

Creating a Culture of Accountability and Compliance

Brenda Mora
Executive Administrator-Human Capital
Region One ESC



The Landscape Has Changed

- Stronger talent pools are emerging
- LEAs can no longer afford tolerance-based leadership
- Employees want clarity, fairness, consistency, and expectations
- Compliance failures are increasing tied to leadership challenges



Culture of Accountability Starts with Leadership

Accountability is a Culture-Not a Write-Up

Accountability means:

- Clear Expectations
- Consistent Follow-Through
- Timely Conversations
- Measurable Standards
- Documentation of performance and conduct

Not:

- Punishment
- Micromanagement
- “Gotcha” leadership



Culture of Accountability Starts with Leadership

What Employees Watch

Employees see:

- What leaders tolerate
- Whether policies apply equally
- Whether high performers carry low performers
- Whether documentation is consistent
- Whether evaluations matter



The worst behavior leaders tolerate becomes the organization's standard.



Accountability and Documentation: The Leader's Role in Creating Culture

Employees do not become accountable because policies exist. They become accountable because leaders consistently enforce expectations.

When leaders do not address issues promptly, employees learn:

- Expectations are optional
- Deadlines are negotiable
- Policies are selectively enforced
- High performers will carry the load
- There are few consequences for underperformers.

Over time, this becomes the organizational culture



The Accountability Ladder

Leaders should follow progression

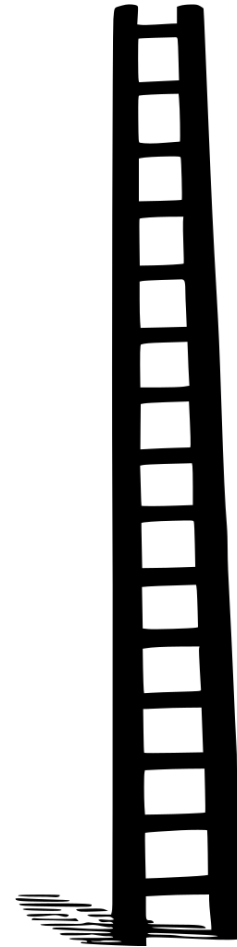
Step 1: Clarify Expectations

- Does Employee understand the expectation?
- Has the expectation been communicated?

Step 2: Coaching Conversations

- Concern
- Impact
- Desired outcome

Conversation should be documented



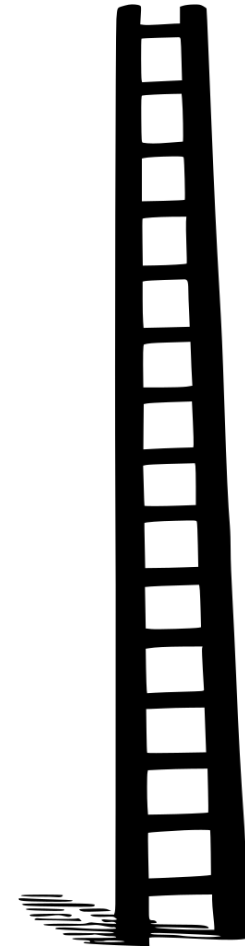
The Accountability Ladder

Step 3: Follow-Up Documentation

- Date
- Concern
- Expectations discussed
- Support Provided

Step 4: Monitor Progress

- Has performance improved?
- Is additional support needed?

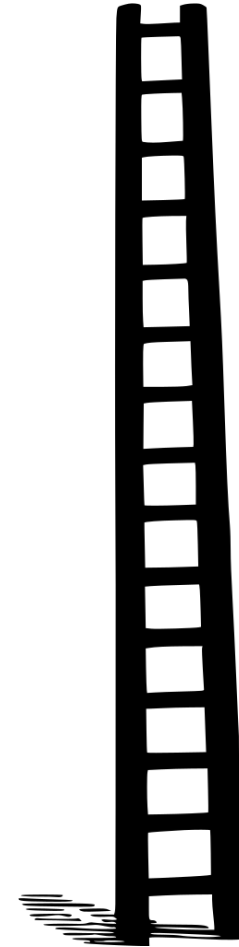


The Accountability Ladder

Step 5: Formal Intervention

- Written directives
- Growth plans
- Performance improvement plans
- Corrective Action-Memorandum of Concern

The employee should not be surprised at this stage.



Documentation is Leadership Communication

Good documentation:

- Creates fairness
- Tracks progress
- Protects the organization
- Supports employment decisions
- Strengthens compliance
- “They’re trying.”

Without documentation:

- Performance issues become opinions
- Evaluations lose credibility
- Corrective actions become difficult.
- Employee relations issues increase
- Nonrenewal and terminations become harder to defend



The Documentation Formula

- Objective Facts
- Policy/Expectation
- Impact
- Expectation Moving Forward
- Follow-up



Sample Framework for Leaders

Weak Documentation:

“Needs Improvement with professionalism.”

Strong Documentation:

“On February 12 and February 19, the employee failed to submit required ARD documentation within district timelines despite 3 prior reminders. This resulted in delayed compliance processing. Expectation moving forward is submission within required timelines by 4:00pm daily. Weekly monitoring will occur for the next 30 days.”



Documentation: Leadership Skill

Why Documentation Fails

- “I talked to them already.”
- “I don’t want to damage morale.”
- “They’re close to retirement.”
- “I don’t have time.”
- “HR is taking care of it”
- “They’re trying.”

Result

- No record of coaching
- No progressive support
- No legal defensibility
- No performance history
- No leverage for improvement



Reframing Documentation

Documentation is:

- Leadership communication
- Employee clarity
- Compliance protection
- Performance coaching
- Evidence of support provided

Documentation is not:

- Punishment
- Personal attack
- “Building a case”



Leadership Shift

Leaders may:

- Delay Hard Conversations
- Avoid Documentation
- Hope behavior improves
- Fear Conflict
- Over-rely on HR to “Fix” Problems

Reflection:

Does your leadership team know how to document objectively, professionally, and consistently?



Cost of Avoiding Documentation

Leaders may avoid documentation because they want to:

- Preserve relationships
- Avoid conflict
- Keep morale high
- Focus on positive interactions

Avoidance creates larger problems



What Happens When Leaders Do Not Document?

High Performers Become Frustrated

They see poor performance tolerated.

Managers Become Inconsistent

Different Employees are held to different standards

HR Becomes Reactive

HR spends time fixing problems instead of preventing them

Employees are Surprised

They receive negative evaluations or employment actions with minimal prior feedback.



Common Documentation Mistakes

Mistake #1: Writing Opinions

- Employee has a bad attitude
- Employee interrupted colleagues three times during the department meeting and declined assigned tasks.

Mistake #2: General Statements

- Needs Improvement
- Failed to complete monthly reports by the established deadline in January, February, and March.



Common Documentation Mistakes

Mistake #3: No Impact Statement

- Leaders must explain why behavior matters
- What was the impact on students, staff, operations, or compliance?

Mistake #4: Waiting Too Long

- Leaders tend to wait months before beginning the documentation process.
- Best documentation occurs immediately following the conversation.



Staffing Forecasts & Contract Season Accountability

Strong Districts Use:

- Performance Data
- Evaluations
- Attendance trends
- Certification status
- Student outcomes
- Culture contribution
- Professional conduct history



Contract Timeline

Dec - Jan

- Performance Review-Conduct formal performance reviews and document any deficiencies or areas of concern
- Preliminary Discussions-Begin preliminary discussions with administrators about contract renewals and potential non renewals

Feb - March

- Documentation-Ensure all documentation supporting renewal or nonrenewal decisions are complete and up to date
- Initial Notifications- inform employees of potential nonrenewal and provide them with an opportunity to improve



Contract Timeline

April

- Final Evaluations: Conduct final evaluations and gather any additional evidence needed to support renewal and nonrenewal
- Administrative Review: Administrators review all cases and make final recommendations for renewal and nonrenewal

Late April - Early May

- Board meeting preparation: prepare materials for the school board meeting where renewal and nonrenewal decisions will be discussed
- Employee Notification: provide written notification to employees of the proposed nonrenewal at least 10 calendar days BEFORE the last day of instruction



Contract Timeline

Mid-May

- Board Meeting: Present renewal and non-renewal recommendations to Board of Trustees
- Employee Hearings: If requested, conduct hearings for employees who wish to contest the nonrenewal decision

Late May – Early June

- Final Decisions: Finalize nonrenewal decisions for those who requested a hearing or filed a grievance and notify employees of outcome



Questions Leaders Should Be Asking

Before Contracts are Issued:

- Who are our high performers?
- Who requires improvement plans?
- Where are we carrying chronic underperformance ?
- Which campuses avoid documentation?
- Are evaluations aligned with actual performance?
- Are we renewing employees out of fear or strategy?



Staffing Forecast Framework

Categories of Employees:

1. High Impact
 - Retain aggressively
 - Leadership pipeline
2. Solid Contributors
 - Continue growth/coaching
3. Improvement Needed
 - Support plans
 - Documentation
4. Chronic Underperformers
 - Extensive Documentation exists



Accountability During Contract Season

How many contract recommendations are based on:

- Actual performance evidence?
- Evaluation data
- Documentation records?
- Leadership observations?

Vs.

- Staffing shortages?
- Fear of vacancies?
- Historical practices?



Evaluations That Matter

Many Evaluations

- Inflate ratings
- Avoid difficult feedback
- Contradict documentation
- Fail to differentiate performance

Consequences:

- Weak legal defensibility
- Employee confusion
- Damages culture credibility
- Inability to address poor performance

Leadership Reflection:

Do your evaluations reflect actual performance?



Evaluation Example:

If an employee receives a high evaluation rating yet is:

- Frequently late
- Missing deadlines
- Creates compliance concerns
- Struggles with professionalism
- Failing leadership expectations

When an employee still receives a rating of proficient or exceeds expectations, the evaluation system loses its integrity as a reliable tool.



Effective Evaluations Include

Alignment Between:

- Observations
- Coaching conversations
- Documentation
- Improvement plans
- Evaluation Ratings

Leaders Must:

- Provide evidence-based feedback
- Include measurable examples
- Identify growth areas honestly
- Avoid surprise evaluations



Superintendent Accountability Dashboard

Superintendents should review:

- Evaluation completion rates
- Employee relations cases
- Contract Recommendations
 - Improvement plans
- Certification Deficiencies
- Attendance Trends
- Staff Turnover Data
- Documentation audits



Superintendent Action Plan

1. Train Leaders on Documentation
 - Templates
 - Examples
 - Role-playing
 - Calibration Training
2. Audit Evaluation Integrity
 - Are rating inflated?
 - Are evaluations aligned to performance records?
 - Are struggling employees rated honestly?



Superintendent Action Plan

3. Standardize Accountability Expectations

- Timelines
- Communication standards
- Professional expectations
- Compliance requirements

4. Review Contract Renewal Process

- Does this employee strengthen our culture and outcomes?



Superintendent Action Plan

5. Model Accountability at the Cabinet Level

If Leaders:

- Avoid conversations
- Miss deadlines
- Ignore policy
- Fail to document,

The organization will mirror it.



Leadership Reflection

What culture are we unintentionally rewarding?

Accountability or Avoidance

Are leaders enforcing expectations consistently or selectively?

If a new employee observed our organization, what would they conclude about accountability?

What decision have I delayed because it is uncomfortable?



Region One ESC HR PD Offerings

- Crucial Conversations in collaboration with Crucial Learning
- Documentation that Drives Accountability
- Evaluation Integrity: Making Evaluations Matter
- Holding the Line: Leadership and Accountability
- Developing Leaders Who can Hold Others Accountable
- Building a High-Performance Culture

*Trainings are customizable



Key Takeaways

- Employees deserve to know where they stand
- High performers deserve to work in accountable environments.
- Accountability starts with Leadership
- Culture is created by what leaders permit, address, reinforce, and document.

The strongest districts are not those with fewest performance issues. They are the districts whose leaders address issues early, document consistently, and make staffing decisions based on performance.

