Performance Accountability

How schools can ensure a high standard of instructional excellence for their students.
A successful accountability system gives teachers support and opportunities to improve and ultimately exits ineffective teachers.

Teacher Talent Toolbox

- Development
- Recruitment & Hiring
- Professional Culture
- Evaluation
- Accountability
- Retention

A high-performing teaching team

School-tested strategies for growing great teaching teams
Contents of the Performance Accountability Toolkit

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

- How are expectations for teacher performance set?
- What role does a school’s evaluation process play in addressing poor performance?
- What mechanisms are used to identify poor performance?
- When is the right time to intervene with struggling teachers?
- How can schools develop and execute a performance improvement plan?
- How can difficult conversations about performance be conducted effectively?
- When is dismissal warranted?
- How can lessons from the accountability process influence other key human capital decisions?

**TOOLS**

- Processes for setting performance expectations
- Performance improvement plans
- Strategies for holding difficult conversations about performance
- Renewal decision timelines
### Promising Performance Accountability Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clear performance expectations</th>
<th>Ensure that all teachers and administrators share specific performance expectations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Early identification of performance issues</td>
<td>Conduct frequent observations and deliver regular feedback as the first line of defense against poor instructional performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Concrete feedback and actionable improvement steps</td>
<td>Provide struggling teachers with feedback that is clear and actionable and improvement goals that are measurable and time-bound.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Time and resources for improvement</td>
<td>Provide poor performers with reasonable and sufficient support and resources for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Willingness to make difficult decisions</td>
<td>Be willing to exit poor performers who have been given appropriate opportunities to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Learn from experience</td>
<td>Use lessons from working with poor performers to inform other aspects of human capital management, including recruitment, evaluation, and retention practices.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Promising Practices in Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Clear performance expectations</th>
<th>Friendship Public Charter Schools establishes individualized performance expectations with each teacher.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Early identification of performance issues</td>
<td>Memphis City Schools observes all teachers at least four times a year. Apprentice and non-tenured licensed teachers are observed at least six times a year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Concrete feedback and actionable improvement steps</td>
<td>North Star Academy provides measurable action steps for each teacher, tracks implementation, and flags teachers who consistently struggle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Time and resources for improvement</td>
<td>Hillsborough County Public Schools provides a post-observation conference discussion guide to principals that prompts them to provide three areas of focus for teachers with examples from the observation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Willingness to make difficult decisions</td>
<td>Many schools make personnel changes swiftly during the year, whenever it becomes evident that improvement is not taking place quickly enough.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Learn from experience</td>
<td>Based on experience with previous teachers, YES Prep adjusts its “Description of the Ideal YES Prep Teacher” that guides selection of new teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TNTP surveys show that teachers who share a common vision of instruction feel more confident in their school’s accountability decisions.

“THERE ARE TEACHERS AT MY SCHOOL WHO SHOULD BE DISMISSED FOR POOR INSTRUCTIONAL PERFORMANCE.”

| Teachers who “Strongly agree” or “Agree” that their school has common vision |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 12%                         | All other teachers          |
| 35%                         |                             |

50+ SURVEY QUESTIONS on school instructional culture

11,000 TEACHERS surveyed to date

300 SCHOOLS applying the results to develop and retain great teachers

© TNTP 2012
Develop a common vision of excellent instruction to ensure shared expectations between teachers and administrators.

**D.C. Public Schools**
- The *Teaching and Learning Framework* provides a clear definition of what effective teaching looks like with descriptions of both teacher and student behaviors for each standard.
- Teachers receive both written and oral feedback on a minimum of five observations throughout the year, with guidance on next steps for professional growth.

**Achievement First (AF)**
- Conversations between teachers and managers at the start of the year focus on how the teacher will meet AF’s *Essentials of Effective Instruction*.
- Regular observations and feedback conversations revisit these same expectations.

**Houston ISD**
- The Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations Rubrics in the *Teacher Appraisal and Development System* describe teachers performing at different levels and the possible sources of evidence for each criterion in the rubric.

**Friendship Public Schools**
- The *ENGAGE!* performance management process involves creating a detailed self-assessment and setting specific goals for student outcomes.
- Specific instructional interventions are documented and discussed throughout the year.
- Evidence is collected in portfolios and discussed during regular feedback sessions.
Develop student learning goals for each teacher to establish baseline expectations for performance.

- Teachers without individual-value added student data use “Teacher-Assessed Student Achievement Data” to measure student performance.
- At the beginning of the year, the teacher and principal select rigorous assessments to measure student performance, the weights for each assessment and student learning targets. Teachers are evaluated by principals and assigned a score from the TAS rubric.

### TAS 1: Teacher-Assessed Student Achievement Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 4 (Highest)</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1 (Lowest)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student scores on teacher assessments indicate, on average, <strong>exceptional</strong> learning, such as at least 1.5 years of growth or at least 90% mastery of content standards; assessments used are <strong>approved</strong> by the administration; and scores reported are <strong>validated</strong> by the administration.</td>
<td>Student scores on teacher assessments indicate, on average, <strong>significant</strong> learning, such as at least 1.25 years of growth or at least 80% mastery of content standards; assessments used are <strong>approved</strong> by the administration; and scores reported are <strong>validated</strong> by the administration.</td>
<td>Student scores on teacher assessments indicate, on average, <strong>some</strong> learning, such as at least 1 year of growth or at least 70% mastery of content standards; assessments used are <strong>approved</strong> by the administration; and scores reported are <strong>validated</strong> by the administration.</td>
<td>Student scores on teacher assessments indicate, on average, <strong>little</strong> learning, such as less than 1 year of growth or less than 70% mastery of content standards; assessments used are <strong>not approved</strong> by the administration; or scores reported are <strong>not validated</strong> by the administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Involve teachers in goal-setting to build buy-in.

Friendship’s “Annual Performance Plans” provide teachers the opportunity to work with their supervisor to establish Individual Performance Targets on the Friendship instructional rubric criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Performance Targets – Self-Selected, Based on Self-Assessment After Reviewing Rubric Criteria</th>
<th>(Indicate self-selected goal from one of the value-drivers within your rubric) “To integrate assessments within my plans for major projects and use data from the beginning, middle and end of projects to inform my next steps” (ETL 4)</th>
<th>If applicable: Using self-created assessments linked to unit projects</th>
<th>Specify if your goal is to be Proficient or Exemplary</th>
<th>Measurable targets: Q1: Create plans for major fall project that integrates ongoing assessment Q2: Execute major fall project that integrated ongoing assessment Q3: Create plans for major spring project that integrates ongoing assessment Q4: Execute major spring project that integrated ongoing assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10% of Your Rating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

- On the “Action Plan”, teachers map out strategies for achieving their targets and supports they need to meet the goals.
- Evaluators then assess progress towards these goals in tandem with the school-wide metrics and student outcomes goals.
Teachers who are satisfied with their school’s evaluation system are twice as likely to trust the dismissal process.

Percent of teachers responding “Strongly agree” or “Agree” to “My school has fair policies and practices regarding dismissing teachers”

- 63% Teachers who "Strongly agree" or "Agree" that they are satisfied with their school's evaluation system
- 32% All other teachers

Refer to the *Evaluation* toolkit to learn more about effective evaluation systems.
Record and track performance regularly to allow for early identification of performance issues.

**Memphis City Schools**

- The first observation cycle occurs with the principal observing the teacher.
- At the first post-observation conference, they create a “Professional Growth and Support Plan” for the teacher.
- The three subsequent observation cycles (five for apprentice or non-tenured licensed teachers) include a scored rubric, a post-observation conference record and a check on the progress of the “Professional Growth and Support Plan.”

**North Star Academy (Uncommon Schools)**

- Instructional leaders regularly observe and give feedback about once per week. Teachers are given key actionable changes to implement.
- Feedback is tracked on the same “Teacher Development Tracker” each week.
- Subsequent observations check to see if feedback is implemented.
Intervene quickly with an improvement plan once a performance issue is identified.

If regular teacher observation reveals:
- Suggested feedback not being implemented by the teacher
- Changes in teacher practice not resulting in improved student outcomes.

...then school leaders should immediately:
- Conduct difficult, frank conversations about poor performance
- Develop and implement a performance improvement plan
Address problems directly with established protocols to ensure performance issues are clearly communicated.

**Hillsborough County Public Schools**

Evaluators are provided a post-observation “Conference Discussion Guide” that has specific steps for giving feedback.

1. Introduction and Greeting includes setting the tone for the conference.
2. During discussion, ask the teacher guiding questions.
3. Share the strengths found with the lesson and give specific examples.
4. Give three areas for focus, specific examples and recommendations for how to improve.
5. When closing the conference, discuss next steps including professional development.

**Green Dot Public Schools**

Leaders consider Courageous Conversation Norms and Protocol* when discussing performance issues:

1. **Be explicit about your values.**
   - Make what you stand for clear.
   - Link the expected behavior to the mission of the schools and the values implicit within the mission.
2. **No “soft” talk.**
   - A careful conversation is a failed conversation.
3. **Really ask and really listen.**
   - Ask clarifying questions to clearly understand the other person’s point of view.
4. **Let silence do the heavy lifting.**
   - The more emotionally loaded the subject, the more silence is required.

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*Adapted by Green Dot Public Schools from *Fierce Conversations* by Susan Scott and “Talking the Walk” by Valerie Von Frank.
Identify concrete action steps in performance improvement plans.

**North Star Academy (Uncommon Schools)**

### Sample Six-Week Performance Improvement Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Mentor Teacher (MT)</th>
<th>Struggling Teacher (ST)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1-2  | • Observe 5/week  
     | • Observe MT (w/ST), teaching ST's class 2/wk  
     | • Observe MT (w/ST), teaching ST's class 2/wk  
     | • Teach ST’s Core Knowledge class 5/wk  
     | • Debrief during weekly check-in  
     | • Teach ST’s Core Knowledge class 4/wk  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key actionable changes each day  
     | • Teach Core Knowledge 2/wk |
| 3-4  | • Observe 4/week  
     | • Observe MT (w/ST), teaching ST’s class 2/wk  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe ST on day 5 for Core Knowledge  
     | • Observe ST on day 5 for Core Knowledge  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
| 5    | • Meeting w/ST during weekly check-in  
     | • Observe ST at least 3/week  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  
     | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify two key changes  

Support actions are quantified for all involved, including involvement from the instructional leader.

“We invest a lot in recruitment. It makes sense that we would also invest resources in helping our teachers to become successful.”

- Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, Managing Director, North Star Academy
Create strong performance improvement plans that are time-bound and identify specific supports.

**North Star Academy (Uncommon Schools)**

Sample Six-Week Performance Improvement Plan

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<th>Principal</th>
<th>Mentor Teacher (MT)</th>
<th>Struggling Teacher (ST)</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1-2  | • Observe 5/week  
      • Observe MT (w/ST), teaching ST’s class 2/wk  
      • Debrief during weekly check-in | • Teach ST’s Core Knowledge class 5/wk | • Don’t teach Core Knowledge  
      • Observe MT teaching ST’s class; identify two key actionable changes each day |
| 3-4  | • Observe 4/week  
      • Observe MT (w/ST), teaching ST’s class 2/wk  
      • Teach ST’s Core Knowledge class 4/wk  
      • Observe ST on day 5 for Core Knowledge | • Teach ST’s Core Knowledge class 4/wk  
      • Observe ST 2/wk | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify 2 key changes  
      • Teach Core Knowledge 2/wk  
      • Meet w/principal and MT |
| 5    | • Meeting w/ST during weekly check-in  
      • Observe ST at least 3/week | • Teach ST’s Core Knowledge class 3/wk  
      • Observe ST 2/wk | • Observe MT teaching ST’s class: identify 2 key changes  
      • Teach Core Knowledge 2/wk  
      • Meet w/principal and MT |
| 6    | … | … | … |

Struggling Teacher (ST) is given a defined window to demonstrate improvement.

Each Struggling Teacher (ST) is assigned a mentor teacher who is granted support for his/her own classroom in exchange for supporting the ST.
Establish a dismissal timeline to compel leaders to make difficult decisions when necessary.

Example 1: May renewal decisions
- By April 15th, teachers indicate their interest in returning for the following year.
- By May 15th, network indicates whether the teacher’s contract will be renewed.
- District or network rarely terminates mid-year due to terms of annual employment agreement.

Example 2: March renewal decisions; dismiss if necessary
- By January, school leader should have strong read on performance.
- If no improvement is made by March, teacher is notified that at that time they will not be invited back, but finishes the year.
- In some cases, dismissal will occur mid-year if early improvement plan failed.

Example 3: Dismiss as necessary
- Professional growth plan (PGP) identifies teachers who need intensive support.
- Teachers who fail to demonstrate improvement are dismissed as soon as intensive improvement plans indicate no progress being made.
School leaders take varying approaches to timing of dismissal decisions.

**Example 1: May renewal decisions**

“[Each observation form] has two boxes at the bottom: ‘Meeting the conditions for employment’ and ‘Not meeting the conditions for employment.’” If the principal checks the second box after the April observation, the teacher is non-renewed.

- *Network HR administrator*

**Example 2: March renewal decisions; dismiss if necessary**

“I expect non-renewed teacher to have been on an improvement plan. If principals are considering someone to not be renewed, they should be on [an improvement] plan by the debrief after the January observation at the latest.” If an improvement plan has been executed earlier in the year without success, dismissal can also take place mid-year.

- *Network administrator, former school leader*

**Example 3: Dismiss as necessary**

“We believe that our selection is better than most. However, we also believe in ‘Hire slow, fire fast.’ We’ll make a change whenever we need to make a change. We don’t fool around...We give adequate warning. We give more than adequate support.”

- *Network administrator, former school leader*
Use lessons from the performance accountability process to improve other aspects of human capital management.

Questions to consider:

• Are struggling teachers provided with adequate resources to be successful?
• Are performance problems identified early enough to minimize effects on student outcomes?
• Could performance issues be addressed through improved training programs?
• Do poor performers tend to come from the same recruitment sources/training programs?
• Could potential performance issues be seen during selection?
• Would changes in teaching assignment and/or on-boarding improve teachers’ chances for success?

North Star Academy (Uncommon Schools)

Uses an “Exit Interview” to ask departing teachers about specific areas of human capital management in which the school and network can improve.
Explore additional tools for this Toolkit on the Full Toolbox page. Also, be sure to access the five other Toolkits of the Teacher Talent Toolbox to craft a complete talent management strategy.

Teacher Talent Toolbox

School-tested strategies for growing great teaching teams