

Planning Stay Conversations With Teachers



Korey Green (L) receives coaching from Giselle Allen (R) as part of the Baltimore City Teaching Residency, held at the Academy for College and Career Exploration in Baltimore.

Seven Steps for a Stay Conversation

1. Praise:

Highlight the positive. Link this teacher's performance with the bigger picture impact you see this teacher making on their students and your school. Be clear that they are a strong teacher and that you see and value their contributions to your school community.

2. Acknowledge:

Name that the past few school years have been challenging and that this teacher has been working very hard under difficult conditions. Be specific and direct about these hardships and mention specific, positive instances of the teacher's impact, successes, and/or contributions during a hard time.

3. Probe for a Pulse Check:

Start with a targeted question and encourage the teacher to share their feelings with you. How does the teacher feel about their work and their role in the school? Ask for their feedback – What else can you do as a school leader to encourage them to return?

4. Determine Intention:

Use probing and dialogue to determine whether this teacher is planning to stay at your school.

5. State Desired Outcome & Retention Strategy:

Tell the teacher you'd like them to stay and how you'd like to recognize their performance.

6. Plan Ahead:

How will this recognition actually play out? What will it mean for their career and opportunities at your school? For their students and impact on the school community? What can this teacher expect in the upcoming weeks and months?



7. Follow-up:

Set a timeline for follow up and make sure you follow up. Reiterate how much you appreciate the teacher's contributions and that they are welcome to share feedback with you anytime.

Highlight the Positive

- “What I saw today* is what I would hope to see in all of our classrooms.”
- “In reviewing school-wide data this week, I was inspired by how well our students are doing in your class*.”
- “Today’s lesson* is why I look forward to coming to your room each week.”
- “What I saw today* was another example of the skill and energy you put into your lessons.”
- “Watching you teach today* reminded me that it’s no wonder why your students are performing so strongly.
- “The way you connected with all students* in class today is an exemplar for other teachers to follow.”
- Others?

**Insert a specific reference to the low-inference evidence.*

Acknowledge the Challenges

- “I know this year, in particular, has been really challenging, and I appreciate that you’ve repeatedly welcomed additional students into your classes as we’ve faced more staff absences*.”
- “These past years have been hard for our school community. I know you’re working longer hours while juggling childcare and trying to take care of yourself personally*. It’s a lot, and I so appreciate you showing up for our students, day after day “I know that preparing and delivering strong instruction is especially hard this year while you’re also working to support students’ mental health and wellbeing*. I notice and value that you’re showing up for your students day after day with positivity.”
- Others?

**Insert an example of a specific challenge that the teacher has faced.*

Probe for a Pulse Check

- “How do you feel on your drive to work each morning?”
- “What would you tell a friend who is thinking about applying to teach here about what it’s like to work at this school?”
- “How do you feel when you leave this building at the end of the day? At the end of the week?”
- “What would make your teaching experience here more (pleasant, sustainable, enjoyable, etc.)
- “What can I do as a leader to better support you?”



- “If we could find a way to take one thing off your plate, what would that be?”
- “How can I help your workload feel more manageable?”
- “How is your work-life balance? Have there been supports outside of school that are helpful? How can I help ensure you have the personal time you need to recharge?”
- “Are there any resources or supports that would help you feel better about your work here?”
- Others?



Determine Intention

- “Where do you see yourself professionally in 3 years? In 5 years? What does this mean for next year?”
- “What do you see as the most ideal career pathway and the timeline for you to reach your goals? What does this mean for next year?”
- “What do you enjoy most about classroom teaching? How do you feel when you think about returning to the classroom next year?”
- “What do you consider when you think about leaving the classroom/this school/this profession? Are you considering making a change for next year?”
- “Do you have any hesitations or concerns about returning next year that we could talk through together?”
- Others?

State Desired Outcome & Retention Strategy

- “I want to do what I can to make this work enjoyable and sustainable for you so that you can continue to have a positive impact on students.”
- “Your contribution to students and the school community at large is really remarkable, and as such, I’d like to reward you.”
- “The results you continue to get with students are outstanding and warrant recognition and reward.”
- “You are an incredible teacher who inspires both students and colleagues. I want you to see an exciting, and sustainable career path at our school/system.”
- “You have grown so much this year, and I’m excited to think about your professional potential here, as well as your impact on our students.”
- Others?

Tips for Having a Stay Conversation

	
<p>Be specific and genuine.</p> <p>Be sure to communicate why you think the teacher is strong and share examples of their impact on students and the school community.</p>	<p>Speaking in generalities.</p> <p>It is important to let teachers know why they are valuable to your school and students.</p>
<p>Recruit!</p> <p>Remember that strong teachers probably have multiple options, and you are recruiting them.</p>	<p>Not executing your next steps.</p> <p>Follow through on <u>all</u> commitments agreed upon.</p>
<p>Be transparent.</p> <p>Be open about school challenges and how the teachers can be part of the solution. Ask for and appreciate feedback.</p>	<p>Implementation of retention strategies for compliance purposes.</p> <p>Retention strategies are part of a robust, ongoing plan that is tailored to your school and teachers.</p>
<p>Listen for motivations.</p> <p>Ask for specific ideas the teacher has and leave an open line of communication.</p>	<p>Sugarcoating.</p> <p>Avoid painting an overly rosy picture and be honest about instances where you may have missed opportunities to better support teachers.</p>

Considerations for Supporting Resigning Teachers

Inevitably, some teachers will choose to resign from their positions. Regardless of whether you would have liked to retain these teachers, leaders should work with them to agree to light-touch transition plans that protect students from further disruptions to their learning and school experiences.

These plans should identify student goals, and the actions teachers and leaders will take to ensure these goals are met and encourage teachers to stay engaged and transition out of their positions smoothly and professionally.

Developing these plans could look like discussing the following questions:

- What do you want your students to accomplish by the end of the year? What steps will you take to ensure they meet those goals? How can the school leadership team support you?
- How do you want to wrap up your work with your students and colleagues? What should that look and feel like and what steps can we take to ensure that happens?
- What resources and supports would be helpful for a new teacher in your role next year?



Leaders should also make a point to:

- Acknowledge teachers' contributions and achievements
- Collect any resources, tools, or materials they developed that may be helpful for other teachers
- Continue to demonstrate care for teachers and support for their students
- Emphasize the importance of continuing to provide students with excellent learning experiences
- Learn about the teachers' reasons for resigning and feedback on their experiences at your school

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