



The Architecture of Accountability

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To assist with understanding the inter-relatedness of the elements that are part of employee performance, it is helpful to use the metaphor of a building. To stay in the spirit of the topic, imagine an old schoolhouse. This metaphorical schoolhouse is made up of a floor, walls and a roof.

The "architecture of accountability" can be viewed as like the structure of that schoolhouse. Consider the following four elements related to the teacher's classroom and work performance as the floor or foundation of working with a teacher.

- **Performance** standards clearly communicated to all employees,
- **Accountability** records of systematic monitoring of performance,
- **Classroom** observations performed with objectivity and skill, and
- **Evaluation** documents that assess the whole, indicating patterns and setting forth plans where needed.

Continuing the metaphor of the schoolhouse, the next part to consider in the "architecture of accountability" is the walls, which represent the environmental impact of the performance. This part of the structure is made up of the impact of the teacher's performance as measured by:

- **Student information**, taking into account achievement and the variables that affect performance,
- **Peer and Parent observations** and opinions of the effect of the performance being measured,
- **Administrative factors** that arise as a result of the teacher's performance, such as delayed reports or increased staff workload, and
- **Extenuating circumstances** that are influencing the performance.

Lastly, the roof of the schoolhouse is made up of the leadership /staff relationship, and reflects the interpersonal skills of the supervisor as assessed by the following factors:

- Commitment to success of the teacher demonstrated by the supervisor,
- Assistance provided to the teacher to accomplish remediation,
- Resources allocated to the teacher's success, and
- Encouragement reflected in consistent feedback provided to the teacher.

If we address the job of supervision and evaluation including all the elements represented in the "architecture of accountability" we will succeed on many levels. We will be leaders who are up front, fair and balanced, and we will be complying with all aspects of the law of accountability. We will be both legally fit and principled.

Punishment Doesn't Work to Alter Culture

For almost 30 years I have provided legal representation to school boards in their efforts to dismiss

teachers from employment. I now realize that for any significant advancement to occur in the quality of education, or in the enhancement of the environment in which our employees work, a transformation must occur. We must shift from a culture where accountability is perceived as punitive to one in which accountability is experienced as an opportunity for full self-expression and contribution. We tend to focus on the "doingness" of what should happen to remove ineffective teachers, training our administrators in how to document unsatisfactory performance and apply progressive discipline. In the meantime we have virtually ignored the "willingness" of our people to hold themselves and others accountable for the results that indicate quality education. Additionally, we have ignored the culture and climate in which that "willingness" arises.

We don't have to approach the law of accountability and its architecture as something we need to know if we're going to be the "bad guy" and fire someone. We can learn and incorporate the legal criteria, and their ethical and principled underpinnings, for what they are - clear guidelines of what factors need to be in place to determine:

- whether a human being has been treated well in the workplace, and
- what the future should be for that person based on his or her accountability for producing excellence in education.

Editors' note: This article is general in nature and is not intended to replace professional, legal advice.

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