



REMEDICATION OF TEACHERS

TEMPLATE

Introduction

Educators are great gifts of God to His church. Many are dedicated workers with a passion to serve children, their families, and their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. These dedicated men and women are intentional about integrating their faith and sharing the Gospel message every day with children and young adults entrusted in their care. Their desire to teach combined with their unselfish nature to serve, reflects the quality of instruction offered to little children and young adults. Educators in our Lutheran schools are redeemed children of God. They are valuable to the school families and congregational members that they serve.

Need for Remediation

Those with the responsibility to supervise workers in God's church, need to do so with a willingness to help. Educators in our Lutheran schools are not perfect; however, they are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ. Sometimes, staff members do not perform effectively or err in their work or living and as a result, become a stumbling block. For these workers, a special kind of ministry is needed. In Christian love for them and those who may be affected by the situation, the worker must be helped. Sometimes, that means helping them make a career change. However, more often, it results in guiding and helping them remedy their deficiencies and improve their performance.

The following is not a legal document or opinion. There are suggestions and exhibits offered in this template. They are simply a guide to assist supervisors and Boards of Christian Education as they deal with personnel issues.

Part I – Divine Call

Synod Bylaw 3.8.3.8.5 identifies that only causes for which members of a faculty may be removed from office, other than honorable retirement, are listed as follows:

- 1. Professional incompetency including, but not limited to, the failure to meet criteria identified in Bylaw 3.8.3.8.2 (d)**
- 2. Incapacity for performance of duty**
- 3. Insubordination**
- 4. Neglect of or refusal to perform duties of the office**
- 5. Conduct unbecoming a Christian**
- 6. Advocacy of false doctrine (Constitution, Art. II) or failure to honor and uphold the doctrinal position of the Synod as defined further in Bylaw 1.6.2 (b)**

With this in mind, educators need to be served evangelically, fairly, and responsibly. We, who supervise those entrusted to us, do so by prayer, asking the Lord for help, guidance, and a discerning heart and mind. Encouraging and assisting the workers under our care strengthens the ministry and educational process for all. Matthew 18:15-20 provides supervisors the process when dealing with erring colleagues. These Scripture passages provide guidance on how to approach a colleague and stress the concept of forgiveness and reconciliation. When leaders approach a brother or sister in Christ who has strayed with understanding, mutual care, and concern, the process is better set to bring forth resolution and an improvement in performance.

Part II – Four Part Model

The suggested model to implement is the model offered in the Synod's handbook. This is titled 'How to Help: Guidelines for Dealing with Problem Teachers or Administrators'. There are other models; however, this model is suggested as the model of choice for it is specific to the needs of Lutheran educators and follows God's Word. In any model, the goal is to improve not punish. The model of choice for Lutheran schools outlines a progressive action plan for remediation.

1. Serve Notice

Pray for guidance and wisdom before approaching the colleague needing remediation. When approaching a colleague, it is important to establish a time and place to meet. You will want to determine if that is a convenient time and place to talk for a few minutes. Ask your colleague if they are available. Begin the meeting with prayer. Do not rely on opinions or recall. Have documentation of exactly what the problem is. Be honest with the teacher and relate reasons why documented behavior cannot continue. Write your response so that it clearly represents what is adversely affecting people: children, other colleagues, parents, congregational members. Factual and documented incidents keep the conversation moving forward and

eliminate opportunities for debate. Close the meeting with prayer. Below is a summary of steps related to the first step, 'Serve Notice':

- Deal with facts not opinions.
- Document exactly what the problem is and how it affects people for whom the teacher is responsible.
- Document the facts of the meeting and that a notice has been served.
- Inform the Pastor(s) about the meeting points and that a notice has been served.

2. Clearly Explain

When approaching the colleague and sharing the concerns, it is important to remember that you always want to do so as a servant of the Lord Jesus. Your position is one of serving others. By maintaining this mindset, you will use the documented incident to assist you in explaining the seriousness of the situation. Allow the colleague to speak. Listen carefully. Continue the discussion until you are certain the individual understands the seriousness of the situation. Document other important matters that take place during the conversation. Pray for resolve. Below is a summary of steps related to the second step, 'Clearly Explain':

- Use the documented incident to clearly explain the seriousness of the situation.
- Explain the concern as often as necessary to ensure the colleague understands.
- Document all additional matters that surface during the conversation.
- Sign the documentation from the meeting and share the next day with the colleague.
- Continue to keep good lines of communication open with the Pastor(s).

3. Offer Assistance

It is proper to suggest alternatives for improvement. Provide a variety of helpful suggestions ready in advance (i.e. consultants, professional development classes, professional counseling, resource books, journals, budgeting, time management, task planning, etc...). Document all types of assistance that are agreed upon. If there is financial support available, make that clear. Both the administrator and the educator must sign the action plan. Below is a summary of steps related to the third step, 'Offer Assistance':

- Prepare a written list of helpful suggestions to share at the meeting.
- Explain all the available resources that may be used.
- Document what assistance and financial support are available to the educator.
- Sign documentation from the meeting and share the next day with the educator.
- Inform the Pastor(s) that an agreed action plan for improvement is implemented.

4. Specify a Time Frame

An action plan is more likely to be effective when it has time benchmarks that are specific to the needs of the individual, measurable, and obtainable. The success of the agreed upon plan is integral when the administrator and educator work together for resolution. However, the implementation of that plan and the consequences if deadlines are not met are not negotiable. Below is a summary of step four, 'Specify a Time Frame':

- Set an exact date by which improvements are to occur.
- Be in agreement as much as possible in setting this date, but remember the supervisor sets the time frame.
- Clearly explain the consequences if the deadlines are not met.
- Both parties must sign the remediation plan.
- Inform the Pastor(s) of the plan.

Conclusion

This template is to give the administrators and educators assistance in helping to resolve performance or lifestyle issues that arise. These suggestions are merely a guide. Each party needs to keep all signed documentation, written communication, and summaries of each meeting so that good communication happens. Signed documentation also helps convince the educator of the problem, helps maintain clarity/objectivity, protects all involved, and disseminates accurate information. If termination becomes the end result, a Divine Called Worker involved in a termination has the constitutional right of dispute resolution process explained in the Handbook of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Bylaws 1.10.10 through 1.10.10.2.

Reference

Moser, Carl J. and Bolt, James H. (1993). *How to Help: Guidelines for Dealing with Problem Teachers or Administrators*. Concordia Publishing House: MO.