

Failure to Perform Professional Duties

Case Study #5

Standard 5.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairly, and in an ethical manner.

Questions

1. How should a principal address the complaints of one faculty member against another faculty member?
2. How can a principal ensure that the teachers act with integrity and ethically towards their students?
3. How should administrators ensure that teachers who work collaboratively work effectively to benefit all of their students?

Situation

Many of the classes at Sunny High School are collaborative classes. Students who are a part of the Exceptional Education Department are placed in classes with students who are in the regular education classes. Mrs. K. is a resource teacher who should work collaboratively with the content teacher. However, many content teachers at SHS express that they have no interest in working with Mrs. K because she rarely comes to the class. When she comes, she is normally late and leaves early, or she sits in the corner and does not interact with the students. Finally, she never grades her students' papers. Content teachers conclude that she must arbitrarily assign her students grades. This has been her pattern for years.

One content teacher, Mrs. G., complained to an assistant principal. She expressed her frustration because Mrs. K. is not performing her professional obligations. Mrs. G. told the assistant principal that the students on Mrs. K's caseload were behavioral problems. Mrs. G. concluded that the students acted out because they did not understand the content. Mrs. G further added that she spends most of her period trying to maintain order and rarely gets to teach free of interruptions. She felt that if Mrs. K would attend class daily and work collaboratively, all of the students would benefit.

The assistant principal acknowledged that he was aware of Mrs. K's lack of professionalism. He added that this has been a problem for years; moreover, Mrs. G. is not the first person to complain. He assured her that he would speak with Mrs. K and Mrs. K's lead teacher; however,

Mrs. K's unprofessional behavior persisted after Mrs. G's conversation with the assistant principal. The only change was that Mrs. K. called Mrs. G. to inform her when she would be late or would not come to class. She never graded or recorded her students' papers. Likewise, she never interacted with the students.

Mrs. G. remained frustrated and felt that it was futile to complain because nothing happened. She chose not to take her complaint any further because Mrs. K's lack of professionalism was a joke around the school. Mrs. G. was sure that everyone, including the principal, was aware of Mrs. K's actions.

Answer

1. Although the principal may opt to meet with each teacher separately, the administrator must also provide an opportunity for both parties to meet along with the administrator in order to try to resolve the issue. Administrators must also encourage teachers to communicate with one another—especially those who work collaboratively.
2. Administrators have a responsibility to make sure that teachers perform their professional duties. Teachers who are not in compliance should be placed on a PDP, Professional Development Plan, to assist them in fulfilling their professional obligations.
3. Professional development and training are vital if collaborative teaching is to be successful. Staff development that emphasizes collaborative teaching and planning would be helpful in this case. Administrators must understand the concept of collaborative teaching and work to empower teachers with the tools to do so effectively.

Evaluation

The assistant principal's leadership style is rudimentary. He failed to adequately address the problem of the teacher's failure to perform her duties. He also did not lend support to the content teacher. Although he acknowledged the teacher's lack of professionalism, he did not ensure that the Special Education students were being served nor did he act fairly towards the complaint of the content teacher. Hence, the administrator's lack of response was just as egregious as Mrs. K's failure to perform her duties.