

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

- A. Contractual Provisions
- B. Past Evaluation Practice
- C. Be Familiar with Forms Used
- D. Evaluation May be a Tool for Growth
Evaluation May be a Tool for Discharge
- E. Assistance from Other Teachers/Master Teachers
- F. Take Notes/Keep Records
- G. The Evaluation Conference
- H. Plans of Assistance/Individualized Development Plan
- I. After the Evaluation

**TIPS FOR WRITTEN RESPONSES
TO EVALUATIONS, REPRIMANDS, WARNINGS, ETC.**

1. Write everything from the point of view that a stranger will be reading it and judging you and your statements.
2. Avoid making excuses.
3. Rebut allegations as directly as possible, either with facts or a simple direct statement that the criticism is not true; it is being blown out of proportion, etc. **Avoid provocative wording.**
4. Include positive statements with examples, if possible, about your work and good qualities.
5. Avoid allegations against others, including your supervisor. Say that the evaluation is incorrect, but do not **personalize** your response.
6. Avoid statements that appear to be complaining in nature.
7. Never make a statement that you can't defend. Let them make all the erroneous statements.
8. Do not appear to be combative to the reader.
9. Keep in mind: You want to appear as the patient, warm, friendly, long suffering employee. Let the facts make your case. If you can plant the idea in the mind of the reader that **maybe**, just **maybe**, your supervisor is wrong, unfair, exaggerating, etc., your response will be successful.
10. Most important is item number 1 above. Read it again. Remember it always.

IS YOUR EVALUATION LESS THAN GLOWING?

If you feel your evaluation is unfair or incorrect, you should take a number of steps:

1. Check your contract carefully to see if the evaluation procedure was followed. If not, you may have a grievance. Contact your local president and watch your timelines.
2. Meet with the evaluator to discuss the evaluation. The evaluator should explain his evaluation specifically, not in generalizations. Question him about each item you disagree with.
3. You may have an association representative at your evaluation conference. The association representative should take notes and actively participate in the discussion on your behalf.
4. Explain your perspective to the evaluator. He/she may not be aware of the background or know specific students, and additional information may have an impact on the conclusions reached.
5. If you think something is unfair or inaccurate, explain why and ask your principal to change it. Most principals are willing to reconsider requests.
6. Don't overreact! A few less than glowing remarks are not the end of the world and may be ignored. On the other hand, a series of poor evaluations signals trouble; you should contact your local president immediately.
7. You should rebut or respond to a poor evaluation. An unrebutted evaluation can come back to haunt you, because it will be considered accurate.
8. If your principal gives suggestions or recommendations, implement them and make sure he/she knows you have done so.
9. When in doubt, call your local president for help.

WHAT'S REASONABLE DISCIPLINE?

Generally we speak of what an arbitrator accepts as discipline as reasonable because arbitration is the usual place at the end of the grievance procedure where employee discipline matters are decided. Most arbitrators subscribe to the theory of **progressive discipline**, as does the Michigan State Tenure Commission.

Progressive discipline generally consists of about six steps. Let's suppose the problem is chronic tardiness; the employee is late to work a lot of the time. The six steps would work something like this. (They may differ from case-to-case and should not be viewed as a hidebound cookbook recipe for all situations.)

1. **Initial Reprimand:** Generally this will take the form of a quiet word from the principal/supervisor. Assume that he/she has kept notes on the matter and has the date and what he/she told you. This type of reprimand usually ends with a warning that more serious action may be taken.
2. **Written Reprimand:** This is usually the same as (1) except that it is in writing and is filed with the personnel file so that a permanent record is made. This assumes that, in the opinion of the principal/supervisor, the tardiness has continued with no improvement.
3. **Partial Docking:** This is a money penalty, possibly a prorated hour's pay.
4. **Suspension:** If the tardiness still persists, a short suspension without pay is the next appropriate step. Records are filed with the personnel folder.
5. **Severe Penalty:** This will probably mean the suspension is for a longer period of time (a week or two). Records again will be kept with the personnel folder.
6. **Dismissal**

All of the above assumes that each step of the procedure is taken for the same violation, that is, tardiness. The same, or substantially the same, procedure applies to any violation of rules by the employee.

The question we're concerned with is: "What should the employee do about the procedure once it's under way?" The obvious answer, if the charge of violation is appropriate, is: "Correct the matter" so that further process along the discipline route is not going to happen. It's important to be sure that the administrator had knowledge of your improvement. However, if the charge results from pettiness, is not being enforced consistently, or is unfair for other reasons, the employee should move NOW to correct the unfair discipline by applying the grievance procedure. Remember, the first step of the procedure is usually to have a discussion of the matter with the principal/supervisor. If that fails, proceed on up the grievance ladder.

Typically, however, the employee is not *blessed* with a principal/supervisor who consistently applies the **progressive discipline** theory. Usually, the principal/supervisor first decides he/she has a *bad apple* employee and then sets about proving it so that he/she can justify a dismissal. That error is fatal to their heart's desire and, when it happens, employees should be on the lookout for:

1. A dramatic change in the principal/supervisor's attitude toward you.
2. A series of closely connected reprimands for seemingly petty things.
3. A "Big Brother's watching you" atmosphere. If these occur, the employee should:
 - a. Immediately try to determine the reason. It may be a simple misunderstanding over some petty thing that can be cleared up immediately.
 - b. If (a) fails, the employee should begin always requesting Association representation whenever the principal/supervisor calls him/her in for a corrective conference. Assume the worst, (he's/she's out to fire you) and the battle's on. Inform your Association president, grievance chairperson, and, of course, your Uniserv Director.
 - c. Grieve anything in a discipline vein which is at all questionable. Keep all of the appropriate people informed. You will probably have to use the grievance procedure to *expose* the principal/supervisor's real intent and methods.

Get help or advice fast if any of these or similar things happen to you. It may be nothing to worry about, but better safe than sorry.

*Warning
Signs
During
the
Evaluation
Process*

1. A second administrator is assigned to observe/evaluate.
2. Any item on your evaluation is rated “unsatisfactory” or “needs improvement” or is noted as a “concern.”
3. You are told that the administrator might not recommend renewal of your contract or recommend tenure.
4. You are given any written document criticizing your performance, particularly if it says “cc: file” at the bottom.
5. You are required to observe another’s teaching.
6. You are required to attend inservices to improve specific concerns.
7. Your lesson plans are returned to do over.
8. You hear parents have complained about your work.
9. You hear that other staff members have expressed concerns about your work.
10. Students drop your class and take the same class from another teacher.
11. Your evaluator is observing you more than the contract requires.
12. Anything happens which is different than what happens to the rest of the faculty.
13. You feel alone – colleagues avoid you.