

Preface

During his first year as a middle school principal, the author learned the hard way how frustrating and difficult it can be to terminate an ineffective teacher. Even the most experienced school administrators struggle with this task. This book is designed to guide school administrators, supervisors, district office personnel responsible for evaluations, and university graduate students through the complicated teacher dismissal process. Over the course of several years, resources compiled by the author took the shape of a manuscript or guide to help principals and supervisors avoid the same pitfalls the author encountered while going through the process of terminating a teacher. The author believed his experience and resources would benefit other professionals who are involved in supervising teachers. Subsequently, the first edition of *The Marginal Teacher: A Step-by-Step Guide to Fair Procedures for Identification and Dismissal* was published in 1993 to support principals and supervisors throughout the cumbersome teacher dismissal process. Throughout the years, this book has helped many principals navigate through the complicated teacher evaluation process. Principals must do their homework in order to conduct an effective teacher dismissal. Poorly prepared documentation will result in the dismissal being overturned by a school board, appeals board, arbitrator, or other ruling body. This book illustrates actions the principal can integrate into the evaluation process to successfully gather documentation to terminate an ineffective teacher. It provides numerous tools to help streamline the teacher evaluation process—sample letters, observation forms, a calendar with action dates identified, and a sample unsatisfactory evaluation binder. You can modify these resource documents to fit your effort to create a strong case for the termination of an ineffective teacher.

The Marginal Teacher is predicated upon seven basic assumptions about a school district's evaluation system. First, that the district school committee has designated improved student achievement as its number one priority. Second, the school district does not use a portfolio or a Peer Review Program to evaluate teachers. Third, the principal has followed the legal and contractual obligations of the master contract, school district policies, and state laws relative to the teacher evaluation process. Fourth, the principal understands the physical and

xii THE MARGINAL TEACHER

psychological demands of the teacher dismissal process. Fifth, the principal has established and implemented consistent teacher evaluation procedures. Sixth, the principal has established administrative and instructional credibility with the staff to analyze and describe what is occurring in the teacher's classroom to diagnose the causes of the unsatisfactory teaching. Seventh, the principal has discussed the teacher dismissal process with individuals in central administration as well as the attorney for the school district to obtain their support and to ensure that legal and contractual obligations are met.

This book correlates with two other guidebooks—*How to Handle Staff Misconduct* and *The Incompetent Specialists*—that may point the principal in the right direction to prepare an unsatisfactory teacher evaluation. However, these books are not necessarily the perfect models of the teacher dismissal process or of the best strategies to employ. Accordingly, before using this or any other guide, carefully review your district's teacher evaluation procedures and related stipulations contained within your state statutes, school district policies, and the master contract.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the teacher evaluation process that explains the due process requirements. Chapter 2 explains the types of behavior that are considered misconduct and the steps in the teacher appraisal process. Chapter 3 describes the marginal teacher, the good teacher, a schematic view of the basic steps in the teacher evaluation process, and the role of the evaluators. Chapter 4 explains the opening procedures for starting the school year to include regular and constructive conduct observations of all teachers. Chapter 5 explains how to create an organized binder containing the documentation that a principal may need to support an unsatisfactory evaluation. Chapter 6 explains how to successfully prepare to conduct observations of all teachers. This chapter also includes the steps of conducting pre- and postobservation conferences and sample informal and formal observation forms, memoranda of concerns, and letters that document the guidance and assistance provided to the teacher. A new evaluation instrument, the Memorandum of Accomplishment, was added to give the principal another strategy to follow up on the first Memorandum of Concerns. Chapter 7 details how to implement an intensive teacher assistance plan. Chapter 8 is designed to prepare the principal for the important school-level dismissal meeting. Chapter 9 is a new chapter that explains how to successfully conduct a school-level meeting and includes a sample narrative to use to present the case. Chapter 10 is a new chapter that explains how to effectively present the unsatisfactory evaluation at the district-level conference to an impartial hearing officer and school committee—a decision about the teacher's future employment in the school district is made at this step. The following resources can be found at the end of the book for easy reference: A has letters to the principal's supervisor; B is a calendar with a suggested action timeline; C is a summary of state-by-state teacher evaluation statutes; and D is the Sample Unsatisfactory Teacher Evaluation Documentation, including a full Sample Unsatisfactory Teacher Evaluation Binder that will come in especially handy as a reference while reading Chapter 9. Please note that all forms, sample letters, and the full Sample Unsatisfactory Teacher Evaluation Documentation can be found on the dual-format CD-ROM included in the back of the book. Forms can be downloaded and easily customized for your own needs in assembling documentation to support an unsatisfactory evaluation.