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**Newsletter  
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## Ineffective Teachers

*NAD Principals' Handbook*

When addressing an ineffective teacher, the following points should be considered:

- Remember that the teacher is an employee of the conference, and collaboration with the LCOE is essential as it may impact employment.
- It is important that the principal is in all classrooms on a regular basis so as to be aware of potential problems as early as possible. Regular observations and teacher evaluations must be completed.
- When dealing with a teacher having significant problems, be sure the evaluation of ineffectiveness is based on firsthand, objective observations.
- The written evaluations shared with the teachers must include specific reference to areas needing improvement.
- The successful professional development of the teacher should always be the goal.
- In conferencing with the ineffective teacher, address the specific areas that need improvement and lead out in designing a plan that will give the teacher an opportunity to grow.
- Provide constant and regular support and feedback.
- The school has the option of recommending that a teacher be placed on probation. This is a change of status and must be voted by the local school personnel committee and the local conference board of education. The union Education Code will provide guidelines for this action.

<http://adventisteducation.org/principals-handbook/>

## Identifying Weaknesses to Achieve Success

*George Bronson, Associate Superintendent, Central California Conference*

Dictionary definitions of ineffective teachers often include such statements as “someone that does not succeed at accomplishing or moving toward a goal.” Other sources suggest that an ineffective teacher is “one that is not capable of performing satisfactorily.” Certain characteristics occasionally appear in other definitions, such as “boring to students;” “has an abrasive personality;” “insensitive;” “unprepared;” and “lack of knowledge of subject matter.”

In recent years, though, there seems to be a newer and narrower definition of ineffective teachers, which, according to Peter Green, may be stated as a “teacher whose students score poorly on a test.” The assertion is that students generally score low on a test because they had an ineffective teacher. There may be some truth to that, but there are many other factors that may negatively influence test scores that have little to do with teacher effectiveness, and which may include one or more of the following factors:

- Students from low income environments
- Poorly organized schools
- Lack of adequate resources and facilities
- Culturally biased tests
- Chaotic home life
- Misalignment of curriculum being taught to the test being administered
- Lack of administrative support

With the intense pressure placed on teachers to ensure student success on tests, especially standardized tests, they are often blamed for students’ poor performance, blame which often is ill-deserved.

On the other hand, there are definitely teachers who are ineffective and bear direct responsibility for low student performance. Derrick Meader suggests that the characteristics of these teachers often include:

- Lack of classroom management skills

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# Conquering Fear to be Effective

Terry Pottle, Principal, Thunderbird Academy

Fear can be a powerful emotion to overcome. As I work with teachers, I find that often the reason for ineffective teaching is fear. These teachers are not afraid of students or the classroom, but of change. This fear can produce paralysis, and paralyzed is what many ineffective teachers have become. This is most prevalent with teachers who have been teaching for an extended period of time. As the world changes around the teacher, they fail to change to meet the new world. They adopt a mantra of “if it’s not broke don’t fix it”. Unfortunately, teaching methods of twenty years ago may not necessarily be the most effective tool to engage students of today in the learning process. Our world is changing at an incredible rate, and our students’ brains are programmed differently than they were just a few years ago. **If our teaching methodology doesn’t change to meet these new realities, it will become ineffective and stale and our students won’t be willing to engage in the learning process.**

To help this type of ineffectual teacher is to help them overcome their fear. Notice the word *help* is used, not *dictate*. Dictating change in the classroom is rarely effective and has a very limited lifespan of usefulness. Instead, I, as an administrator, have to create a desire within the teacher to face their fear in order to make the necessary changes in their teaching. This is a two-step process: 1) Identify the fear and 2) work *with* the teacher

to overcome their fear.

It seems odd that in an environment where we encourage students to “just try” and “you can learn from your mistakes,” a teacher is uncomfortable using the same philosophy for themselves. Sometimes trying something new can cause an avalanche of parental concern through phone calls and email. When this happens, the teacher invariably waits for the shadow of the administrator in their doorway to find out if their employment status is in jeopardy. Unfortunately, this behavior in a teacher is usually developed by personal experience or watching others work in an environment where administration has not made the culture of being safe to fail. Too many times administrators have left teachers vulnerable to attack rather than working with teachers to shield them.

Once the origin of the fear is understood, the second and rewarding step can begin. Working with the teacher to try new methods is more than just making sure the teacher understands the procedure. It means going beyond the method to identify possible issues that may arise and putting in place strategies to minimize the potential. Working with the teacher will bring comradery and trust in your relationship. **The most powerful conqueror of the fear of failure is trust, the most important gift you can give to your teachers.** ☩

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## Identifying Weaknesses (continued)

- Lack of knowledge of the content being taught
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of professionalism
- Lack of organizational skills
- Poor judgment
- Poor people skills

How an administrator chooses to address the problems demonstrated by an ineffective teacher depends largely on their administrative philosophy. If a principal views him- or herself as primarily a finance and operations director and plant manager, or a recruitment and fundraising officer, then perhaps that principal may choose to remove the ineffective teacher from the classroom as quickly as possible. The teacher may be viewed as a liability in terms of fundraising, recruitment, among other things, so removal might be the most expeditious way to deal with the problem.

Conversely, a principal who views him- or herself primarily as an instructional leader might wish to identify

specific areas that need remediation. Then, work jointly with the teacher to establish goals that the teacher can accomplish which will have the dual benefit of salvaging a teacher and of helping to provide a classroom climate in which an effective teacher can help students thrive and learn. This approach can test the patience of parents and school board members, but a skilled principal who is in the business of building people up—both students and teachers—will usually find it is worth the time, effort, and criticism that may occur. *“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...” 1 Thessalonians 5:11*

Thankfully, the incidences of ineffective teachers in our schools are limited. Instead, we are blessed to have some of the most dedicated, talented, and inspirational classroom teachers. However, Adventist schools must be diligent guardians advocating nothing short of teaching excellence. Identifying teacher weaknesses and developing a professional growth plan toward success and effectiveness can be challenging, but the results are positive for both the teacher and students. ☩

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## Not If, But What

*Victor Anderson, Principal, Pine Hills Adventist Academy*

Most principals have worked with an ineffective teacher. In fact, if we are honest, most of us are currently working with one or more. The question is not “if”, but “what”. What can be done when one of our colleagues is not effective in their classroom?

- The first thing a good Adventist administrator should do is go into their room, close the curtains, lock their door, and pray. Pray for your school, pray for your teacher, pray for yourself, and most of all pray that God’s will be done. Whatever action is taken will be more effective if it is bathed in prayer.
- The second step is to pick up the phone and talk to your local conference office. They have experience, wisdom, a fresh perspective, and access to legal advice. All of which you may need before you are through.
- Third, take a few moments and write down specific complaints and specific outcomes you would like to see. As you work through this process, **remember it is much easier to explain what good teaching and good classrooms are than it is to find all the dysfunctional behaviors a teacher or classroom can exhibit.**
- Make a list of the two or three things you want to see in the classroom and share those in your evaluation.
- Incorporate your list in a formal evaluation specifically listing desired outcomes that were not present during your observations.
- Schedule a conference with the teacher. Discuss what you want to see, not what is wrong with what you observed. Usually, there will be one of two responses.
  - a. The teacher will recognize the areas that need improvement and begin problem solving. The solutions may include some classes, reading materials, coaching, and observations in other classrooms. This is a healthy response and should lead to resolution of the problems.

- b. The teacher will begin listing reasons why their students, parents, and classroom are not able to perform to your expectations. The teacher will try to shift the responsibility for solutions to the students, parents, and anyone else. This is not a healthy response. It is important to impress on the teacher they are responsible for what happens in their classroom.

- If the teacher’s response is “a”, all that is necessary for follow-up is to provide necessary resources, conference with the teacher at least weekly, and document progress.
- If the teacher’s response is “b”, call the conference office to inform and to get advice. Document the response as “teacher is not willing to take responsibility for problems in their classroom”. Document the lack of progress toward your expectations as listed in the initial evaluation. Once a lack of progress is documented, move to place the teacher on probation. (Note: This takes both local board or personnel committee approval and conference board of education approval.)
- When your teacher is placed on probation, you must provide intervention(s) that will assist the teacher in addressing deficiencies. Once again, communication with the conference office, documentation of progress or lack of, and frequent conferences with the teacher are essential.
- If there is no progress made in the probationary period, dismissal should be recommended. Once again, local and conference board approvals are needed.

Throughout this process, it is essential to maintain communication with God, your two boards, your conference office, and the teacher. Keep in mind there are labor laws with which to comply. Also remember, you are dealing with a career and a human being for whom Jesus died. ☩

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*The only sense that is common in the long run is the sense of change—and we all instinctively avoid it.*

–Elwyn Brooks “E. B.” White