

## LITERACY EDUCATION

principal determined that Mr. W was deficient and in need of assistance. Thus, the process began anew.

### Systematic Procedures

Teachers can file a lawsuit over a negative evaluation only on the basis of procedures. The administrator therefore has to systematically follow every procedure with precision. A series of steps with a corresponding timetable carries the process forward in an expedient manner. The following suggestions serve as a general guideline to the steps involved:

1. Get training on the district's evaluation instrument. Documentation requires a valid and reliable instrument. Often local instruments lack the statistical support that renders them valid and reliable. Check with the district office about the statistical testing that has preceded the use of your district's instrument. Georgia's teacher evaluation instrument emerged from more than 10 years of data collection and field tests in the 1980s and '90s, and all educators are trained in the use of the instrument. All regional education consortium personnel were trained in the use of the Georgia Teachers Evaluation Instrument and had to pass a test before counseling administrators about the instrument. The use of a valid and reliable instrument means that the recorded data can support your decision in a court of law.
2. Mark your calendars with all due dates for teacher evaluations and contract renewals.
3. Become aware of district support for nonrenewed contracts and termination. Look at the history of cases in your area and note the stance of the current district administration. Be in contact with the appropriate district personnel who can provide guidance and support. Use them throughout the process and add their written comments to your documentation file of multiple sources.
4. Provide clear descriptions of expectations to teachers in their orientations and consider having teachers sign to acknowledge that they received the information about their job descriptions and the evaluation instrument. Leaders often erroneously assume the faculty is familiar with the evaluation instrument.
5. Follow the district's standard evaluation process, with the initial notification conference of a problem with the ineffective teacher by Oct. 1 or by a specific date early in the school year that allows time for remediation, documentation, and conferencing. Document details of the problems and provide a copy to the teacher to be signed. The signature means he or she has received the copy, not agreement with the contents.
6. Train master teachers and instructional specialists in observation procedures, mentoring behaviors, and conferencing skills to enable them to collect data on the ineffective teachers progress. They will provide data that contributes to the file of multiple sources of information. One of the principals interviewed for this study stated, "Do not do it all yourself."
7. Instigate two processes at this time: documentation of provided support and documentation of performance. Call in other people to observe the ineffective teacher.
8. Have multiple sources of help given to the teacher using district- and school-level specialists, professional development workshops, and counselors. Provide sample lesson plans and videos of effective practice. Assign a mentor. Abundant support must be provided and documented.
9. Have multiple sources of evidence of performance. Record the span of grades given by the ineffective teacher if appropriate. Keep all records of comments by parents and students and file all written observations by other educators. Personally conduct at least two observations of classroom teaching by Jan. 1 and include a witness, such as an assistant administrator and or any person who has a right to know, while conducting a conference about the teacher's performance.
10. Use the district evaluation instrument to document problems and refer to them during the subsequent observations and conferences. For example, a documentation of behavior related to lesson plans may include the notation, "see item c.1 in Standard Evaluation Form (dated mm/dd/yy) that lesson plans were incomplete, lacking objectives and standards for the week."
11. Be systematic and nonemotional. A supportive attitude that maintains rapport is essential to keeping open communication.

Claxton concluded, "If three factors are present—scheduled procedures, onsite observers, and district support—dismissal is not a problem."

### Working With the Coaster

A teacher who is failing to meet standards because he or she is coasting presents a unique challenge to new and veteran administrators alike. The coasting teacher is very often a teacher who has been marginally or even very successful as an educator in the past; however, years of teaching may have diminished the initial enthusiasm. An administrator must first determine if the desire can be restored to its former level. In view of such a possibility, the capable administrator can often accomplish