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Dallas ISD improves employment rights for at-will support workers; needs to do more

In an important step for its thousands of bus drivers, custodians, teacher aides and other at-will support staff, Dallas ISD has adopted a new regulation encouraging supervisors to take steps to address worker performance deficiencies before resorting to an employee's termination.

Sheila Walker, president of NEA-Dallas, applauded the district's administration for making the regulation change. And she called on the school board to complete the job by giving at-will employees what they really need, due-process employment rights, something for which NEA-Dallas, an affiliate of the Texas State Teachers Association, has long advocated.

"This new regulation emphasizes taking steps, when necessary, to improve performance deficiencies instead of imposing outright termination," Walker said. "It will help give more job security to the dedicated, hard-working employees who drive our students safely to and from school, feed them while they are there and keep our campuses clean and safe."

The new regulation emphasizes progressive performance coaching for at-will employees with performance issues. This can include such steps as verbal warnings, written directives for improvement, more training or reprimand letters in lieu of immediate termination. But supervisors aren't required to follow the guidelines.

"These workers have also earned the right to representation, notice for dismissal, an opportunity for a fair and meaningful hearing and other due process rights to be granted by the district," Walker said. "NEA-Dallas calls on the Dallas school board to finish the job and require these rights for all its employees. They will give support staff the dignity and respect they deserve and will make the workplace environment fairer and more equitable for all district employees."