Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) FAQ

1. What is a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)?

Administrators use Performance Improvement Plans to notify an employee of perceived *ongoing* performance deficiencies and to identify a course of action to address them. Sometimes administrators try to address one-time concerns through a PIP, but PIPs are really for longer term or ongoing concerns. PIPs are typically issued after administrators identify performance deficiencies as part of the evaluation process.

2. What are the possible outcomes from being on a PIP?

If you successfully complete the plan, then the administration should not proceed with non-renewing you. But if you do not successfully complete the plan, the administration may recommend to the school board that you be non-renewed which means that you are not offered a contract for the ensuing school year. You may have an opportunity to submit your resignation prior to the non-renewal recommendation being brought to the school board, which in some cases may be preferable.

3. What are the legal timelines for PIPs?

   School districts will often give an employee an opportunity to improve before non-renewing that employee for performance reasons. A PIP is a way for an employer to notify the employee of performance issues and to tell the employee what they need to do to improve. By law, preliminary notice of non-renewal must be issued by April 30th and final notice by May 15. A reasonable and good faith PIP will include a timeline that allows ample opportunity for the employee to show the administration that they have met expectations before the nonrenewal deadlines.

4. Does the fact that I've been placed on a PIP mean that my administrator is planning to non-renew me?

While some administrators may use a PIP disingenuously for the purpose of building a case for nonrenewal, it's often true that administrators sincerely want to help the employee improve and hope to avoid non-renewal. Even if it seems the administration is leaning towards non-renewal, you should do your best to successfully complete the PIP. In the end, it isn't solely up to your principal to make the final decision as all non-renewals must be approved by the Board.

5. What should I do when I find out I'm being placed on a PIP?

   It's critical to not go it alone. Contact your Building Rep (BR) and ask them to review the plan and come to any meetings your principal wants to have with you. While you might be reluctant to share with someone that you have been placed on a PIP, having another set of eyes and ears and an advocate is often the difference between succeeding in completing your PIP and being non-renewed. We often see administrators act more reasonably and conciliatory when a co-worker accompanies you.

6. My PIP doesn't seem reasonable. What can I do?

Sometimes the plan initially received isn't reasonable or doable. If you are notified that you are being placed on a PIP, you should immediately let your Building Rep (BR) and Local President know. Review the proposed plan with them and then set up a meeting with your BR and your administrator to review the plan and request changes that will make it more reasonable. The plan should be collaborative. You should ask your BR to join you in meetings you have with your administrator during your PIP.

7. How do I get off the PIP?

The best way to successfully exit from a PIP is to complete the PIP and show your administrator that you are meeting their expectations. Treat the PIP with seriousness and urgency and show your administrator that you are working hard to improve. You are in a much stronger position to argue against non-renewal if you have done everything you can to complete the PIP and meet the administrator's expectations.

8. I don't think I should be on a PIP. How can I stop it?

It's very rare that someone agrees they should be on a PIP. But refusing to set that aside, will lead administrators to believe there is an unwillingness to acknowledge their concerns and improve. That's a road to non-renewal. If the administrator has judged you harshly, unfairly, or without all the facts, focus on demonstrating your competence rather than arguing about it. You will be much more likely to succeed in exiting your PIP if you take that approach.

9. I think I'm on a PIP due to bias or discrimination.

Even if you think bias or discrimination is occurring, the best course of action is to take the PIP seriously and demonstrate your competence. If you provide good evidence that you are adhering to and meeting or exceeding the PIP's expectations, then you are best positioned to protect your job and career. Of course, if the administrator has a pattern of placing certain people on PIPs, or if you have other evidence to support that you are being targeted for adverse employment actions because of your age, race, gender, religion, ethnicity or membership in another protected class, then contact your union and you can raise any legitimate concerns identified through the union with the school district. However, in the meantime, you still need to do everything you can to successfully complete the PIP.