

Hamilton Central School District Probationary Appointments and the Granting of Tenure

Gaining tenure is an important milestone. Having tenure means you can't be terminated without due process and you're entitled to a hearing if the Department of Education takes disciplinary action.

Under New York State law, public school teachers must serve a probationary period of four years and a day from the date of their appointment. Upon completion of their probationary period, teachers are granted tenure. Tenure isn't automatically granted. To be granted tenure, you must:

- Be on track to complete all your state certification and city licensing requirements;
- Be on track to receive professional certification
- file an application;
- have a record of acceptable service during your probationary period; and
- be recommended for tenure by your principal.

Tenure becomes permanent only after completion of all certification requirements.

Having tenure means you may not be disciplined or terminated without due process for reasons other than failure to complete the requirements for your professional certificate. As a tenured teacher, you have the right to a hearing before an independent arbitrator regarding any charges brought against you. This due process right protects you from being fired for personal, arbitrary or political reasons.

The tenure evaluation process for new teachers occurs over four years. Teachers who have achieved tenure in another school district are subject to a three year period (see number one below). Using the Annual Professional Performance Review, required by the New York State Education Department, many elements are considered when making the ultimate decision of whether to grant tenure. Tenure considerations include many factors in addition to classroom performance.

It should be noted that the administration reviews the progress of teachers working towards tenure with the board of education multiple times during each year of the tenure process.

Questions and Answers Regarding the Tenure Process:

1. What is a probationary teacher?

A probationary teacher is a teacher employed by a school district during a period of probation, which usually lasts four years. Teachers who have received tenure in another school district or BOCES or in another tenure area within the same district in New York State, serves a three year probationary period. A probationary period may be extended based on mutual agreement between a school district and a teacher. Only a full time teacher qualifies for a probationary appointment; the only exception is pre-kindergarten teaching.

The probationary appointment allows districts to evaluate the competency of a teacher prior to making an appointment to tenure.

2. Who has the final authority to appoint a teacher to tenure?

The superintendent recommends a person for tenure. It is the school board who by a majority vote may grant tenure.

3. What criteria does the Hamilton Central School District use to evaluate the performance of teachers as part of the tenure process?

The Hamilton Central School District prides itself on the quality of teaching that occurs within our classrooms. Teachers are given the opportunity to take part in extensive staff development that strengthens pedagogy and enhances the level of professionalism in all of our teachers. It is expected that a teacher will take part in these professional opportunities and assimilate these pedagogical practices within their teaching and their students' learning.

We look at four "domains" embedded within the Framework for Teaching by Charlotte Danielson: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities.

Planning and preparation: knowledge of content and pedagogy, knowledge of our students and their instructional needs, selection of instructional goals, knowledge of resources, design of coherent instruction, and assessment of student learning.

Classroom environment: creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture for learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior, and organizing physical space.

Instruction: communicating clearly, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in the learning, providing feedback to students, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness.

Professional responsibilities: reflecting on teaching, maintaining accurate records, communicating with families, contributing to the school and district, growing professionally, and showing professionalism.

4. What processes do we use to gather evidence regarding these criteria?

- formal classroom observations
- informal observations
- examination of artifacts: assessments created, letters and other communications written to parents and children, lesson and unit plans developed, materials designed, record-keeping.
- examination of professional growth activities: workshops and coursework
- participation on school and district committees and initiatives
- communications from parents and community (we look at trends over time)
- reflections of pedagogical success

5. What other factors are considered in the tenure process?

Examination of professional growth activities: workshops and coursework - participation on school and district committees and initiatives-communications from parents and community (we look at trends over time). Willingness to grow and learn, and remain a life-long learner.

Ability to work collaboratively with teachers, para-professionals and administration. Professional interchange with all members of our learning community is paramount to teacher success. We hope that teachers are willing to share their thoughts and expertise in a way that will strengthen our profession. Constructive suggestions and collaborative dialogue is the expectation in all we do.

Classroom environment: creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture for learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior, and organizing physical space.

Instruction: communicating clearly, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in the learning, providing feedback to students, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness. Use of the Learning Strategies and NextGen Standards. Understanding the instructional, learning, and social-emotional needs of students to enhance the potential of success.

Professional responsibilities: reflecting on teaching, maintaining accurate records, communicating with families, contributing to the school and district, growing professionally, and showing professionalism.

6. What is public and what is not public concerning personnel decisions?

The board of education and the school district administration are prohibited by law from discussing the employment record of an individual in public. Appointments and terminations are done by board resolution, and are public after they are voted upon in a public session.

7. APPR Privacy

At the end of the 2012 NYS Legislative session, an agreement was reached to limit the disclosure of teacher and principal evaluations. This enacted law states that every district and BOCES must disclose “final quality ratings and composite effectiveness scores from the annual professional performance reviews of its teachers and principals” to ONLY parents and legal guardians of students.

See enacted legislation here: <http://open.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S7792-2011>