



Leader's Guide: Documentation Protocol

Templates + Strategies for Legally-Sound School Administration



Why Documentation Matters

As a school administrator, documentation is your **first line of defense** in legal matters, personnel disputes, and safety incidents.

Clear, consistent documentation:

- Protects you and your school
 - Provides a paper trail for accountability
 - Helps ensure fair, data-informed decisions
 - Prepares you for legal scrutiny, if necessary
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General Documentation Best Practices

- ✓ Use **objective language** – stick to facts, not feelings
 - ✓ Include **time, date, and location** on all entries
 - ✓ Record **names and titles** of everyone involved
 - ✓ Be **timely** – document as close to the event as possible
 - ✓ Use **secure storage** (encrypted digital folder or locked file cabinet)
 - ✓ Keep copies of emails, texts, voicemails, and notes related to the situation
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TEMPLATE 1: Critical Conversation Log

Use this after parent meetings, teacher conferences, or student behavior conversations.



Date:



Time:



Location (in person/virtual):



Participants (Name + Role):



Summary of Conversation (word-for-word when possible):

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Key Agreements/Decisions Made:



Follow-Up Actions:



Your Signature:



File Location/Reference #:



TEMPLATE 2: Incident Documentation Form

Use for student/staff altercations, behavioral issues, or safety concerns.



Date of Incident:



Time:



Location:



Individuals Involved:

- Name / Role / Grade
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Description of Incident (factual only):

 **Witnesses (include their statements separately):**

 **Actions Taken Immediately:**

 **Parent/Guardian Contacted:**

- Time & Method of Contact:
- Summary of Discussion:

 **Referral to (Counselor, HR, District, etc.):**

 **Supporting Documents Attached:**

- ☐ Security footage
- ☐ Witness statements
- ☐ Behavior history
- ☐ Medical report

 **Reported by:**

 **Stored in:**

TEMPLATE 3: Investigation Notes Template

Use this for internal investigations involving staff, allegations, or legal concerns.

 **Case Name / ID:**

 **Investigation Start Date:**

 **Assigned Investigator(s):**

 **Allegation/Concern Summary:**

 **How Concern Was Reported (e.g., anonymous tip, staff report):**

 **Individuals Interviewed (Name/Role):**

- Date / Time / Summary of Interview

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Evidence Collected:

- Emails, text messages, camera footage, etc.



Findings:

- Summary of facts and patterns observed



Conclusion / Recommended Action:



Final Report Sent to (HR, Legal, etc.):



Prepared By:



Stored In / Case Closed Date:



Storage & Retention Tips

- Use **cloud-based encrypted systems** (if approved by your district)
- Label files by **date + subject** (e.g., “2025_01_10_ParentMeeting_Smith”)
- Retain files according to district policy (often 3–7 years)
- Don’t co-mingle personal notes with official records



Leadership Reminders

- When in doubt, **document it**.
- You don’t have to be perfect — just **consistent and thorough**.
- Ask your district’s legal team or HR when you’re unsure.



3-2-1 Documentation Method

A quick, reliable way for administrators to capture critical info during conversations, incidents, or investigations.



Use this method when you:

- Talk with parents, students, or staff about sensitive issues
 - Respond to an incident or crisis
 - Begin any formal or informal investigation
 - Need to keep a record of recurring concerns
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3-2-1 Breakdown

3 — Key Facts

Record the **three most important facts** about the situation:

1. **Who** was involved? (Names + roles)
2. **What** happened? (Factual summary only)
3. **When** and **where** did it happen? (Exact date, time, and location)




Tip: Keep it short, clear, and free of opinions or assumptions.

2 — Direct Quotes

Write down **two verbatim quotes** that were said during the conversation or incident.

These might come from:

- A student
- A teacher or parent
- Yourself

 *Why quotes? They're powerful in showing tone, clarity, and context — especially if the situation escalates or becomes legal.*

1 — Action Step

Identify **one follow-up action** that you took or will take.
This could be:

- A referral
- A phone call home
- A written report to HR
- Scheduling a follow-up meeting

 *Even a small step counts — it shows leadership responsiveness.*



Example Entry (3-2-1 in Action)



Date: July 22, 2025



Time: 10:30 AM



Location: Principal's Office

3 Key Facts:

1. Student A and Student B had a physical altercation in the hallway.
2. Teacher Ms. R. witnessed the incident and separated both students.
3. Incident occurred at 9:55 AM near the science wing.

2 Quotes:

- Student A: “He pushed me first — I was just defending myself.”
- Teacher Ms. R.: “I saw Student B throw the first punch.”

1 Action Step:

Both students were sent home, and parent calls were made. A behavior contract meeting is scheduled for 7/23 at 9:00 AM.



Store Your 3-2-1 Notes:

Use a designated:

- Digital form (Google Form or PDF version)
- Spiral notebook with tabs
- Cloud folder labeled by date and category