

Performance Evaluation and Action Plan

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Part 1: Analyze the Case

Before addressing any problems that the teacher may be causing, it's important to check in with the department head to see what specific problems he/she might be having managing the group, and specifically that individual teacher. It would also be important to ask the department head what they have tried to resolve the issue. How long have these problems been happening? And has he/she talked to the teacher individually yet? If the group is doing well, and the department head identifies only Mr. Blumenstock as the problem, I would sit in on a meeting with the entire team and make my firsthand observation of the problem teacher. Despite the insight provided by the department head, as a school leader I would approach Blumenstock individually, since this doesn't seem like a team problem. My approach would be as a school leader who is truly curious using questions like, "It appears you might be having challenges with your teammates. What do you believe is going on here?"

I would then ask more specific questions including: "What are the challenges preventing you working with the team? Do you have a problem with leadership (the department head)? Or is it the curriculum, or the students." All the time maintaining an open mind while discussing what the expectations and coming up with agreements. The expectations are non-negotiable. For example, being on time, being at school and district training meetings, maximizing teaching time, and have a lesson plan available at all times (Marzano, 2020). The agreements are what we can do as a team to improve the situation.

Part 2: Identify the Larger Issues

It's not just the board policy that could impact my decisions about what to do next with Mr. Blumenstock, his contract could play a role. For example, his contract likely requires him to attend planning meetings. These are often part of a teachers' union salary requirements, if he's not complying with this requirement, he is breaking his contract which is a behavior that can go into his discipline file. Again, some additional information to know about the situation before proceeding with action includes whether the problem is an unwillingness to come to work and if so, what could do to problem solve this. If it's a total personnel issue, a lack of motivation or lack of performance, then it needs to go into their performance evaluation and can become the basis for their termination.

The one negative aspect of acting to solve this problem is the discomfort that might be felt between myself as an administrator and Mr. Blumenstock, if Blumenstock feels he has been judged wrong. There is no positive outcome if I, as an administrator, do nothing to solve this impasse. However, there will be definite negative impacts on students and additionally on the team, and the culture of the school. Administrators who do nothing to find solutions to problematic teachers send a message to other staff that it is okay not to abide by your obligations and expectations as a professional educator.

Part 3: Create an Action Plan

The action steps moving forward include the following:

1. **Investigation:** Get to the root of the problem, find out the source of Mr. Blumenstock's contentiousness within the department.
2. **Negotiation:** Figure out what Blumenstock and what his department needs to remedy the situation.
3. **Expectation:** Set a time to make corrections and follow up at predetermined amount of time to make sure the plan that has been arrived at is being followed.

These steps to take in addressing the problem depend on the urgency of the situation.

One must ask oneself the impact this teacher's actions have on the students. But in general, my mentor believes that the first time the administrator is made aware of the problem by the department head he needs to move swiftly into action by attending the next department meeting with the team and within a week scheduling an individual conversation with Mr. Blumenstock. At this point, I would tell Blumenstock what I saw at the meeting and ask him to explain what is going on. During the conversation we would set expectations and establish some mutually agreed upon resolutions. At the next meeting, I would expect to see a change, if I do see that change, I would continue to monitor Blumenstock's progress through consultation with the department head. If I don't see a change, it might be time to put the teacher on a more formal improvement plan that could turn into dismissal if changes do not take place. One expert says that teachers need to be either on a growth path or a dismissal path and if "someone isn't *definitely* on a growth path, they need to be on a dismissal path, completely and definitely, until you can clearly move them back onto a growth path" (The Principal center, 2023).

The challenge in trying to correct problematic behavior is always the chance you will meet resistance from a teacher who feels he is being targeted, or even bullied. This natural feeling is one reason it is best to dispense with a punitive demeanor and instead return to the curious and caring approach to building trust and high expectations within your team. I still see this as a personnel issue and not a departmental issue and not a cultural issue so the only people that need to be involved is the teacher, the administrator, and maybe the department head and/or the teacher's union head. While he/she can play an advisory role, collaborating with a school leader but ultimately the department head does not have the responsibility to monitor the situation because he is not the teacher's direct supervisor.

References

The Principal Center. (2023). Growth or dismissal? Choosing your evaluation path for each teacher. Retrieved on November 15, 2023 from <https://www.principalcenter.com/growth-or-dismissal-two-paths-evaluation>.

Marzano, R. (June 2020). Non-negotiable expectations. Principal's Playbook. Retrieved on November 15, 2023 from <https://www.theprincipalsplaybook.com/educational-leadership/non-negotiable-expectations>.