

Teacher Assistance and Support Process

Purpose of the Teacher Assistance and Support Process

In most teacher performance cases, the teacher is meeting the standards or expectations of performance established by the district. These teachers are considered to be in the Continuing Contract status. In instances where the teacher is performing below the district standards or expectations and requires assistance to be performing at a higher level, the administrator in the evaluator role can recommend that the teacher enter the Teacher Assistance and Support Process. The Teacher Assistance and Support Process is designed to support teachers on continuing contracts in the improvement of their professional knowledge, skills, and performance with an intentional plan of improvement and collegial support. The Teacher Assistance and Support Process is not applied to probationary teachers.

There are three phases in the Teacher Assistance and Support Process: 1) Awareness; 2) Assistance; and 3) Discipline. Each phase has its own procedures and types of support. The Teacher Assistance and Support Process is intentionally set up to enter the teacher at the awareness phase. Teachers should not be entered into the process in Phase 2 or Phase 3. The Discipline Phase of the Teacher Assistance and Support Process should be the final stage for issues related to instructional performance aligned with district standards and expectations. Teachers may face disciplinary action for reasons other than instructional performance. Those decisions lie outside of the bounds of the Teacher Assistance and Support Process.

The teacher remains in the Teacher Assistance and Support Process until:

- his/her performance is judged by the district to be satisfactory in all domains of the district's standards and expectations of performance
- or
- the district concludes that the teacher has had sufficient time and resources to improve to a satisfactory level and has not done so.

In the case of improved performance, the teacher is removed from of the Teacher Assistance and Support Process. In the case of no improvement, the teacher is subject to employee discipline, including but not limited to termination of employment.

Role of the exclusive representative

There are constitutional, statutory, and contractual protections including grievance procedures to prevent any misuse of this process. The district is responsible for determining whether a teacher's conduct is such that he/she should be subject to discipline or placed in the Teacher Assistance and Support Process. The exclusive representative shall not have any role in that decision, but retains its right to grieve any discipline of a teacher.

Teacher Assistance and Support Process Phases

PHASE 1. AWARENESS

The purpose of the Awareness phase is to formally bring to the teacher's attention documented concern(s) about their instructional performance and to create a Professional Improvement Plan that provides targeted support for resolving the concern(s).

Step 1. Identify and communicate the area of performance concern(s)

The administrator in the evaluator role makes formal contact (e.g., a letter or memo) with the teacher related to unsatisfactory teaching performance specifying in writing the following:

- Explanation of concern(s) that identifies the specific standards or performance expectations that are in question
 - Evidence supporting the concern(s) (e.g., observational notes, communications with the teacher, third party reports)
 - Request for a face-to-face meeting to discuss the awareness of the concern(s)
 - Inform the teacher that the meeting is an opportunity for the him/her to present his/her evidence related to the stated concern(s)
 - Proposed time and date for the meeting which should follow no more than one week after the written concern(s) are sent to the teacher
 - The teacher's right to have an exclusive representative present at the meeting
- This written communication is placed in the teachers' personnel records.

The district determines processes for how the Awareness phase documentation is followed up if the notified teacher voluntarily transfers to another teaching assignment in the district.

Step 2. Collaboratively develop and document a support plan

During the face-to-face meeting that was established in Step 1, the teacher and the administrator in the evaluator role collaborate to resolve the identified performance concern(s). At the conclusion of the meeting, the following items are documented in writing:

- Identification of the area of concern(s) related to district performance standards and expectations
- Identification of 1-3 key measurable goals for improvement
- A method for what measures of performance improvement will be collected and documented (e. g, direct observation of the teachers' performance, records of planning, records of teaching, student surveys)
- A Professional Improvement Plan that may include learning supports such as professional workshops or conferences, books, collegial observations, peer coaching, principal observations, curriculum resources, video of classroom teaching, targeted professional development, outside consultation
- A method for what data will be collected to document adherence to the Professional Improvement Plan
- A mutually established time frame for addressing and resolving the area of concern(s)
- A mutually determined process for monitoring progress on the Professional Improvement Plan and/or establishing a feedback loop between the teacher and the

evaluator (e. g., monthly meetings with evaluator, regular written communications, evaluation observations, peer coaching logs)

- A scheduled meeting between the teacher, the administrator in the evaluator role, and an exclusive representative (if desired by the teacher) to assess whether the area of performance concern(s) has been adequately addressed
- This document is placed in the teacher's personnel record.

Step 3. Engage in the Professional Improvement Plan

While engaging in the Professional Improvement Plan, there are several expectations of both the teacher and the administrator in the role of evaluator.

Expectations of the teacher

- Participate in the activities identified in the Professional Improvement Plan identified in Step 2
- Participate in the collection of evidence related to the measurable goals identified in Step 2
- Be open and flexible in implementing different and/or refined strategies to improve his/her performance
- Maintain a proactive stance in his/her own professional improvement
- Engage in professional reflection ascertaining what is effective practice and what practice(s) need improvement
- Be responsible for maintaining his/her own anecdotal notes (if desired)
- Ask for clarifications from the principal, direct supervisor, an exclusive representative, or superintendent or designee when needed
- Be responsible for meeting deadlines, appointments, scheduled observations, and other agreed upon timelines

Expectations of the principal, administrator in the evaluator role, or supervisor

- Provide relevant support opportunities identified in Step 2
- Give encouragement and informal support for improvement of performance
- Be open and available for clarification at the teacher's requests
- Monitor the teacher's performance and / or behavior for improvement

Step 4. Assess progress

At the end of the timeframe established in Step 2, the teacher, the administrator in the evaluator role, and an exclusive representative (if the teacher desires) meet to assess progress of the teacher toward resolving the area of concern(s). At the meeting the following are reviewed:

- Professional Improvement Plan established in Step 2
- Measures of progress documented in writing
- Records of participating in activities identified in the Professional Improvement Plan

➤ These documents are placed in the teacher's personnel record.

The administrator in the role of evaluator completes a summative evaluation based on the documentation and the meeting. In this summative evaluation, one of the following determinations is made:

- a) Leave Awareness phase and reenter Continuing Contract status
- b) Awareness phase is extended for further professional improvement (repeat Steps 1, 2, 3 in this phase)
- c) Move from Awareness phase to Assistance and Support phase (see Phase 2)

Within one week after the meeting, a summative evaluation is completed in writing. The summative evaluation must be:

- Sent to the teacher
- Placed in the teacher's personnel record

PHASE 2. ASSISTANCE & SUPPORT

The intent of the Assistance and Support phase is to improve the teacher's performance to a satisfactory level based on district performance expectations. It is not intended as an opportunity to build a discipline case against a teacher, nor is it intended as an opportunity to build a case insulating a teacher from discipline. Accordingly, the participants in the Assistance and Support phase are encouraged to be blunt, frank, and accurate with their input, whether it is positive, neutral, or negative.

Step 1. Recommend teacher move to Assistance and Support

The administrator in the role of evaluator completes and submits a recommendation in writing for the teacher to move into Teacher Assistance and Support phase to the superintendent or designee. The recommendation provides:

- Explanation of concern(s) that identifies the specific standards or performance expectations that are in question
 - Evidence supporting the concern(s) (e.g., observational notes, communications with the teacher, third party reports)
 - Summary of the Awareness phase activities (e.g., Professional Improvement Plan, documentation of measurable goals)
 - The Summative Evaluation completed at the end of Step 4 of the Awareness phase
- This document is placed in the teacher's personnel record.

Step 2. Establish a Teacher Assistance Team

A meeting that includes the principal, the administrator in the evaluator role if different from the principal, the superintendent or designee, the teacher, and an exclusive representative (if desired by the teacher) is set within one month of the summative evaluation in the Awareness phase. During this face-to-face meeting, participants collaborate to establish a Teacher Assistance Team that supports the teacher in the Assistance and Support Process. The Teacher Assistance Team uses data and information from the teacher's evaluations to develop a Professional Assistance and Support Plan collaboratively with the teacher.

Composition of the Teacher Assistance Team (3-6 people):

- 1 – 2 teachers appointed by the superintendent or designee (e.g., special education coordinator, mentor, grade-level lead, department chair, curriculum coordinator)
- 1 principal other than the teacher's direct supervisor appointed by the superintendent or designee (In the case that the superintendent or designee determines the evaluator

should be an administrator other than the direct supervisor, the direct supervisor may become a member of the Teacher Assistance Team.)

- 1 – 2 teachers recommended by the teacher (The team shall not include any representative from the grade level or the department of the teacher in the Assistance and Support Process unless requested by the teacher.)
- 1 an exclusive representative if desired by the teacher

Step 3. Establish a Professional Assistance and Support Plan

The Professional Assistance and Support meeting includes:

- Identification of the area of concern(s) related to district performance standards and expectations
- Identification of 1-3 key measurable goals for improvement
- A method for what measures of performance improvement will be collected and documented (e. g, direct observation of the teachers' performance, records of planning, records of teaching, student surveys)
- A Professional Assistance and Support Plan that may include learning supports such as professional workshops or conferences, books, collegial observations, peer coaching, principal observations, curriculum resources, video of classroom teaching, targeted professional development, outside consultation
- A method for what data will be collected to document adherence to the Professional Improvement Plan
- A mutually established time frame for addressing and resolving the area(s) of concern
- A mutually determined process for monitoring progress on the professional improvement awareness plan and/or establishing a feedback loop between the teacher and the evaluator (e. g., monthly meetings with evaluator, regular written communications, evaluation observations, peer coaching logs)

Step 4. Engage in Professional Assistance and Support Plan

While engaging in the *Professional Assistance and Support Plan*, many people have roles and expectations.

Expectations of the teacher

- Participate in the activities identified in the Professional Improvement Plan identified in Step 2
- Participate in the collection of evidence related to the measurable goals identified in Step 2
- Be open and flexible in implementing different and/or refined strategies to improve his/her performance
- Maintain a proactive stance in his/her own professional improvement
- Engage in professional reflection ascertaining what is effective practice and what practice(s) need improvement
- Be responsible for maintaining his/her own anecdotal notes (if desired)
- Ask for clarifications from the principal, direct supervisor, an exclusive representative, or superintendent or designee when needed
- Be responsible for meeting deadlines, appointments, scheduled observations, and other agreed upon timelines

Expectations of the Teacher Assistance Team

- One member of the Teacher Assistance Team is appointed as the Facilitator by the superintendent or designee
- The teacher and the Facilitator mutually establish a schedule of meetings with the Teacher Assistance Team
- The Teacher Assistance Team keeps a log of Assistance and Support meetings in order to document actions taken to assist the teacher and recommendations made by the Teacher Assistance Team (Note: the log does not provide evaluative statements regarding progress of the teacher toward the improvement goals)
- Team members' observations and dialogues with the teacher are **not** recorded in writing, are not reported to the teacher's direct supervisor, and are not part of the summative evaluation decision
- When communicating with the teacher, the Teacher Assistance Team may
 - Offer multiple strategies related to the improvement goals from which the teacher may choose
 - Give direct observational feedback to the teacher
 - Offer peer coaching
- Strict confidentiality is to be maintained and no reference is made to the name of the teacher or the school where the assistance is being provided
- The facilitator communicates regularly with the superintendent or designee regarding the completion of action steps in the Professional Assistance and Support Plan
- At the completion of the designated Assistance and Support phase, the log of meetings that documents completion of action steps is submitted to the teacher and the superintendent or designee

Expectations of Teacher Assistance Team Facilitator

- Calls full team meetings
- Maintains team logs
- Creates agendas and facilitates meeting
- Participates in summative evaluation meeting at the designated end of the Assistance and Support phase

Expectations of the exclusive representative

- Observes the process
- Protects the teacher's right within the process
- Reminds the teacher of her/his responsibility within the process
- Remains neutral and objective

Expectations of the administrator in the evaluator role or supervisor

- Monitors the teacher's performance and / or behaviors for improvement through direct observation
- At least one observation occurs at the end of the Assistance and Support phase
- Completes a summative evaluation in writing
- Submits the summative evaluation to the superintendent or designee at the end of the Assistance and Support phase
- Sends a copy of the summative evaluation to the teacher

Expectations of the superintendent or designee

- Guides the Teacher Assistance Phase
- Introduces the process to the teacher
- Brings together the Teacher Assistance Team, appoints the facilitator, and provides direction to them
- Monitors the Professional Assistance and Support Plan
- Works with the principal and / or supervisor to assess progress
- Reviews log from Teacher Assistance Team and the summative evaluation from administrator in the role of evaluator or supervisor
- Determines summative conclusion of the Assistance and Support phase

Step 5. Assess progress

At the end of the timeframe established in Step 3, a summative evaluation meeting with the superintendent or designee, the administrator in the evaluator role, the Teacher Assistance Team Facilitator, and an exclusive representative (if desired by the teacher) to assess whether the area of performance concern(s) has been adequately addressed

Evidence to review:

- Teacher's personnel file with documentation of Awareness Phase
- Agreed upon performance improvement plan with measureable goals in the Assistance and Support Phase
- Documentation of the measures of progress aligned with the goals
- Additional evidence that the teacher wants to put forward
- Documentation of the meetings with the Teacher Assistant Team
- Description of the recommendations and support provided by the Teacher Assistance Team
- Evidence collected by the administrator in the evaluator role
- Evidence collected at the discretion of the superintendent or designee
- Past summative evaluations may be considered

Criteria for decision-making

- Progress toward meeting the goals identified for improvement
- Current performance level (consideration for past performance may be given)

Within 10 working days of the meeting, one of the following determinations is made by the administrator in the evaluation role about the teacher's status:

- a) Leave Assistant and Support phase and reenter Continuing Contract status
 - b) Assistant and Support phase is extended for further professional improvement (repeat Steps 1, 2, 3, 4 in this phase)
 - c) Move from Assistant and Support phase to the Discipline phase (see Phase 3)
- Written notification is sent to the teacher within 3 days and placed in the teacher's personnel record.

PHASE 3. DISCIPLINE PHASE

Step 1. Notice of disciplinary action

A notice of disciplinary action may be provided to the teacher by the district at this time as determined by the superintendent or designee.

Step 2. Specify the discipline process

A meeting between the principal/supervisor, the superintendent or designee, teacher, and an exclusive representative (if desired by the teacher) occurs. The administrator identifies in a written reprimand the specific performance expectations, rules, or policies that are deficient.

The teacher is given an opportunity to provide a written response with supporting evidence.

Following the discussion, the administrator in the role of evaluator indicates a timeline for responding to the teacher on whether or not the teacher corrects the deficiencies, action may be taken, such as, but not limited to, any one or a combination of the following, pursuant of M.S. 122 A.40, Subd. 9 and M.S. 122 A.40, Subd. 12, (listed in no particular order).

- a. Final warning with requirement of specific training within a specified time frame
- b. Termination, discharge, or non-renewal
- c. Transfer to a different position
- d. Leave of absence (paid administrative leave or suspension without pay)
- e. Other discipline a school administrator deems appropriate

The exclusive representative may represent the teacher, advise the teacher, and may provide professional development support.

Sample communications and templates

Notification memorandum to the teacher for the Awareness Phase

Professional Improvement Plan (Awareness phase)

Assistance and Support Plan (for the Assistance and Support phase)

Examples of SMART goals