

Talking Points on the New Tenure Law

This law is a “win-win” for students, teachers, and the public.

- Everyone wants to be sure we have the best teachers in every classroom, and this new law can help achieve that goal.
- Under the old law, teachers earned tenure (the right to appeal dismissals to a neutral third party) after three years.
- Under the new law, they earn it after FOUR years. The first year will provide new teachers with mentoring by skilled colleagues and administrators, ensuring they have the skills and supports they need to succeed.

If a teacher is deemed ineffective, the dismissal process will be faster, less costly, but FAIR.

- Everyone agrees it shouldn't take several years and hundreds of thousands of dollars to dismiss a teacher deemed to be ineffective. That was sometimes the case under the old law as cases got bogged down in the courts.
- Under the new law, dismissal appeals will be heard by nationally certified arbitrators, whose decisions are binding. An arbitration hearing can be scheduled and concluded in a matter of a few months at most, and at a fraction of the cost of an extended court case.
- Massachusetts adopted an identical process 20 years ago, and it has been enormously successful.
- Under the new law, teachers' rights to due process – appeal to an outside third party – are preserved (the original bill would have taken that right away).
- After all, these are PUBLIC jobs, and we must protect them from political interference and other unfair influence.

The next step must be the adoption of a fair and effective evaluation system.

- Fair and well-administered evaluations are vital to the successful implementation of the new tenure law.
- NJEA and its members are closely involved in the current pilot evaluation project, which is entering its second year.
- We will be working to ensure that evaluations identify successful teachers, help struggling teachers to improve, and do not overly rely on student test scores. The new tenure law specifically states that test scores may not be the predominant factor in an evaluation.

Seniority was not addressed in the new tenure law, and it's not the problem.

- In most professions, experience is valued and respected. We all want experienced doctors and lawyers working for us.
- Experienced teachers are leaders in their schools, and play a key role in mentoring younger teachers. They will have even greater responsibilities to do so under the new tenure law.
- If a teacher of ANY experience level isn't doing his or her job, he or she should be evaluated and, if unable to improve, face dismissal under this new law.
- Administrators now have a fair, fast, and less costly dismissal process. There is no excuse nor any reason to have to choose between an effective or an ineffective teacher in a layoff situation.