

Teacher Tenure Decision-Making 2010-11

We know that the most significant factor in a student's performance is the quality of his or her teacher. Yet, currently, we have few ways to recognize outstanding teaching. Unlike professions where mastery is rewarded with accolades, growth opportunities, and additional compensation, teaching is still organized like a factory model – with teachers rewarded primarily for longevity, regardless of effectiveness.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the tenure decision-making process. For too long, we have granted the same tenure distinction to our most effective teachers as we have to our least effective. Along the way, we have forgotten that tenure is actually a high honor: a commitment for life, awarded to those who have demonstrated they can perform at a high level for the duration of a career. Our current approach demeans the teaching profession and does nothing to help our kids.

Last month, Mayor Bloomberg laid out a new vision for how tenure is granted to teachers. From now on, only teachers who demonstrate significant professional skill and meaningful, positive impact on student learning will receive lifetime employment. The City will transform the awarding of tenure from a right, granted practically by default, to an honor bestowed upon our outstanding teachers. We will reconceive how tenure decisions are made and introduce a set of tools intended to establish tenure as a distinction to be earned. Improvements include: (1) introduction of a 4-point effectiveness framework for use in decision-making; (2) expanded performance data for probationary teachers; (3) streamlined decision-making; and (4) a set of hiring policies aligned to our tenure objectives.

More broadly, this new approach is intended to help schools build a culture where teachers receive regular feedback and support for their professional growth; and to establish the tenure decision as a milestone in every teacher's development. The DOE will ask that schools take this opportunity to implement what many successful principals already do as standard practice: meet personally with each tenure-eligible teacher to review his or her work well in advance of the tenure decision. These conversations provide needed support for teachers up for tenure and an opportunity to personally acknowledge strong performance.

This memorandum provides further information about the tools and policies that will apply to the teachers in your school who are up for tenure this year.

TENURE POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. 4-point Effectiveness Framework

For the first time, a 4-point effectiveness framework will be used to aid in making tenure decisions. The framework measures teacher practice along multiple dimensions – impact on student learning, instructional practice, and professional contributions – and requires multiple measures of each over more than two academic years in order to demonstrate effectiveness. Additionally, special consideration will be given to gains demonstrated with special populations, including Special Education students, English Language Learners, and students who are over-age and under-credited. A copy of the framework is attached to this document.

2. Expanded Data

The Tenure Notification System (TNS) will provide principals with centrally available data on their probationary teachers, including the following indicators:

- previous U-rating
- poor attendance
- particularly strong or weak teacher data report indicators
- ATR status

- limited time teaching at their current school (less than 1 school year)
- probation previously extended

To assist superintendents, additional data will be available to manage tenure decisions, including:

- duration of principal tenure in building
- school QR scores
- school PR scores

3. Clear Steps for Tenure Decision-Making

In January, principals will be asked to enter an early (preliminary) recommendation using the 4-point framework for probationary teachers whose tenure decisions are due in May and June.

When principals enter final recommendations in TNS, they will (1) provide feedback using the 4-point framework and (2) using a new Tenure Recommendation Form, they will be required to provide a rationale for their tenure recommendation, explaining the evidence they've collected which led to the recommendation of granting or denying tenure, or offering an extension of probation. As in the past, principals will enter their final recommendations in the Tenure Notification System (TNS), and Superintendents will review principal recommendations and issue final decisions.

4. Improve Hiring Policies

In an effort to ensure that tenure recommendations are made based on a teachers' ability to positively impact their students' educational outcomes and their contributions to the school, the following incentives have been put in place:

- In the past, principals may have resisted denying or extending tenure because of a fear of creating a vacancy that could not be filled with a newly hired teacher of their choice. This year, principals who deny tenure (or discontinue prior to denial) can backfill the position with a teacher new to the system, provided that (1) the school has the FY 2011 budget to afford a teacher in the position and (2) there is not a layoff condition making implementation impossible under legal and contractual rules.¹
- If schools are compelled to excess teachers for whom they have recently granted tenure, networks and then clusters are responsible for identifying an appropriate placement for that teacher.

NEXT STEPS:

- Principals can access a current list of probationary teachers with upcoming tenure decisions via TNS and will be able to produce one-touch data reports for those teachers through TNS starting in January
- As outlined above, principals will be asked to make preliminary recommendations of effectiveness using the attached 4-point framework (for teachers whose tenure decisions are due in May and June starting in January.)
- Schools should work directly with their CFN to implement the policies described in this memo.
- Training materials will be available beginning in mid-December.

ATTACHMENTS:

- [4-pt framework](#)

¹ This applies only to vacancies in the same grade and subject as the one held by the denied employee.