

AR Mini-Session

Session Title: **The “Write” Way to Protect Your Job**

Time: 15 minutes

Materials/Equipment Needed: newsprint, markers

Handouts: Your Professional Papers

Tips for Responding to Written Documents



Script

Say → Imagine you have been called to your Human Resources office and suspended for what they label “unprofessional behavior. You are not allowed to return to your classroom, and thus aren’t able to retrieve any of the paperwork you have there. What do you do?

Imagine that after receiving your pay stub in the mail one month, you look closely and realize that something appears to be incorrect. You are not sure where you have placed previous documents relating to your pay. What do you do?

Imagine that you are in the process of securing a new certification. You have taken all the courses necessary, but receive a letter stating that you are three credits short. You have no idea where to locate proof of your previous coursework. What do you do?

For these reasons, and many more, NCAE recommends that all educators keep a file containing their professional papers at their home or other safe place outside of their work location.

Activity 1

Say → The term “professional papers” can seem rather ambiguous. What types of documents do you think would be important to keep in your file?

[Allow participants to brainstorm for several moments, and list their ideas on the newsprint. After discussion has ended, distribute the handout and, referring to the side titled “Your Professional Papers”, discuss the differences in this list and the list on newsprint, pointing out important documents that may not have been discussed.]

Activity 2

Say → When you receive a written document from a supervisor or parent, should you respond in writing?

[Allow several moments for discussion, as participants will discuss positive and negative aspects of responding in writing. Ask them to look at the back of the handout and read “Tips for Responding to Written Documents.”]

Share with the participants some additional thoughts relating to the handout tips.

- For example, saying “My lesson plans are stored in my top desk drawer” conveys the same information as “If you had asked for my lesson plans, I would have shown you were they were”, but sounds more professional. Remember, a purely factual response serves as a much better argument than a pointed finger or heated word.
- If you write a novel, your response may not even be read. Everyone respects a writer who understands brevity and can get to the actual point of the matter.
- Your response should make you sound like the professional you are.
- Never assume that someone else is keeping these important records and documents for you.
- For example, if a parent sent a letter to you and the principal, the principal will want to see how you resolved the matter.
- If you receive a letter from your principal over a simple incident, and you reply to the State Superintendent of Schools, such an action could come back to haunt you. By keeping your documentation, you ensure that should a situation arise where some other party needs to become involved, you already have gathered the papers that the reader will need to see

[If time permits, discuss the following helpful hints and ask participants to share hints of their own.]

Say → As educators, we sometimes develop a sixth-sense about students, parents, administrators, and incidents that could spell trouble in the future. Don’t ignore those instincts. When the warning buzzer in your head begins to sound, take that as a reminder to document events and communication concerning that matter, and keep such information in your professional papers file.

Some days it feels as if the whole world is against us, and we wonder why in the world we decided to become educators. To help combat these feelings, keep a brag book. Use a three ring binder filled with page protectors to fill with cards and drawings from students, notes of praise from parents, and thank you notes from administrators. When you are feeling low, flip through your book and remind yourself of all the good you’ve done!

(Feel free to share your tips with the group about how you document and what works best for you.)