professional areas. Along with asking about the generic impact of SDTs on professional development, principals were asked to evaluate the extent to which SDTs were helping teachers increase their knowledge of effective practice, reduce the tendency to work in isolation, and facilitate reflective practice in their work. Table 1 indicates the proportion of principals who say the SDT program was having a substantial impact.

**Table 1. Percent of Principals saying SDT program’s impact is “great” in Selected Areas related to Professional Development**

Type of School	Professional development	Knowledge of effective practice	Working in isolation	Reflective practice
Elementary School	93.3 %	86.5 %	63.6 %	63.5 %
Middle School	87.1	77.4	64.5	50.0
High School	66.7	52.4	33.3	36.4
Special School	75.0	25.0	25.0	25.0
Average	88.1 %	78.8 %	58.7 %	56.3 %

The principals perceived that SDTs were having the greatest impact in facilitating the professional development of teachers and the least impact in facilitating reflective practice. SDTs in the Elementary Schools were perceived as having the greatest impact in virtually all areas in comparison to Middle Schools, High Schools, and Special Schools.

## 3. SDTs are also said to be influencing classroom practice.

The ultimate objective of the SDT program is to improve teachers’ performance in the classroom. Principals were also asked about the extent to which the SDT program was having an impact on several classroom and student-related areas: enhancing staff dedication to improving student performance, facilitating collaborative practice for instructional performance, facilitating the use of data to improve instruction, strengthening student’s belief that they can master challenging content, and helping teachers adapt to the needs of a diverse student population. As can be seen in Table2, principals also believed the SDT program was having an impact in these areas. However, when the last row of Table 2 is compared with that of Table 1, the percentages tend to be 10-15 percentage points lower. It can be concluded that principals see less impact to date in these classroom and student related areas.

Again, principals in the Elementary and Middle Schools were most likely to perceive the SDTs as having a major impact while those in High Schools and Special Schools were least likely to perceive a substantial impact.

**Table 2: Percent of Principals who say SDT program is “great” in Selected Areas Related to Instruction and Student Performance**

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>Improve Dedication to Student Performance</b>	<b>Collaborative Practice for Instructional Improvement</b>	<b>Use of Data to Improve Instruction</b>	<b>Students’ Belief that they can Master Content</b>	<b>Help Teachers Adapt to Diversity</b>
Elementary School	65.4 %	69.6 %	45.2 %	47.1 %	32.4 %
Middle School	69.0	63.3	45.2	48.4	32.3
High School	40.9	54.5	22.7	45.5	18.2
Special School	33.3	50.0	0	0	25.0
Average	62.0 %	66.0 %	41.0 %	46.0 %	30.2 %

#### **4. Conclusions**

Overall, it can be said that the principals are highly enthusiastic—Every principal who participated in the survey (85 % of all of the principals in MCPS) indicated their conviction that the SDT program can improve student achievement. Having said that, at least two broad conclusions stand out in the principals’ responses:

- SDTs are perceived by principals as having a bigger impact on the behavior of teachers than on the behavior of students.
- SDTs are perceived as having a bigger impact in Elementary Schools than in High Schools and Special Schools.

### **III. SDTs’ Views of the SDT Program**

The SDT program depends on the professionalism and initiative of the SDTs. So a second important source of information on the effectiveness of the program comes from the SDTs themselves. The survey of SDTs focused on their training, roles, support, and impacts. This section also draws on findings from the case studies and the analysis of SDT logs.

#### **1. The SDTs generally feel well prepared for their innovative roles.**

Almost all the responding SDTs received their initial intensive training during the summer of 2000. Seven were trained during the fall, and six reported not having attended initial training.

The SDTs were asked about the extent to which several topics were covered in the initial training. Their perceptions varied widely and are indicated below in Table 3.

**Table 3: Topics Covered in Initial Intensive Training**

Topics Covered	Not At All	To a Small Extent	Some	To a Great Extent
Philosophy and purposes of the SDT program	0 %	4 %	31 %	65 %
Helping teachers collaborate for instructional improvement	2	15	48	35
Instructional strategies	3	23	53	22
Strategies for professional development of teachers	2	28	48	22
Strategies for using data to improve instruction	9	40	40	12

When asked about the frequency of the twice-monthly training conducted throughout the school year, five percent of the SDTs thought it was not frequent enough, 39 percent thought it was just right, and 57 percent thought it was too frequent.<sup>10</sup>

The SDTs were asked to “describe your skill level” for several domains. Almost all had a high assessment of their skills except those needed to analyze student data. The results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: SDTs’ Perceptions of Their Skills**

Skill	Poor	Good	Excellent
Creating a sense of collegiality	1 %	40 %	59 %
Working with adult learners	1	45	54
Communicating the value of professional growth	2	45	53
Sharing knowledge of best practices	1	50	49
Modeling best practices	3	49	48
Analyzing student data	17	58	25

The SDTs were asked, “Now that you are into your job as an SDT, what suggestions do you have for improving the initial intensive SDT training?” The answers were quite varied. The most commonly cited suggestions were to set priorities and train on fewer matters; provide more on analyzing and using data, more on specific professional development strategies and adult learning, more on PDPs; and more time to try some things out such as developing a model lesson or training plan.

The SDTs were also asked, “Now that you are into your job as an SDT, what suggestions do you have for improving the twice monthly training?” The answer varied considerably, but more time for discussion, sharing, brainstorming, and collaborating among SDTs was mentioned far more often than anything else. The other common suggestions were to hold the training less often and focus on best practices.

<sup>10</sup>Note that 22 percent of the respondents did not answer this question, which is a somewhat higher rate when compared to other questions included in the survey.

## **2. The SDTs generally feel adequately supported.**

The SDTs were asked if they believe that “the SDT program is given sufficient support from the principal?” Ninety-four percent said “Yes” and six percent said “No.”

They were also asked whether “sufficient time is available to teachers to design and implement PDPs?” Only sixty-four percent said “Yes,” and 36 percent said “No.”

When asked whether they think the SDT program “will be able to work with all the teachers in your school,” 11 percent said “Very few” or “Some” and 89 percent said “Most” or “All.”

When asked “approximately how many times did you engage an SDT sub [substitute]?” 13 percent reported zero times, 25 percent reported 1-9 times, and the rest reported more than that. Twenty percent reported engaging subs more than 30 times. (Note: Twenty-one percent of respondents did not answer this question.)

The middle school and high school SDTs were asked whether they would prefer next year to have “a single full-time SDT or two or more shared-time SDTs.” Sixty percent preferred the former and forty percent preferred the latter. When asked to explain the reason for their answer, those favoring a single full-time SDT cited the magnitude of responsibilities and the need for coordination; those favoring multiple shared-time SDTs indicated the need to relate the activities to the content areas and the claim that it was working in their school.

## **3. Over the course of the school year there was some shift in the typical activities of SDTs.**

What the SDTs did during the fall, their start-up months, is best recorded in their logs which list the following activities in order of frequency:

- Presentations and staff development
- Worked on teacher PDPs
- Meetings with grade level and department teams
- Consulting with teachers
- Classroom observations
- Preparing materials
- SDT program management
- SDT professional development and training
- Managing SDT substitute program

The case study visits carried out in the mid-spring indicate a slight shift in their typical activities:

- Guiding the PDP process
  - Mentoring new teachers
  - Orchestrating staff development meetings
  - Researching and gathering resources
  - Modeling and coaching
  - Analyzing data
  - Attending staff development training sessions
  - Coordinating substitutes

Case study visits indicated that the SDTs were continuing to meet with grade level and department teams, but possibly not as extensively. The PDP process, which dominated the year’s activities, became more intensive beginning around November, and may have waned through the late winter and spring as teachers completed developing them. One new activity, mentoring new teachers, was included under the fall category, “consulting with teachers”, but may have appeared to have greater prominence to the evaluators or the SDTs in the spring. In their surveys, 43% of the SDTs reported giving “a lot” of time and attention to new teachers.

The other new activity that emerged as a more demanding topic during the year was the importance of analyzing data. The need was not foreseen by the summer 2000 training, but became apparent as the SDTs struggled with each teacher to prepare their PDPs which required them to identify, define, and analyze measurable data that would reflect on the teacher’s performance. By spring the need for greater skills in analyzing data was on the top of the list for requested staff development.

Using the categories identified by the earlier evaluation strategies, SDTs were asked to estimate the amount of time they spent on each activity. The results of the major activities follow:

<u>Amount of Time</u>	<u>SDT Activity</u>
• Assisting Teachers with PDPs	20%
• Meeting and planning	16%
• Sharing materials	14%
• Presentations and staff development	14%
• Classroom observations, modeling and sharing feedback	14%
• Analyzing data for school and teachers	5%

The proportions of time identified by the SDTs vary somewhat from the ranking of their activities in the fall. Basically, by spring the SDTs put greater emphasis on working with the PDPs, and less time giving presentations at staff development sessions. Meeting with teachers and teams, preparing/sharing materials, and classroom observations are at about the same rank. Other categories in the fall list were not among the options given to the SDTs on the survey. The new topic, analyzing data, was recognized as a major area of activity by mid-winter and was included on the SDT survey.

**4. The results vary substantially across the level of schools.**

SDTs have been assigned to all schools in MCPS. Many of the results varied moderately across level of the school, with elementary school SDTs generally having the most positive perceptions of the SDT program, and the high school teachers having the least favorable perceptions. The most notable differences are highlighted in Table 5.

**Table 5: The Results That Varied Substantially By Level of School**

<b>Result</b>	<b>Elementary Schools</b>	<b>Middle Schools</b>	<b>High Schools</b>
Initial intensive SDT training covered “to a great extent”:			
Philosophy and purposes of SDT program	81 %	56 %	35 %
Helping teacher collaborate for instructional improvement	55	11	12
Strategies for professional development	33	16	0
Instructional strategies	31	16	2
Strategies for using data to improve instruction	15	12	5
SDTs perceived skill level is “excellent” for:			
Working with adult learners	52	48	70
Creating a sense of collegiality	50	62	76
Analyzing student data	27	28	18
Roles most typical of SDTs work:			
Trainer (ranked first—as most typical)	21	26	3
Leader (ranked first—as most typical)	8	31	45
For those without a full-time SDT, would it be preferable to have a full-time one rather than several shared-time (% “Yes”)	Doesn't Apply	78	38
SDT program is perceived “to a great extent” as:			
Facilitating the professional development of teachers	52	54	14
Facilitating collaboration for instructional improvement	34	22	16
Increasing dedication to improve student performance	29	38	2
Facilitating the use of data to improve instruction	22	22	7
Facilitating reflective practice by teachers	16	11	7
Impact “to a great extent” on establishing a school culture for:			
One the job learning	38	27	12
Continuous improvement	36	22	19
Can SDT activities improve student performance (% “Yes”)	100	96	83

**5 . Shared model SDTs encountered difficulties.**

Probably the major issue addressed by the SDT program this year was the use of shared model SDTs in most high schools, less than half of the middle schools and a few elementary schools, as shown in Table 2. Schools choosing the shared model divided the full time (1.0) position among several persons. Frequently in high schools, this meant giving one period a day, or .2 of a position, to the Resource Teacher (RT) in each of the subject areas of English, mathematics, science, social science and one other subject.

**Table 6: Number of SDTs by Shared model and School Level**

School Level	No. of Schools	SDT's Shared Time						Total by Level
		0.2	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	
High Schools	23	95	3		1		4	103
Middle Schools	35	28	6	10	4	1	23	72
Elementary Schools	124	1		4		1	114	120
Special Schools	9						9	9
Total:	151	124	9	14	5	2	150	304

\* Based upon "School-Based Staff Development Teachers," prepared by the MCPS Department of Staff Development, February 1, 2001. This count includes schools with 6 SDTs if the .2 is indicated, and vacant, TBD positions.

The shared model was selected by high schools for several reasons. One was the size of the school. The average number of teachers per school is shown in Table 6. One SDT assigned to a high school, for example, would be expected to help an average 93 teachers. If that position is divided among five people, each would only be responsible for about 19. The elementary and special school full time SDTs work with 31 teachers, and in the middle school with 55 teachers. One case study finding (based on 16 schools) was that the more effective programs did not exceed a ratio of 1 SDT to 51 staff.

**Table 7: Number of SDTs to Teachers in Schools**

School Level	Total # of Teachers	Number of Schools	Average # of Teachers per School
Elementary	3,841.7	124	31
Middle	1,928.5	35	55
High	2,227.9	24	93
Special	185.6	6	31

\*From MCPS Schools at a Glance, 1999-2000, Department of Research and Evaluation, MCPS.

Principals also explained that they chose the shared model because their RTs, who were also their department chairpersons, were overburdened, and the additional period a day could relieve that pressure. When these decisions were made in the spring

of 2000, the full expectations of the SDTs for the following year were not clearly defined by MCPS and understood by principals and potential SDTs.

In general, participants in shared model-SDT schools felt that the model was a hindrance to effectively implementing the program. SDTs found that the part-time nature of the position was detrimental to their completing their responsibilities. Analysis of the logs revealed that for every 40 hours that the combined, shared time RT/SDTs had for SDT work, they were only able to accomplish 26.5 hours of SDT work, or about 66% efficiency. Probably most telling, when SDTs were asked if they wish to continue as SDTs next year, 88% of the elementary SDTs said, "Yes", but only 55% of the middle school and 52% of the high school SDTs said "Yes". Examined differently on the SDT survey, of the SDTs in the quartile with the largest allocated time (1.0) 80% wanted to stay. Of those in the smallest quartile (0.2), only 38% wanted to continue.

Full and part-time SDTs, based upon their reported tasks in the logs, appear to feel responsible for the following tasks, in order:

- Research, prepare and distribute useful materials
- Conduct classroom observations and share feedback with the teacher
- Conduct training sessions on special topics
- Share promising practices with teachers
- Assist teachers with their Professional Development Plans (PDPs)
- Increase the teachers' awareness of and enrollment in other staff development opportunities
- Be part of the school leadership team
- Meet with teachers on various teams: grade level, subject area and special teams
- Hire and organize SDT Substitute Teachers
- Prepare special events, such as Professional Development Day
- Support and develop good programs, such as Gifted and Talented, William and Mary, Project Soar, etc.
- Analyze data for school and teacher planning.

The part-time SDTs were usually able to complete only two responsibilities well: the work with teachers on their PDPs, and one other. This could explain why the high school SDTs in the focus groups and surveys were the least content. They explained that it was because of time constraints and the difficulties inherent in high school scheduling. The case studies found that the insufficient time for the shared responsibility SDTs resulted in minimized staff development efforts.

Two possibilities for reconciling the demands on the position raised by the responsibilities, and the limited resources (manpower and time) to complete them are (1) increase the number of SDTs in larger schools, and/or (2) reduce the expectations. Case study participants at the full time secondary schools felt that the full time SDT could:

- Coordinate staff development opportunities
- Meet with teachers on a daily basis (because the full time SDTs can accommodate teachers' schedules)
- Research and provide resources
- Observe and support teachers in the classroom
- Train teachers on the requirements of the new Teacher Evaluation System

Teachers in the shared model SDT schools want the SDTs to conduct more classroom observations and give feedback, model instructional strategies in the classrooms and give assistance in lesson planning. They were complimentary of their SDTs and viewed their inability to do these things as a result of having too many responsibilities and too little time.

The other concern inherent in the combining of SDT and RT responsibilities in one individual is that the SDT is to be a teacher's mentor, someone the teacher can confide in. The RT, however, observes teachers in his or her department, and writes a report on the observation which is shared with the principal, and may be used for the teacher's evaluation. Teachers in case study schools explained that they are unwilling to use an SDT as a mentor when that person is responsible for evaluating their teaching performance.

Opinions of SDTs on the shared time role are mixed. Among middle and high school SDTs, 52% prefer the full time SDT because of the magnitude of the responsibilities and the need for coordination; 49% prefer the shared time because of the need to relate activities to the content areas, and because they perceive it is currently working. The middle school SDTs preferred the full time position by 72%. The comparable percentage for high school SDTs was 32%.

#### **6. SDTs wishing to continue in that role perceive the program substantially more positively than those not wanting to continue.**

Seventy percent of the SDTs indicated that they would like to continue in that role next year, twenty percent were unsure, and ten percent indicated that did not want to continue in the role. What perhaps distinguishes those who want to continue from those who are uncertain or do not wish to continue? The most dramatic difference was that 88 percent of those in elementary schools want to continue in the role but only 48 percent in the high schools are similarly inclined. Those wanting to continue as SDTs also were generally more enthusiastic about SDT training, roles, support, and impacts than those who were undecided or did not want to continue in the role. The most notable differences are highlighted in Table 5.

From the cross-tabulation analyses, three major findings are apparent: (1) half of all the SDTs in the middle and high schools are undecided or have determined they do not want to continue in the program next year, (2) The SDTs in the high schools perceive substantially more shortcomings in the program than do the SDTs in the elementary schools, (3) SDTs who do not want to serve as SDTs next year or are uncertain about continuing perceive more shortcomings in the program than those who want to continue next year.

#### **7. Conclusions from the SDT Survey**

The SDTs in the elementary schools generally perceive that the program is off to a good start. Those in the middle schools are somewhat less enthusiastic, and those in the high schools have a mix of positive and negative views about the program's first year and its potential.

Overall the SDTs perceive that they were pretty well prepared for their innovative roles. Common suggestions for improving next summer's training included providing

more emphasis on analyzing and using student data to plan improvements in instruction, specific strategies for professional development, instructional strategies that will improve student performance, and time for the SDTs to practice what they are being taught during the training sessions. By the same token, some felt too much was covered in the initial training, but very few suggested what should be dropped. For the by-weekly training through the year, the most common suggestion was more time for the SDTs to share and collaborate on matters of mutual interest.

The SDTs generally appear to be assuming the roles and responsibilities that were anticipated. The forty percent of SDTs who indicated they are devoting “a lot” of time to new teachers might be doing double duty orienting and mentoring new teachers, and it is not clear they should be devoting so much time to this. Thirty percent ranked “Listener” as their first or second most typical role and those SDTs may not be assuming as active a role as was anticipated for them.

The SDTs generally perceive they are receiving good support, but there are three areas of concern. More than one-third reported that the teachers do not have enough time to prepare their PDPs. Almost two-thirds of the middle and high school SDTs indicated that the present shared-time SDTs in their school should be replaced with a full-time one. It also appears that a quarter of the SDTs are making little use of substitutes when engaging teachers in professional development activities.

Overall the SDTs appear optimistic about the impacts of the program. Their main concerns are about facilitating the use of data to improve instruction and facilitating reflective practice by teachers.

The results varied substantially by level of school and whether the SDT wished to continue in that role next year. SDTs in the middle and high schools were less favorable about the program than were those in the elementary schools. The results did not vary much over SDT phase, years the SDT had been in the current school, or prior professional development experience of the SDT.

Taken as a whole, these results suggest that the SDT program in the elementary schools is off to a good start but could be strengthened with some refinements suggested above. It should be noted, however, that the favorable results at the elementary school level do not assure that the SDT program will achieve its goals at that level. They only indicate that the program is being implemented much as planned and these SDTs are optimistic about its potential. That is good news, but only time will tell whether the program boosts student performance.

The survey results suggest that the SDT program in the high schools, and to a lesser extent in the middle schools, faces serious challenges. A substantial portion of high school SDTs perceived shortcomings in training, support, and immediate impacts. There is a prospect that about one-third of the high school SDTs may choose not to continue in the role next year, requiring the recruiting and training of many replacements. There is also reason for serious concern about whether the high school SDT program will achieve its ultimate goal—raising student performance. It would be easy to dismiss this warning, because only a few SDTs in the high schools had strongly negative perceptions, but it should be noted that volunteers in innovative programs usually start with great enthusiasm and view the first year or two through rose-colored glasses.

### III. Perspectives of Teachers on the Role and Contribution of Staff Development Teachers

The SDT program has been established to foster the professional growth of teachers and thereby to improve the quality of teaching and the level of student achievement. Given the centrality of teachers in the educational process, it is essential to consider their views about this innovation.

#### 1. SDTs focus more of their energies on new teachers than on veteran teachers.

One of the early questions in the survey asked teachers how many hours over the past year they had actually spent working with an SDT, whether on a one-on-one basis, as a small group (up to ten), or in a larger group. Table 8 indicates that the average number of hours a teacher spent with an SDT was 14 hours, of which 3.1 hours was one-on-one, 6.1 hours in a small group, and 4.8 hours in a larger group.

One of the areas of interest was the amount of effort SDTs gave to teachers new to teaching. To investigate this, we divided the sample into four more or less equal groups: new teachers (0-3 years of teaching experience), moderately experienced teachers (4-7 years), experienced teachers (8-15 years), and veteran teachers (16 years or more). The average number of hours new teachers report having had with SDTs (20.5 hours) is greater than for the other groups. Moreover, the number of hours of one-on-one assistance this group reports is also comparatively high.

**Table 8: Number Hours Contact with SDTs, by Years of Experience**

Years of Experience	Individual	Group 2-9	Group 10+	Total
1-3	6.2	7.6	6.8	20.5
4-7	2.6	8.2	5.3	16.1
8-15	2.0	6.5	3.8	12.3
16 or more	2.4	3.9	4.1	10.5
Average	3.1	6.1	4.8	14.0

N=311

#### 2. High School Teachers report they have the least amount of contact with SDT teachers.

The average number of hours of contact that teachers reported having with SDTs was 14 hours; in contrast with this average, high school teachers reported an average of only 5.8 hours. Moreover, whereas the average number of hours of one-on-one contact with SDTs was 3.1 hours, high school teachers reported an average of only 1.1 hours of one-on-one contact with SDTs during the school year, shown in Table 9. In sum, ***there appears to be a very wide gap in the implementation of the SDT program at the high schools relative to the other school levels.***



	Total	Elementary	Middle	High	1-3 Yrs	4-7 Yrs	8-15 Yrs	More Than 15
Workshop Outside	51.3%	50.6%	54.7%	50.0%	54.8%	56.1%	48.4%	50.8%
SDT Workshop Inside	90.2%	94.5%	93.0%	75.4%	88.7%	91.2%	90.8%	89.5%
SDT demonstration	32.3%	40.4%	32.1%	10.9%	40.0%	34.8%	4.0%	23.0%
Team taught with SDT	8.8%	9.3%	10.7%	3.1%	13.1%	13.4%	4.7%	5.7%
SDT shared materials	76.9%	83.4%	85.5%	49.2%	74.2%	77.9%	75.4%	79.2%
Observed by SDT	32.3%	31.7%	35.7%	26.6%	44.3%	39.7%	33.8%	22.1%
Team Planning with SDT	53.3%	62.1%	59.8%	23.4%	43.3%	50.0%	58.1%	58.7%
Peer Observation	40.9%	35.4%	52.9%	37.5%	43.5%	47.1%	36.9%	38.5%
Action Research	18.0%	18.5%	19.5%	14.5%	13.1%	15.9%	15.6%	22.2%
Study Group	11.4%	15.0%	7.3%	6.3%	14.8%	4.6%	9.4%	15.1%
Coaching from SDT	59.4%	66.3%	60.5%	37.5%	72.1%	63.2%	52.3%	55.9%
SDT Located Resources	66.0%	79.4%	64.6%	34.4%	68.3%	69.1%	65.6%	63.3%
SDT helped to Acquire Skills	50.5%	55.8%	53.7%	29.7%	57.4%	52.2%	54.7%	43.8%
Examined Data with SDT	37.3%	46.9%	37.8%	14.5%	41.0%	42.4%	31.7%	35.0%

**Table 10b: Percentage of Teachers Finding Selected Activities Helpful (of those Actually Participating in the Activities)**

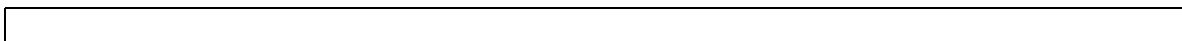
Activity	School Level				Years Teaching			
	Total	Elementary	Middle	High	1-3 Yrs	4-7 Yrs	8-15 Yrs	More Than 15
Workshop Outside	47.5%	43.2%	52.2%	51.7%	47.1%	58.3%	36.7%	46.7%
SDT Workshop Inside	40.8%	48.7%	34.8%	19.6%	40.0%	48.4%	28.8%	43.0%
SDT demonstration	59.8%	59.1%	53.3%	83.3%	58.3%	70.8%	52.2%	58.6%
Team taught	72.7%	84.2%	50.0%	50.0%	75.0%	75.0%	50.0%	75.0%

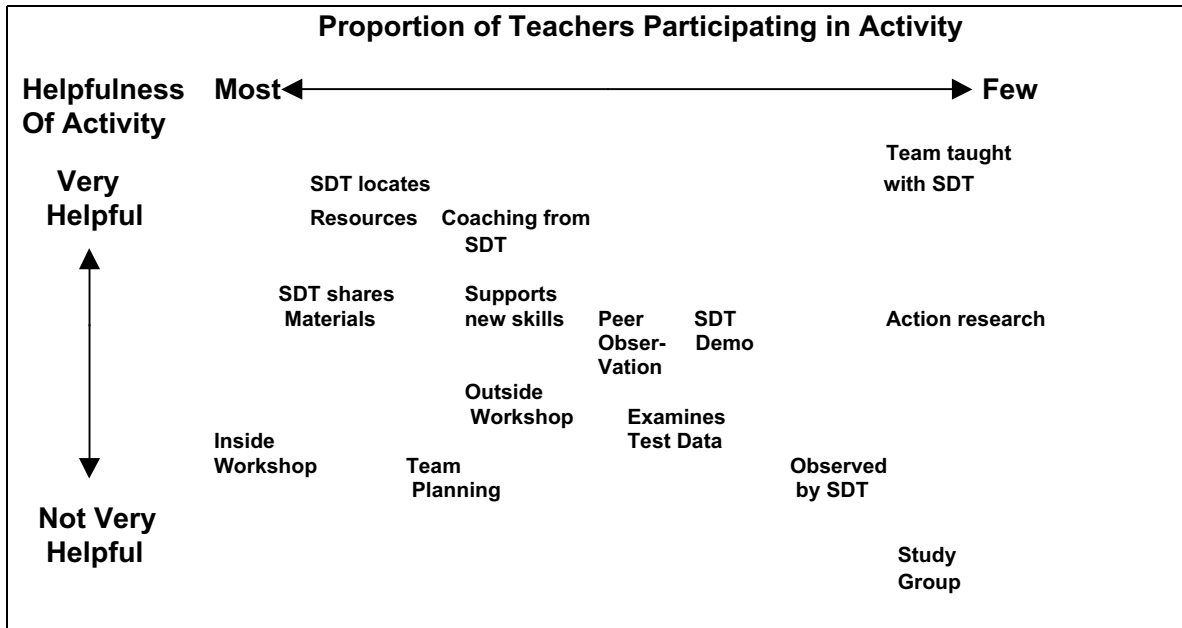
	Total	Elementary	Middle	High	1-3 Yrs	4-7 Yrs	8-15 Yrs	More Than 15
with SDT								
SDT shared materials	51.6%	53.0%	50.0%	40.0%	67.4%	50.0%	42.9%	49.5%
Observed by SDT	41.6%	41.5%	39.3%	43.8%	38.5%	48.0%	31.8%	44.4%
Team Planning with SDT	54.9%	58.8%	47.9%	42.9%	72.0%	66.7%	33.3%	54.4%
Peer Observation	61.1%	63.8%	52.4%	66.7%	70.4%	71.0%	52.2%	53.5%
Action Research	60.3%	58.1%	68.8%	55.6%	50.0%	58.3%	41.7%	75.0%
Study Group	47.4%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	22.2%	75.0%	37.5%	58.8%
Coaching from SDT	68.3%	71.7%	65.3%	60.9%	70.5%	74.4%	54.3%	69.7%
SDT Located Resources	72.5%	72.7%	74.5%	66.7%	80.5%	71.7%	60.5%	74.0%
SDT helped to Acquire Skills	63.2%	65.9%	57.1%	56.3%	76.5%	56.3%	48.6%	68.6%
Examined Data with SDT	51.7%	54.5%	40.0%	66.7%	48.0%	55.6%	31.8%	63.4%

**4. Teachers indicate that the most helpful activities of SDTs are coaching, team teaching, and assistance in the location of resources.**

Those who were engaged in particular activities were asked to indicate how helpful they found this experience (very helpful, somewhat helpful, little/no help). Whereas, as reported in the previous section, there was significant variation in the frequency of activities by school level and the experience of teachers, the helpfulness ratings of the different activities were relatively uniform across levels, phases, and years of experience of the teachers. Teachers were especially appreciative when SDTs helped them locate resources, provided coaching, and engaged in team teaching. They give lower helpfulness ratings to SDT-led inside workshops, team planning, observations of their teaching practices by the SDT, and study groups.

**Figure 1: The Incidence and Helpfulness of SDT Activities**





The horizontal axis of Figure 1 indicates the frequency with which particular activities were reported from Most (circa 80 percent) to Few (circa 10 percent), and the vertical axis indicates the extent to which teachers who participated in the activities felt they were helpful. Study groups, an activity that was rarely reported and was not considered helpful by those who participated in the activity, appears to be an activity that should be de-emphasized. In contrast, team teaching with SDTs and action research, two activities that were infrequently reported yet considered very helpful, appear to be activities that deserve greater emphasis. Coaching by SDTs and the assistance of SDTs in locating resources were two activities that were frequently reported and considered very helpful. The other activities varied between these extremes.

**5. Elementary and Middle School Teachers have a much more favorable impression of the expertise, availability, and quality of services of their SDTs than do High School Teachers.**

Table 11 reports the percentages of teachers agreeing on the availability, expertise and quality of services of their SDTs. In general, SDTs are given moderately high ratings in most areas. Approximately half of the teachers indicate that their SDTs have sufficient expertise, are available, and provide a reasonable quality of services in most areas. Areas where the quality of services is less highly regarded include the planning of useful activities and the provision of useful information on subject content.

**Table 11: Teachers Confirming the Expertise, Availability, and Quality of Services of SDTs, by School Level**

	Elementary	Middle	High	Special	Average
Sufficient expertise	58.3%	44.8%	19.7%	70.0%	47.7%
Available when needed	55.5%	54.7%	20.6%	70.0%	48.9%
Follows through on requests	66.1%	54.0%	23.0%	70.0%	54.8%
Plan useful activities	42.6%	27.6%	11.7%	50.0%	32.9%
Flexible in accommodating needs	61.3%	50.6%	22.6%	70.0%	51.2%
Maintains confidentially	61.1%	57.5%	26.7%	60.0%	53.6%
Useful information on teaching skills	53.4%	40.2%	13.1%	50.0%	42.1%
Useful information on content	47.6%	29.9%	13.3%	40.0%	36.1%
Useful information on system expectations	54.0%	44.2%	18.3%	50.0%	44.5%

For every area, high school teachers are more critical than are their colleagues in the elementary and middle schools. It is especially notable that only one-eighth of all high school teachers believe the SDTs plan useful activities or that they provide useful information on subject content and teaching skills; indeed in these three areas, there are as many high school teachers providing strong negative ratings as providing positive ratings.

Whereas there is wide variation in the impressions of teachers by school level, the differences by phase are more modest. In general, teachers in Phase I schools have somewhat more positive impressions than do teachers in Phase II and Phase III schools. (The spread is typically ten percent.)

**6. Teachers with less tenure tend to have a more favorable impression of the SDT program**

Concerning years of experience, an interesting finding was that moderately experienced teachers (those with 4-7 years of experience) had the most positive impressions, followed by new teachers, and then the more experienced teachers. A similar pattern was reported earlier concerning the teachers evaluations of the helpfulness of the various SDT activities. Whereas new teachers receive the most attention of SDTs, their needs are the greatest, and so they look to the SDTs for more help than can be provided. The moderately experienced teachers appear to be the most appreciative of the expertise of the SDTs and the help they provide. The teachers with many years of experience are the least appreciative, perhaps believing that they already have most of the answers they need for the challenges they face.

**7. Teachers in Elementary Schools and Phase I Schools are the most likely to say that the SDT Program has had an impact on their teaching.**

Several questions were asked to determine the extent to which teachers believed the SDT program was having an impact on their and their colleagues' teaching practices. For most of these questions, as indicated in Table 12 below, approximately thirty percent of all teachers estimated that there was a substantial impact (and approximately ten percent indicated no impact). Facilitating professional development was described as the area of greatest impact, a reflection of the extensive involvement of SDTs in helping

**Table 12: Teachers' Impression of SDT Program's Impact on Their Teaching**

	Total	Elementary	Middle	High	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Facilitates Professional Development	38.0%	42.7%	38.3%	25.0%	48.4%	29.4%	39.5%
Increases Dedication To Student Performance	28.1%	35.8%	23.3%	15.5%	31.7%	26.0%	27.2%
Facilitates Reflective Practice	28.3%	33.3%	27.9%	12.7%	34.0%	25.2%	26.3%
Facilitates Use of Data To Improve Instruction	29.0%	32.9%	31.0%	12.7%	25.7%	30.5%	30.7%
Facilitates Collaborative Practice for Instructional Improvement	33.3%	38.8%	32.5%	40.0%	40.2%	27.3%	34.6%

teachers develop their Professional Development Plans during the fall of 2000. But many teachers also acknowledged that the SDT program was having an impact on staff dedication to improving student performance, facilitating reflective practice, facilitating the use of data to improve instruction, and facilitating collaborative practice for instructional improvement. As with many of the other findings from this survey, the impact was felt to be greatest in the elementary and middle schools and in Phase I schools. There were no significant differences by years of teaching.

**8. Teachers in Elementary Schools and Phase I Schools are the most likely to say that SDTs have had an Impact on School Culture.**

Somewhat distinct from instructional practice is the expectation that the SDT program will transform school cultures, resulting in a stronger commitment to on the job learning, experimentation, and continuous improvement. Again a significant minority (approximately thirty percent), as illustrated in Table 13, believes that the SDT program is fostering a shift in school culture. Again, teachers in elementary schools and Phase I schools are more likely to perceive a change, and there are no significant differences by years of teaching experience. A small minority (approximately ten percent) believes there has been no change, and this group is disproportionately composed of high school teachers; for example, 25.8 percent of high school teachers say there has been no improvement in on the job learning, 33.3 percent say there has been no fostering of experimentation, and 27.4 percent say there has been no shift towards continuous improvement.

**Table 13: Teachers’ Impression of SDT Program’s Impact on The School Culture**

	Total	Elementary	Middle	High	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
On the job Learning	31.8%	40.4%	23.5%	17.7%	40.8%	28.4%	25.9%
Experimentation	19.9%	25.0%	20.2%	7.9%	23.3%	19.5%	16.0%
Continuous Improvement	36.8%	45.3%	30.6%	19.4%	45.6%	32.1%	33.3%

**9. Teachers express both frustration with the preparation of PDPs and satisfaction with the focus the PDPs brought to their work.**

From the viewpoint of systemic growth, the PDPs provided the linkage between the teachers’ individual activities in the classroom to the school system’s ultimate goal: improving student achievement, generally as measured by standardized test scores. MCPS’s academic priorities, outlined in Our Call to Action,<sup>11</sup> include to “Analyze and measure teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in improving student performance and results.” Each school’s improvement plan, the Local School Success for Every Student Plan (LSSESP) was required to address Our Call to Action with measurable outcomes, and teachers were required in their PDPs to address at least one of the school’s LSSESP goals, and include it as their own. The teacher’s PDP is then used as part of the teacher’s evaluation, explaining why there is a great amount of concern and attention given to the development of the PDPs.

The PDPs, identified in the focus groups as being a primary activity of the SDT, consumed a lot of the SDTs’ time. But it also brought a focus to the program, and an introductory way of working with individual teachers in a supportive role. The result was, however, that in many ways teachers saw the SDTs and the PDPs as part of the same package. The case studies found that the SDT role and program are perceived to be directly tied to the PDPs.

In their focus groups, the teachers felt that the SDT program, and, in particular, the PDP implementation were stressful ventures. They noted the PDPs have brought a heightened level of accountability to teachers’ work, that “expectations are rising with everything”. In contrast to that “least useful activity”, they mentioned as a “most rewarding activity” that the completion of the PDPs and their opportunities to observe and plan were the most rewarding aspects of this year. This had not happened in previous years. Principals and SDTs added that the analysis of school wide data was a very helpful activity in setting goals for school and teacher PDPs.

Teachers, in their survey, reported what they found to be the most useful aspects of the PDP. In order of the most frequently mentioned, they are:

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<sup>11</sup> Montgomery County Public Schools. (November 9, 1999). Our Call to Action: Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap Because Children Matter.

1. Opportunity to focus on goals and objectives and professional growth
2. Working with teams and collaborating on team and department goals
3. Personal growth, professional development and accountability
4. The long-term perspective of planning
5. Working with the SDTs
6. Working with their colleagues about teaching strategies and student-oriented goals
7. Using the PDP to increase focus on students
8. Time during the day made available by SDT substitutes
9. Using the opportunity to reflect about their teaching
10. Researching and locating resources
11. The writing process that helped them organize, and can later be used to check their progress.

Among what they found least useful, 65% addressed the process of the PDPs and the demands they place on teachers, not on the PDP's content and substance. The least useful aspects in order were:

1. PDP process – the purpose, directions, form and lack of follow-up
2. Time required when they have other demands on their time
3. PDPs not reflecting their own personal and professional goals
4. Amount of paperwork
5. Attending meetings and other work related to the PDPs
6. Implications of future accountability, implementation and lack of flexibility
7. Their need for more support from the SDTs.

On the whole, teachers were positive about the PDP, and gave a positive rating to ten items describing the PDP. The first five are: The PDP is focused on relevant content; it was developed with the help of an SDT; it is leading to improved student learning; it lays a multi-year plan for professional growth; and it is a living document that will change as I works toward my professional goals. The one item which did not receive a positive endorsement was their agreeing that the PDP is just administrative paperwork. Interestingly, the teachers who were most positive about the PDP process were in the Phase I schools.

Only teachers who are in the evaluation year of their professional growth cycle, and in Phase I schools were required to use the PDP in their evaluations this year. This was part of the new Teacher Evaluation System, also known as the Professional Growth System. Other teachers in Phase I schools were also required to prepare a PDP, and teachers in Phases II and III were required to develop draft PDPs. The majority of teachers in all three phases, (about 82% in each) completed their PDPs.

#### **10. Most teachers find value in the SDT substitutes.**

One element of the program, attesting to the careful design given to the SDT effort and commitment of resources, was the providing of SDT substitutes to cover teachers' classes while they engage in staff development activities. These substitutes were generally assigned to one school where they could get to know students and staff. The amount of substitute time was also allocated with a greater number of hours available to Phase I schools which were implementing the new Teacher Evaluation System. Substitute time will be increased in Phases II and III schools each year as that

phase implements the system. Teachers used the substitutes about once a semester. The less experienced teachers tended to use the substitutes more.

The large majority of teachers, 74%, support the substitutes. They said it was basically a good program, and they appreciated how easily they could procure a substitute's services (usually arranged by the SDT). They commented on how important it was for the substitute to be familiar with the school and students. The dissenting 26% felt that it took too much time and effort to prepare for the substitutes. Many did not want to leave their classes, especially for classes with advanced curriculum, difficult students or special education.

Teachers used the substitutes, listed in order, to:

- Observe other teachers in their home school and other schools
- Improve their teaching practices
- Engage in professional development
- Collaborate with other teachers
- Meet with grade level and subject level teams
- Do individual planning
- Work on their PDPs
- Prepare materials
- Accomplish instruction-related activities
- Meet with their SDTs.

Teachers frequently pointed out that none of these would have been possible without the SDT substitutes. Comments from middle and elementary school principals attested to the value of the program. They reported that the substitute days are crucial and critical to the SDT's success.

## **V. Cross-Cutting Findings**

### **1. School environment and context influence implementation of the SDT program.**

The size and level of schools has had a bearing on implementation. While the equivalent of one SDT was assigned to each school, the challenge of reaching teachers was magnified in larger schools and in the high schools where teachers are subject specialists. The approach experimented with during the first year in most high schools has been to ask several teachers to share responsibility for staff development; as will be noted below, this approach has its weaknesses.

In the first set of sixteen school visits 152 school personnel were interviewed: 109 teachers; 11 full-time SDTs; 16 shared model SDTs; and, 16 principals. Participants were asked to identify factors within their schools that promote or hinder the implementation of the SDT program.

Table 14 lists the factors most frequently cited by participants as promoting SDT program implementation. Only factors cited by two or more participants in each school and in 8 or more schools (50% of schools or greater) are included in the table. The frequency of factor identification, or number of times each factor is mentioned, is reported by total number of schools; type of school; number of schools with one full time

equivalent SDT; and, number of schools with shared staffing. Differences by Teacher Evaluation Phase were negligible.

**Table 14: Factors Most Frequently Identified as Promoting SDT Program Implementation**

Factors Promoting SDT Implementation	# of Schools Identifying Factor	Type of School			# of Schools with 1 FTE SDT	# of Schools with Shared model SDTs
		HS	MS	ES		
Increased Teacher Accountability	12	4	2	6	7*	5
SDT Support of Teachers	12	1	4	7	6	5
Unified Vision	9	1	1	7	7	2
Principal Support of SDTs	9	2	3	4	4	5
Knowledgeable & Skilled SDT	8	2	1	5	5	3

\*Includes one school with a single full time SDT and 5 - .2RTs allocated at the principal's discretion.

Increased teacher accountability and SDT support of teachers are perceived as the primary factors promoting implementation of the SDT program. Middle and elementary schools believe the support of the SDT is key to promoting implementation of the SDT program, while the high schools place greatest emphasis on holding teachers accountable.

The new Teacher Evaluation System requires teachers to set professional development goals, implement practices designed to meet those goals and document results. Teachers are expected to develop a plan for their professional development known as the PDP, and will be held accountable for meeting the goals they've outlined as part of their evaluation. The SDT role in the construction of teacher PDPs is one important and central piece of the expectations engendered by the new evaluation system during this first year. While many teachers feel that holding teachers accountable for student learning is nothing new, most participants interviewed perceive that the new system is different from the former system which was described by one teacher as "loosely configured and loosely monitored". There is a general feeling that the new Teacher Evaluation System and the SDT program have heightened expectations that teachers must continue to grow professionally, link their professional development with school and system goals and initiatives, and that the ultimate assessment is student learning. The case studies provide evidence that the requirements of the new Teacher Evaluation System enhance the appeal of the SDT program since it is designed to provide support and guidance to help teachers meet expectations of accountability.

Positive feelings about the contributions of the SDTs in supporting staff development efforts are especially felt in the middle and elementary schools. While their focus differs somewhat from school to school, the activities of the SDTs generally center on: guiding the PDP process; orchestrating all staff development meetings; researching and gathering resources; modeling and coaching; analyzing data; attending staff development training sessions; and coordinating the staff development substitute teacher(s). In the majority of case study schools, SDTs have concentrated their efforts during this first year on guiding the PDP process and mentoring new teachers.

Participants perceive that implementation of the SDT program is enhanced by a unified vision, principal support and knowledgeable and skilled SDTs. Particularly in the elementary schools participants describe the positive impact of having a clear, school-wide vision. In these schools, the activities of the SDT program are coordinated with school objectives aimed at improving student achievement as expressed in the LSSSES plan. One SDT commented that this focus helps teachers make sound and consistent instructional decisions. Teachers in one school described the importance of having “a common cause” and the instrumental role of the SDT in unifying staff around that cause. A high school principal reported, “That prior to the “SDT program there was not a unified vision in the school, just initiatives that felt like individual pieces which did not create a momentum to achieve the SES plan. The unique position of the SDT as neither an evaluator, as are the resource teachers, or as an administrator, as is the principal, allows the SDT to partner with teachers and the administration to move forward clearly defined school and school system agendas”.

Although the SDT program can provide support in establishing a unified vision, some SDT and principal participants suggest that size and design of the secondary schools, particularly the high schools where the organization is by content, create challenges not so prevalent in elementary schools. One teacher comment illustrates this: “While all teachers in a high school may agree that students’ math scores need to improve, teachers in other content areas, say foreign language or English, may not agree that they should teach math strategies in their classes or include improving math scores as a professional goal in their PDPs”.

In addition to a unified vision, participants perceive that principal support to the SDTs enables effective implementation of the program. Principal support is described as providing clear definition of the role and activities of the SDT communicated to all staff in the beginning of the school year; maintaining the intent of the program by only engaging the SDT in staff development activities (i.e. no teaching or duties outside the realm of staff development); and, respecting that the position is non-administrative. In schools with positive principal support, professional staffs recognize that the principal and SDT(s) work well together in establishing a vision and planning staff development activities.

The SDTs are instrumental in conducting the work of the SDT program and meeting program goals. The strength in skills and knowledge of SDTs is considered important to the success of the program, but was noted in only half of the schools visited and only one middle school.

Table 15 cites factors perceived as hindering SDT program implementation. Only one factor, teacher resistance, was identified in 50% or more of participating schools.

**Table 15: Factors Most Frequently Identified as Hindering SDT Program Implementation**

Factors Hindering SDT Program Implementation	# of Schools Identifying Factor	Type of School			# of Schools with 1 FTE SDT	# of Schools with Shared model SDTs
		HS	MS	ES		
Teacher Resistance	11	3	2	6	6	5
Poor Communication	7	3	1	3	3	4
SDT Configuration	7	4	3	0	2*	5

\*One of these two represents a school with 1 FTE SDT and 5 - .2 RTs allocated at the discretion of the principal.

Teacher resistance is perceived as the principal factor hindering SDT program implementation. This perception crosses the lines drawn by school type, SDT position configuration and perceptions of effective implementation as well as participant group. In all schools identifying this factor, a distinction was made between the response of less-tenured teachers (3 or less years experience) and veteran teachers (4 or more years experience) to the SDT program. A nearly equal number of less-tenured and veteran teachers were interviewed. In nearly all cases, less-tenured teachers are very positive in their assessment of the program often describing the unexpected and highly valued support provided by the SDT(s). Veteran teachers are more circumspect in their appraisal, often commenting on county history and their recollections of several innovations that have come and gone in the years they've taught in the system. There is resentment of what some believe is the public perception that teachers need to be "fixed" and a county perception that teachers with considerable experience don't know what they're doing. A few veteran teachers involved in constructing PDPs reported that they were simply writing out the goals that they intended to work toward during the school year with or without the SDT program. For the most part, veteran teachers interviewed were not complimentary of the PDP process. One reports that it was "...laborious, there's been no follow-up, and I was told I had to write goals to improve reading scores. I teach science". A few veterans declared that they didn't believe they would learn anything new from the SDT.

In almost all of the schools visited, SDTs have given concentrated time to working with new teachers (teachers in their first year of teaching). Most SDTs mention working with veteran teachers in staff development meetings, team meetings and through the PDP process. Yet, they describe the level of involvement of veteran teachers as a group as well below that of less-tenured teachers in all schools. One SDT summarized that it seems that veteran teachers have not bought in.

Faulty communication is thought to be a barrier to SDT program implementation. This perception is more prevalent in schools with shared model SDTs than schools with a single full time SDT. Three areas of communication were identified as problematic: communication between MCPS and SDTs, communication between SDTs and teachers, and communication between SDTs and other support staff. The first is identified in five of seven schools and, in each case, by the SDTs. In the shared model SDT schools,

the feeling was unanimous that MCPS did not provide a clear job description, was not explicit about expectations of the job at the time the SDTs agreed to take the position, and has forwarded contradictory and conflicting information, particularly about the PDPs. These same SDTs confirm that they were not able to attend all of the summer training, and because of other duties and responsibilities, have been unable to attend all of the bi-monthly training sessions.

In three schools, teachers comment that they have little idea of what the program is about or what the SDT(s) is doing. Academic support personnel in two schools suggest that communication about coordinating various programs within schools is vague; they feel uncertain about who is to take charge of what and when.

Participants identify the shared model configuration of the SDT role as a hindrance to program implementation in all case study schools in which this configuration exists. In all of the shared model SDT schools plus one school with five .2 RTs and 1 FTE SDT, it is SDTs who identify this configuration of the position as hindering program implementation. Principals and some teachers in three of these schools would like to change to a single full time SDT. Shared model SDTs feel they have inadequate time to fulfill the responsibilities of the role particularly in light of teaching and administrative duties. They also feel its very difficult to serve as both a mentor and evaluator. This is a concern of some secondary teachers who say they are unwilling to utilize the SDT as a mentor when that same person is also their RT and responsible for evaluating their teaching performance.

The perceptions of the effectiveness of shared model SDTs as compared with those of full time SDTs were consistent in the second set of school visits. Participants in six secondary schools (4 high schools and 2 middle schools) were interviewed. Three of the schools applied the full-time SDT model and three had shared model SDTs. Even in large secondary schools where SDT to teacher ratios are 1-100, participants perceive the full-time SDT is in a position to coordinate staff development opportunities, to meet with teachers on a daily basis, (in part, because the SDT can accommodate teachers' schedules), to research and provide resources, to observe and support teachers in the classroom and to train teachers on requirements of the new teacher evaluation system. Variations exist in the extent to which full-time SDTs conduct these activities and in teacher perceptions of the overall quality of their performance in these areas across the three schools.

Teachers in the three secondary schools utilizing shared model SDTs report they are not receiving sufficient support and do not feel they are well informed about the program. Not surprisingly, it appears that the amount of staff development occurring in these shared model schools is directly linked to the amount of time the SDTs have to invest in these activities rather than to lack of interest or poor intent. This was highlighted in an analysis of SDT logs reporting SDT related activities in early fall. Calculations of dedicated time over 40 days revealed that 66% of SDT available time was spent in SDT related work by shared model SDTs. In addition, the size of some of these schools can require that a single .2 SDT work with as many as 30 teachers. Because the SDTs have spent their time working with teachers on PDPs, the issue of conflict between serving as both a mentor while in the SDT role and an evaluator in the RT role did not surface during the second set of interviews.

**2. Implementation is improved by thoughtful and consistent support from principals.**

The support of principals has proven to be critical to the success of the SDT program. The principal support enabled effective implementation by:

- Providing a clear definition of the role and activities of the SDT, communicated to all staff at the beginning of the year
- Maintaining the intent of the program by only engaging the SDT in staff development activities
- Respecting that the position is non-administrative.

Ninety-one percent (91%) of the SDTs reported in the SDT survey that the principal gives them sufficient support. However, in the focus groups they also mentioned that some principals ask too much of SDTs, turning to them to assist in various tasks. A clearer definition of the boundaries of staff development is desirable.

**3. Summer 2000 and bimonthly staff development helped prepare SDTs, and future training should place more emphasis on data analysis.**

Reports on the summer 2000 training program were generally good. Teachers in the early months commented on the volume of information. Principals (91% overall) believed that the SDTs were adequately prepared for their jobs. This broke down to 100% in special schools, 96% in elementary schools, 89% in middle schools and 63% in high schools.

The lower opinion of high school principals can probably be explained. The SDTs working in the shared SDTs model had to share the time allotted to a full time SDT during the summer training. This resulted in a patchwork of training for most of the high school and some of the middle school SDTs, accounting for the lower opinion high school principals and SDTs had of staff development and its effectiveness.

**Table 16: SDT Skills from Summer 2000 Training as perceived by Principals and SDTs.**

Areas of SDT Skills	Principal	SDT	
	“Excellent”	“Excellent”	“Good”
Sharing best practices	82 %	50 %	49 %
Professional growth	81	54	44
Modeling best practices	81	48	49
Creating collegiality	78	61	38
Working with adults	77	53	46
Analyzing student data	42	25	60
Average:	73 %	49 %	48 %

In areas taught in the training, shown in Table 16, principals and SDTs remarked on the skill levels of the SDTs. The principals rated the SDTs’ skills much higher, but

virtually all the SDTs felt that their skills were good to excellent. Data analysis is the one exception to this pattern. SDTs had reported that it was only covered to a small extent during the training, and they suggest that it be given more emphasis in future staff development training.

In addition to the summer program, SDTs attended training twice a month on Fridays. Some felt that the continuing influx of new information was sometimes overwhelming. The strongest reaction to the bimonthly training meetings was that they were too frequent – reported by 58% of the SDTs. Another 3% said they were too few, and 39% thought they were just right. Looking at the responses by level, 54% of elementary SDTs, 46% of middle school, and 77% of high school SDTs felt they were “too much”. The strongest objection was raised by Phase I elementary teachers and principals.

The areas principals felt should receive more emphasis in future staff development training were data analysis, teaching practices, and curriculum as shown in Table 17. The chart provides the larger picture of their areas of concern for staff development, but also illustrates a tailoring to emphasize different skills with the different groups.

**Table 17: Principals’ Staff Development Recommendations for SDTs, Teachers and Themselves**

Category	Group			Total
	SDT	Teachers	Principals	
Data analysis	66	55	58	179
Teaching practices	22	35	27	84
Curriculum	18	31	11	60
Management/leadership			38	38
SDT Responsibilities	32			32
Working with others	24			24
Understanding Teaching		23		23
Technology	8	3	10	21
Shared training	7	2	7	16
Time and planning		10		10
PDPs and evaluation		7		7
Special education	2			2
Other	22	21	16	59
<b>Total:</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>555</b>

SDTs confirmed their need for training in how to analyze school data because of its pivotal role in determining school plans and teacher PDPs. High school SDTs wanted more content-related training next year. “More meat and less games.” In their survey, SDTs asked that summer 2001 training set priorities and train on fewer matters. They would like to have more time to try things out, such as developing a model lesson plan or training plan. Specifically, they ask for the training to provide more on:

- Analyzing and using data
- Specific professional development and adult learning strategies

- PDPs.

Teachers said that the SDTs need greater supervisory training and knowledge of how to work with professional adults. They noted that classroom teachers don't always possess such skills.

SDTs and principals asked that their training be taken in conjunction with each other. SDTs highlighted that their training and preparation were done in isolation. They need to be trained with principals so that everyone is "receiving the same message". The conflict of messages has been confusing and makes the SDT seem as if he/she is not aware of wider county initiatives.

**4. SDTs have had some impact on school culture and the development of a professional community of learners.**

Making schools even better as professional communities of learners is one of the purposes of the SDT program. This would, in many cases, require a change of the culture in the school, and is difficult to measure. The issue of culture change was explored in the case study interviews, focus group interviews and to some extent, the SDT surveys.

In the first set of case studies, teachers, SDTs and principals were asked, "Has the culture of the school been impacted by the SDT program?" Participant responses suggest possible indicators of change as shown in Table 18. Indicators included are those mentioned by at least two participants in each school and in two or more schools.

**Table 18: Possible Indicators of Change in School Culture**

Indicators of Change	# of Schools Identifying Indicator	Type of School			# of Schools with 1 FTE SDT	# of Schools with Shared model SDTs
		HS	MS	ES		
Increased Collaboration & Collegiality	9	2	1	6	8	1
Increased Professional Conversation	6	1	1	4	5	1
Heightened Awareness of Instructional Practices	3	0	0	3	3	0

An increase in collaboration and collegiality among the staff was reported in elementary schools by some combination of principals, SDTs and teachers. According to these participants, this has been fostered by a school-wide vision, grade level goals, and opportunities through the availability of the staff development substitute to observe and plan jointly. In many cases, elementary teachers are coming together to align the curriculum with the Maryland Learning Outcomes and the language of the MSPAP.

In the middle school included in the table, the principal and SDT believe that the program is causing the staff to become more collegial and supportive of one another. This is especially the case among less-tenured teachers in this school. In the two high schools, shared model SDTs are finding their interactions with other departments is leading to increased collegiality as they share ideas and learn more about what teachers in other content areas do. A high school principal with a full time SDT noted that teachers are coming together more often to talk about what they're doing in their classrooms.

In both focus group interviews and the SDT survey, SDTs commented on collaborative practice as a perceived program impact. 30% of all SDTs surveyed feel the program has impacted to a great extent facilitation of collaborative practice for instructional improvement and 50% feel it has had some impact.

The perception of an increase in professional conversation is most prevalent in elementary schools visited and represented in Table 18. As a result of the staff development work she has done, one SDT believes that teachers are 1) more aware of what others are doing, 2) getting to know each other more, and 3) talking about becoming a learning community. Another points to a significant change in the level of talk about professionalism and student learning. Teachers and principals in these schools also perceive increased "teacher talk" around professional issues. The middle school principal and SDT perceive teachers in their building are beginning to speak a common language of instruction focused on improving student learning.

Heightened awareness of instructional practices is reported in three elementary schools. In one, the awareness centers on increasing the number and uniformity of instructional strategies used in Writers Workshop. Teachers in another school see evidence of a greater repertoire of teaching strategies aimed at connecting their PDPs and the Maryland Learning Outcomes. In the third school, teachers are increasing their use of stance questions and rubrics.

Evidence of the SDTs' contribution to change was described earlier through their activities reported in the logs. They also convened sessions such as writing skills, study groups, team building and collegiality. This spring, a principal noted that Understanding Teaching had provided a common language and knowledge base. And a teacher commented on the PDPs: "How quickly its language and overview has become a part of MCPS culture."

SDTs are reported to have had an impact on establishing a school culture in on the job learning, experimentation and continuous improvement, shown in Table 19. Although these are reports on abstract concepts, they provide insight into the development of a professional community of learners, part of the MCPS vision for all its schools.

**Table 19: Percent of Principals, SDTs, and Teachers Who Say SDT Program has had a Major Impact on Several Facets of School Culture.**

Program Impact on Teachers	Principals	SDTs	Teachers
Continuous improvement	61%	30%	37%
On the job learning	58%	29%	32%
Experimentation	62%	13%	20%

A significant minority (approximately 30%) of teachers believes that the SDT program is fostering a change in school culture. How much experience a teacher had was not a factor in this opinion. A small minority, however (about 10%) believes that there has been no change in school culture, and this group is disproportionately composed of high school teachers.

**5. The SDT program is perceived as having a substantial impact.**

One of the hopes for the SDT program, system-wide, is that it will raise expectations. Two of the SDTs in the focus groups remarked that the expectations have always been the same in the county. It is simply now that the county would like to see those expectations translate into effective practices. But the vast majority of focus group participants felt that the SDT program is raising expectations for student success.

Principals, SDTs, and teachers in their surveys were asked how great was the role of the SDT program in creating a professional community of learners. Their results are shown in Table 20. Principals see more impact than do the SDTs or teachers.

**Table 20: Percent of Principals and SDTs, and Teachers Who Say the Program is having a Substantial Impact on Teachers in Selected Areas\***

Program Impact on Teachers	Principal Perception	SDT Perception	Teacher Perception
Facilitating professional development of teachers	88.1%	42.0 %	28.6 %
Facilitating collaborative practice	66.0	30.0	33.3
Staff dedication	62.0	26.0	28.1
Facilitating the use of data	41.0	20.0	29.0
Reflective practice	56.0	14.0	28.3

\*Percentages are for those indicating “to a great extent” from four Likert scale options.

Overall, principals who reported the SDTs’ impact as “great” were most strongly represented at the elementary level. For the nine questions asking about impact, the average rated as “great” were elementary schools – 63%, middle schools – 60%, high

schools – 41% and special schools – 29%. Apart from the special schools, the pattern of the elementary schools being the most positive, and the high schools least positive is reinforced here.

Teachers in elementary and Phase I schools are the most likely to say that the SDT program has had an impact on their teaching. In general, teachers in Phase I schools have somewhat more positive impressions, than do teachers in Phase II and III schools. The spread is typically ten percent. Approximately thirty percent of all teachers estimated that there was a substantial impact (and approximately ten percent indicated no impact) of the SDT program. Facilitating professional development was described as the area of greatest impact, a reflection of the extensive involvement of many SDTs in helping teachers develop their PDPs.

Among teachers there is broad agreement (86% of all teachers) that SDTs' activities can result in improved student outcomes. These range from 68% of high school teachers, 84% of middle school teachers to 94% of elementary teachers. A similarly large majority of teachers (86%) would like the SDT program to continue next year. These opinions range from 74% of high school teachers, 86% of middle school teachers to 94% of elementary school teachers. Accordingly, support is greatest in the elementary schools, and weakest in the high schools. There are no significant differences based on the school's phase or the teacher's years of experience.

Overall, the impression from the teachers' survey is highly positive. Most teachers report interaction with SDTs, and a substantial majority indicates that they have benefited from these activities. While the skepticism of the SDT program is greatest among the high school teachers, it should be noted that three of every four sees promise in this innovation and urges its continuation next year.

Principals had much praise for the effectiveness of this first year. They noted the need to "stick with it". One commented that it was the "best development that has occurred in the last 20 years". All noted it had great potential to improve instruction and learning. Eighty-five (85%) percent of the principals, 91% of the SDTs, and 86% of the teachers indicated their conviction that the program could improve student outcomes.

## **6. The SDT Program Should be Continued**

In conclusion, it should be noted that there is overwhelming approval for the continuation of the program. Every principal surveyed indicated his/her conviction that the program should be continued and 86.4% of the teachers also indicated the program should be continued. The challenge for the future is to refine the program, to have it focus on activities where SDTs can be most helpful, to augment the number of SDTs in large schools, to clearly delineate the responsibilities of SDTs, and to provide adequate training and incentives so that SDTs continue to be highly motivated, to provide outstanding service to their fellow teachers, and to work together to build professional learning communities.

## VI. Suggestions for Change

This report is based on information that has been collected, analyzed and interpreted by the George Washington University team. All the findings and interpretations reported above are by that team. Based on these findings and the team's interpretation of their importance, the following are several suggestions for change that the team offers to MCPS.

The **principals** were enthusiastic about the SDT program, wanted it to continue, and in most cases felt it should be given at least one more year before it is re-examined. While many describe the program as perfect, others shared their thoughts on ways to improve the SDT program. Here, we will present several proposals that seem to be representative:

- More training in accessing and analyzing data for all in the schools
- More training in helping at-risk students for SDTs
- More training in time management for SDTs
- In that some schools have pockets of resistance to the SDT program, more training in working with difficult teachers.
- In that some SDTs are too heavy-handed, more training in diplomacy.
- SDT position might be made part of the career ladder for teachers.
- To reduce collegial tension, the pay and status of Elementary Reading Specialists could be made the same as that of SDTs.
- Instead of assigning SDT subs to specific schools, they might be assigned to the cluster so that several can be deployed at once to a single school thus enabling teams of teachers from that school to be released to go for observation at another school.
- SDTs spend too much time outside of the building—perhaps the most frequent complaint of principals—so be parsimonious in training during the school year.
- Create formulas for the assignment of SDTs to schools which take account of academic needs (more SDTs to schools with low achievement scores), the experience of the teaching staff (more where there are many new teachers), and the number of teachers in a school (more SDTs to large schools).
- Provide a budget to each school so it can acquire a professional library.

The **SDTs** also expressed much enthusiasm for the SDT program, especially those working in the elementary schools. Their views on their strengths and weaknesses were overall highly consistent with those of the principals.

- They felt they were well prepared for the job in most areas, excepting in data access and analysis related to student performance.
- While the SDTs felt they were receiving good support, they noted that teachers need more time to prepare their PDPs.
- They noted that more thought needs to go into the deployment of the substitutes associated with the SDT innovation.
- Similarly more thought needs to go into the role of SDTs at the high school level; over one-half of the high school SDTs indicated that they were not certain they would like to continue in this role next year.

The **SDTs** offered several suggestions for the enhancement of their training:

- More emphasis on analyzing and using student data to plan improvements in instruction
- Specific strategies for professional development
- More emphasis on instructional strategies that will improve student performance
- More time for the SDTs to try out what they are being taught during the training.

While some felt too much was covered in the initial training, there were few suggestions about what should be dropped. Many stressed the emphasis should be on process and not on content. They also suggested that the needs of SDTs varied, so training might be organized in elective modules rather than uniform training for all.

For the by-weekly training through the year, the most common suggestion was more time for the SDTs to share and collaborate on matters of mutual interest. However, many SDTs as well as principals indicated their concern that the training through the year frequently pulled SDTs away from their building. Some modification of this training with a greater reliance on a web-based interactive mode for sharing training materials may be worth exploring.

**Teachers** also were appreciative of the program though many thus far had had only modest contact with their SDTs. Teachers noted that some activities were more beneficial than others.

- Teachers are most partial to the full-time SDT model
- Teachers want more observation and team-teaching opportunities
- Teachers express a desire for more time to work with colleagues in developing materials and in other professional development activities
- High school teachers especially stress the need for attention to subject matter along with teaching methods
- Teachers are sensitive to the way SDTs were selected, expressing a desire to have a voice in the process and for open selection.

**In conclusion**, the findings suggest the SDT program is off to a promising start. The great majority of those involved believe it will have a positive impact on professional development and, by virtue of the more focused efforts of teachers, an impact on student achievement.