



2020-21 Specialized Service Providers (SSPs) Fairness Guide

SPECIAL SECTION:

IMPORTANT SSP FAIRNESS GUIDE UPDATES for SY 20-21

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has shared that 100% of an educator's final effectiveness rating will be based on Professional Practice for the 20-21 SY only.

Professional Practice for SSPs consists of an SSP's professional growth on five expectations that consist of mastery of expertise in their profession.

*DPS and DCTA have reached an agreement that **changes the implementation** of these components as follows:*

OBSERVATION:

- 1) An [SSP GPS COVID Guide](#) that reflects the considerations unique to virtual, hybrid, and in-person services (under COVID restrictions) has been developed by the Growth and Performance team and reviewed by the LCC.
- 2) It is required that all evaluators and SSPs be trained prior to any observation/evaluation being conducted.
- 3) Per article 29-3 in the DCTA/DPS agreement and the 20-21 [MOU](#): SSPs that have reached 3 years of satisfactory performance shall receive a minimum of 1 full observation. Any SSPs new to the district or that have not yet had 3 years of satisfactory performance shall receive at least 2 observations. Additionally, both SSPs and their evaluators can request additional observations for coaching and evaluation purposes.
- 4) SSP GPS observations should take place remotely, where appropriate, due to safety guidelines

STUDENT GROWTH:

- 5) SLOs will not be used (nor will any other student growth measure) for evaluation during the 20-21 school year.

All other guidelines not related to those listed above, will remain relevant to the current year; see following pages.



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1 PURPOSE

The SSP Fairness Guide was modeled after the LEAP Fairness Guide, and reviewed by the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) to ensure that the SSP Growth and Performance System (GPS) is administered fairly and consistently for all SSPs. The Guide includes the requirements that DPS is committed to following when it conducts the SSP evaluation process. It also includes a number of best practices that work toward improving the quality of feedback that SSPs receive.

The Components of SSP Growth and Performance (GPS)

The following measures shall be used to calculate the SSP End-of-Year rating:

- Observation - Professional Practice consisting of five expectations
- Student Growth (NOT used during SY 20-21)

2 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS

The SSP GPS provides a framework for our SSPs to identify areas of strength and growth aligned to their role through regular, meaningful feedback sessions with evaluators. The goal of the system is to support SSPs in their professional development towards meeting students' needs. The SSP and evaluator use the framework to gather evidence on the SSPs' practice throughout the school year during the school day. There is a unique framework for each of the following roles:

1. Audiologists
2. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Itinerants
3. Educational Sign Language Interpreters
4. Itinerant Teachers; Early Childhood Special Education, Gifted and Talented, Special Education
5. Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists
6. School Counselors
7. School Nurses
8. School Psychologists and School Social Workers
9. Speech Language Pathologists
10. Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialists

Observation **PLEASE SEE UPDATED GUIDELINES FOR 20-21**

Our goal is to ensure that all SSPs are provided with ongoing support and coaching through observation and feedback. In-building observations and evaluations for SSPs should be conducted by building leaders (the Principal or Assistant Principal) or a designated SSP Team Lead.

- **Observation Requirements**

All SSPs will receive at least two formal observations that are recorded in the 'observation and final ratings' tracker and/or the Whetstone observation tool for the appropriate SSP role. [Observation Trackers can be located in the Commons](#). Feedback is required for all formal observations. The



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observations that are not scored can include feedback on each of the final rating categories: Not Meeting, Approaching, Effective and Distinguished.

- **Subject of Observations**

Observations for SSPs should reflect the type of service, intervention, or instruction that both parties would like observed. This can include, but is not limited to, the following observable work:

- Instruction, Intervention or Services with Students (1:1, small group or whole classroom)
 - School Counselor specific: ICAP lessons or field trips - career fairs, college visits, etc.
- IEP Meetings
- Parent teacher conferences
- Consultation with teachers or staff
- Parent interview or phone conference
- Leading a training or presenting on a topic (whole staff, small group, 1:1)
- MTSS meetings
- Participation in a school special education team meeting
- Participation in departmental meeting(s): sharing information, presenting on a topic, leading small group discussions, etc.
- Participation in school, department, or district events: leading a training, interacting with families and students, etc.
- Interactions with outside providers or vendors
- Home visits

- **Observers: Who Can Conduct Observations?**

- School Leaders, SSP Team Leads, and Central Evaluators can perform observations. School Leaders include: Principals, Assistant Principals, Principal Residents and Principal Interns, Instructional support roles such as Instructional Superintendents, or other designee.

- **Observation Schedule**

- Evaluators will endeavor to complete one observation each semester. SSPs may be in more than one school so it is important to schedule the observations at the start of the school year.
- Observations should not take place during the first two weeks of the school year or more than once during a school week.
- Observations can take place at any point during the SSP's work day. Observations can be announced or unannounced. Announced – can be defined as the week the observation is to occur, but not the exact time and date. And observations can be scheduled between the SSP and evaluator to accommodate schedules.
- Evaluators will endeavor to observe SSPs **Hired Late** or on **Leave** throughout the course of the year or upon their start date. (See Section 7 below)

- **Feedback Sessions**

- Evaluators will endeavor to schedule a post-observation feedback conversation, during which the evaluator and the SSP will review observation notes shared with the SSP prior to the conversation. While it is strongly encouraged that the feedback session take place in person, it is



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not required and can take place over the phone, video-conference, or via email depending on the schedule of the SSP.

Documented Evidence

Evaluators should document evidence based on the SSP framework and ask SSPs to submit any necessary evidence throughout the school year. Each framework provides a list, though not exhaustive, of the different sources of evidence for each indicator. While not a requirement, it is a best practice to discuss the list and check in on the body of evidence throughout the school year.

Professionalism

The SSP frameworks do not explicitly address professionalism; however, expectations within the frameworks may address professionalism. For example, expectations four and five respectively focus on the SSP reflecting on practice and demonstrating collaboration, advocacy and leadership. SSPs and evaluators should discuss expectations for the role and professionalism behaviors they want to check in on during the school year. Evaluators can collect evidence on behaviors and consider it as part of the body of evidence to inform end-of-year ratings and conversation.

3 STUDENT GROWTH **PLEASE SEE UPDATED GUIDELINES FOR 20-21**

State law requires school districts to include individual measures of student growth in SSP ratings. Since SSPs do not have individual student growth scores, they must complete two SLOs to meet [SB 10-191](#) multiple measures requirement. DPS has selected to use SLOs as the student growth measures for SSPs because SLOs are educator-centered, respect educators as professionals, use a body of evidence, and allow for the closest connection between the instruction and learning that happens in the therapy, consultation, or evaluation of students. As required by law, all Colorado districts must incorporate student growth as 50% of SSP ratings.

- SSPs are required to complete two SLOs to meet the requirement for multiple measures.
- Each SLO is comprised of 25% of the SSP's overall evaluation rating. The two SLOs are evenly weighted.
- Unlike teachers, SSPs are not required to include a minimum of 10 students on each SLO, though DPS recommends that SSPs include as many students as possible to have additional evidence.
- SSPs will have additional time at the start of the school year to collect baseline data for students and will typically not have to submit SLO long-term goals to their evaluator until the end of October. Evaluators should approve the SLO long-term goals the Friday prior to Thanksgiving break. When employees are hired late or go on leave, they can create semester-long or yearlong SLOs with different targets to ensure they are attainable during the time when the employee is working.
- Unlike teachers, SSPs are not required to have students meet 80% attribution. If a student has excessive absences or should no longer be included on the SLO, the SSP has the option of excluding the student from the SLO in collaboration with their evaluator.
- SSPs and evaluators should review the SSP's body of evidence for each student prior to approving the SLO.



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- An overall SLO rating is calculated when the evaluator selects the “approve” button in the SLO Application Tool. If an SSP and evaluator disagree on SLO data (e.g. the rigor of standards addressed, that the appropriate students are included or excluded, baseline levels, and end-of-course levels), and/or the SSP refuses to make revisions or changes, the evaluator may be required to approve the SLO in order to generate an overall rating. The evaluator should then document the specific context around why the SLO was moved to an approved status. An evaluator’s concerns regarding the SLO may be considered in the final assigned SLO rating.

4 SSP BEGINNING-OF-YEAR, MID-YEAR AND END-OF-YEAR CONVERSATIONS

Conversations

As part of an evaluation using the Professional Practice framework, SSPs should expect to participate in check-in conversations throughout the year (Beginning-of-Year, Mid-Year and End-of-Year), as well as in ongoing meaningful conversations based on observation and/or review of service delivery. The frequency of the latter may vary greatly based on an SSP’s specific role, interaction with students and time in the building. Evaluators should provide feedback for growth at an indicator level as this is the most actionable for the SSP.

- **Beginning-of-Year Conversations** should take place in September/October and are crucial in supporting SSPs throughout the entire year. These discussions set the stage for the supportive relationship between an SSP and his/her evaluator, as well as define expectations for the year to come. This conversation should focus on areas of strength and growth. The overall goal is to support SSPs in their professional development so they can meet the needs of DPS students. During this conversation, an SSP and his/her evaluator should discuss and agree upon:
 - The SSP’s role, ensuring it is focused on areas of greatest potential student impact in relation to the school, caseload and/or time in building, and population served.
 - Growth areas of focus for individual professional development.
 - The definition of effective performance and what it looks like.
 - How observation/data collection will be completed and documented.
 - Timing and process for sharing feedback throughout the year in support of an SSP’s ongoing professional growth.
 - Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for the year.
- **Mid-Year Conversations** should take place in January/February and provide an opportunity for employees to provide updates on the services being provided to students, and for evaluators to discuss preliminary ratings, feedback on effectiveness and concrete next steps on how to improve performance. This conversation should include the following:
 - Review of progress in relation to agreements made in Beginning-of-Year Conversations.
 - Review of feedback on the SSP’s performance using behaviors at the indicator level.
 - Identification of any change in focus for an SSP due to environmental factors (e.g., student populations, building, etc.).
 - Reflection on strengths, growth areas, and next steps for the SSP’s development, and discussion on how the evaluator can support continued growth throughout the year.
 - Review of observations and data points collected to date, ensuring that they match the agreed-upon plan, and discussion of the plan for the remainder of the year.
 - Review any artifacts or evidence the SSP has provided the evaluator.
 - Review of progress based on SLOs.



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- **End-of-Year Conversations** should take place in May and evaluators and SSPs should discuss strengths, progress in growth areas, and data points that validate performance, along with the final overall rating. The conversation should also focus on clear and actionable next steps for professional learning opportunities, & on methods to improve performance in the coming year. This conversation should include the following:
 - Sharing feedback on an SSP's performance using behaviors at the indicator level (documented and provided to the SSP) and evidence collected throughout the year.
 - Sharing ratings assigned at the expectation level based on evidence collected (documented in Infor).
 - Reviewing SLO outcomes.
 - Sharing an overall rating for the year (documented in Infor HR).
 - Identifying strengths and growth areas for the SSP's development and actionable steps for future professional development.

An End-of-Year conversation must occur prior to the end of the school year. If an SSP is on leave and has sufficient data to receive a rating, the evaluator should reach out to the SSP to offer to meet either by phone, in person, or through email exchanges to complete the End-of-Year conversation. If the SSP on leave chooses not to participate in any of these options, the evaluator should record in the tracker/Whetstone that the SSP declined to participate in an End-of-Year conversation and will finalize the End-of-Year rating without penalizing the SSP in any manner for that decision.

6 DETERMINING THE FINAL END-OF-YEAR RATING

Evaluators provide SSPs with a rating of Not Meeting, Approaching, Effective or Distinguished for each of the five Professional Practice expectations on the SSP appraisal in Infor HR (formerly GHR). Evaluators approve two SLOs in the SLO application and then those ratings are transferred automatically to the Infor HR appraisal at end-of-year. Evaluators can review the ratings and then use all of this information to determine the final overall rating for the SSP. The appraisal form in Infor HR will prompt evaluators to complete this final overall rating before finalizing the appraisal process.

7 END OF YEAR RATINGS FOR LATE HIRES AND SSPs ON LEAVE

Late Hires: If an SSP is hired after the first 67 SSP reporting days have passed (typically mid-November) he or she is considered "SSP GPS Unofficial." The SSP evaluator may provide an end-of-year rating; however, this rating will not be recorded in his/her Infor HR record and will not be shared with the Colorado Department of Education (Policy updated January 2018). It is recommended that even in the absence of a formal evaluation, the employee should still have a Mid-Year Conversation in January /February and an End-of-Year Conversation in May with his or her evaluator.

Leave: SSPs on leave 68 or more SSP reporting days are also considered "SSP GPS Unofficial." The SSP evaluator may provide an end-of-year rating; however this rating will not be recorded in his/her Infor HR record and will not be shared with the Colorado Department of Education *Note: Due to the complex nature of Intermittent leaves, they are not included in this policy. It is recommended that even in the absence of a formal evaluation, the employee should still have conversations during the year when not on leave and should have an End-of-Year Conversation in May. If the employee is on leave when the school year ends then s/he should have an End-of-Year Conversation before going on leave. The evaluator should schedule the conversation upon their



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return or before their leave. The evaluator can contact the employee to offer to meet either by phone, in person, or through email exchanges to complete the End-of-Year Conversation.

8 REVIEW PROCESS FOR FAILURE TO FOLLOW GUIDE

If an SSP feels that the District has not followed any requirement set forth in this Guide, the SSP is encouraged to resolve the issue by speaking with his or her evaluator and/or by submitting an inquiry to the SSP Growth and Performance System team by emailing ssp_gps@dpsk12.org. A failure to follow any of the written procedures is grievable up to Level 2 per Article 29-3-3 in the current [DPS/DCTA Agreement and Partnership](#).

This guide is a District document that was modeled after the LEAP Fairness Guide for teachers, and reviewed by DCTA. The SSP Fairness Guide may be reviewed and revised and it does not create any contractual or employment rights.