

TIPS FOR MEETING WITH ADMINISTRATORS

You have been called to a meeting with your administrator. You anticipate that the tone of the meeting will be accusatory and your professional reputation or position will be threatened. Some disciplinary action (like probation, suspension, or dismissal) might be in the works. What should you do?

There are three instances when a teacher has the unquestionable right to have a representative present:

1. When a teacher is the subject of an investigation by a police officer or by an investigator from the Child Protective Services unit of the Department of Social Services. This right applies even if school system officials are also present.
2. When meeting to discuss a performance "Plan of Action" and only after at least three days have passed from the time the Plan of Action is received. *See section 10.7 of the Memorandum of Understanding in the EAN Calendar/Handbook on page 43.*
3. During the ***second*** step and any subsequent steps in a formal grievance.

For other situations when a building or central office administrator calls you in for a meeting, even if you are denied a representative or witness, you are obligated to attend. Not attending could be viewed as insubordination, which could lead to a recommendation of dismissal.

It is reasonable, however, for you to expect notice about a meeting, so that both your calendar is open and your mind is focused. If the administrator requests the meeting on short notice, ask for another time. Never leave your class or students unattended for a meeting without making arrangements for their care and supervision. Your first and primary obligation is to them.

If during the meeting you are confronted suddenly by charges, remain calm. Ask if you may have a representative or witness present. If the request is granted and you can't get in touch with your UniServ director, ask that another teacher be present to witness the discussion. Listen carefully to the accusations, and *then ask for time to think before you respond.*

Administrators are aware of body language and your verbal and non-verbal response may become part of the record as to your responsiveness. Do your best, therefore, not to react. Hold your comments and *do not become defensive.* Under no circumstances should you display any emotion!

Listen to all allegations and then say, "I need some time to think about my response and to check with my UniServ director. Could we continue this at a time convenient to his or her schedule?" This gives you time to remember all of the details when you are not under pressure.

At no time during the meeting should you admit guilt or accept blame. If presented with documents, ***sign for receipt purposes only.*** This will not indicate agreement with the contents. Response or rebuttal may come later. Do not resign or sign any papers or agreements related to resignation. Do not agree to anything verbally and do not agree to pay any expenses if that subject should come up.

If asked to write a statement, request that you be permitted to take it home and return it in a day or two. If that is not possible, request, as a minimum, that your UniServ director be permitted to read your statement before signing it. Your state of mind after such a meeting will hinder your ability to write a coherent statement. An educated, second opinion is in order.

Do not discuss the matter with anyone except your UniServ director or your attorney. Do not let your career become the topic of lounge gossip. Do not become the source of faculty unrest. Your UniServ director or your attorney can advise you when and where to make a public statement if necessary.

Begin to document the incident in question. Take down every detail, including the names of witnesses and others involved while still fresh in your mind.

Finally, remember that you are not alone. Call EAN and get advice before meetings that might be a problem for you.