

INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP
ASSOCIATION

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Episode #92

Developing Employee Improvement Plans



Our Essential Question

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How can we develop evidence-driven improvement plans for individual employees who are struggling?

Misconduct vs. Performance

Use your HR employee discipline process—not your professional growth & evaluation process—to deal with misconduct, e.g.:

- Major ethics violations
- Major safety issues
- Inappropriate treatment of students
- Major lapses in basic professional responsibilities

Evaluation criteria are not designed to address misconduct.

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Pinpointing the Problem

- Start with your “emotional first draft” of the problem—what is bothering you, and why?
- Ask the “Five Whys” to uncover the root problem (e.g. poor classroom management due to unengaging lessons due to poor planning due to...)
- Translate your emotional first draft into professional language—what evaluation criteria address these concerns?

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Emotional First Draft

Mr. Johnson's class is incredibly boring; he just lectures all the time. The stronger students take notes and do well on tests, but too many students fail or get bad grades because they don't have the study skills or motivation to succeed in this kind of class. He blames them for not being interested in his boring lessons, and resists ways to update his teaching.

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Construct a CEIJ Argument

- **Claim**—A summary statement describing the teacher's typical practice in a given area. Key phrase: *"Is characterized by..."*
- **Evidence**—Multiple, specific, documented incidents and instances that support the claim. Key phrase: *"For example, on ___/___/___..."*
- **Interpretation**—A clear articulation of the consequences of the teacher's typical practice, e.g. on student learning, school culture, or other relevant outcomes. Key phrase: *"As a result..."*
- **Judgment**—The final rating of teacher's overall practice in specific area, using language and scale of evaluation framework. Key phrase: *"Therefore, ___'s practice in domain ___ is best described as Level ___."*

CEIJ Argument

- Revised **Claim**: Mr. Johnson's instruction is characterized by heavy reliance on lecture, displaying a minimal understanding of how students learn.* Student learning activities consist primarily of notetaking, completing work-sheets, and taking paper-and-pencil quizzes, offering little variety or active intellectual engagement.**
- **Evidence**: For example, on 1/31, Mr. Johnson lectured for 27 continuous minutes, during which students were expected to listen and take notes. During this time, three students fell asleep, and one student poked the student in front of him with a pencil eight times. Seven students took no notes at all during this lecture. During another observation, on 10/17, Mr. Johnson admonished the class for doing poorly on a recent exam, and stated that if more students took notes like they were supposed to, they would do better on exams.
- **Interpretation**: As a result of Mr. Johnson's heavy reliance on lecture as an instructional strategy, students experience a low level of intellectual engagement and a high rate of course failure in Mr. Johnson's classes. For the fall semester, Mr. Johnson's course pass rate of 72% was significantly below the school average of 91%, raising concerns about student engagement and instructional effectiveness. While Mr. Johnson is clearly passionate about his subject matter, the lack of variety and engaging instructional strategies undermines his goals for student learning.
- **Judgment**: Therefore, Mr. Johnson's practice in Domain 1, Planning and Preparation, is best rated as Level 1, Unsatisfactory. This evaluation will be followed by a Plan of Improvement and support from a district instructional coach.
- Danielson 1b, Demonstrating Knowledge of Students, Unsatisfactory column
- **Danielson 1e, Designing Coherent Instruction, Unsatisfactory column

Observe & Validate

- Do I have enough evidence to justify my claim?
- Do I need to revise my claim?
- What would constitute acceptable performance?

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Ensuring An Evidence-Driven Plan

- Consistency is not observable, so don't make consistency a criterion unless it's the issue you're trying to improve
- Don't force everything into SMART goal format
- Use direct observation and a follow-up CEIJ argument to determine whether performance has improved
- Use language from contractual/adopted evaluation criteria whenever possible

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Improvement Activities

- What would plausibly build the necessary knowledge and skills?
- Must be completed
- Not a substitute for improving actual performance
- Observing a higher-performing teacher—may need an “observation guide” to know what to look for

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Timeline

- Don't drag it out too long—a month should be enough time
- Meet weekly to discuss progress
- Observe regularly to assess progress
- Repeat the plan or extend if more time/evidence is needed

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Measuring Progress

- Data can be helpful, but don't let the availability of data dictate your focus
- Does not need to be a SMART goal—it usually starts to miss the point to focus too squarely on a SMART goal
- Align your direct observations with your evaluation criteria

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Improvement Plan Template

Download or save a copy in Google Docs:

PrincipalCenter.com/improvement-doc

