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(09/21)

Rights of Tenured Employees

(This document only applies to cases where charges were filed on or after July 1, 2015.)

This document, while not intended to be exhaustive, describes certain rights of tenured employees in Education Law §3020-a and §3020-b* proceedings. The information contained in this document should not act as a substitute for the applicable statutes or regulations. Individuals are advised to consult with an attorney as significant adverse consequences may result from these proceedings.

Special Notice to Tenured Employees of the New York City Department of Education

Many of the provisions in Education Law §3020-a and/or §3020-b, including those described in this document, have been substantially modified by the collective bargaining agreement and subsequent amendments and/or revisions between the United Federation of Teachers ("UFT") and the New York City Department of Education ("NYCDOE"). Education Law §3020(3) permits the NYCDOE to modify the provisions of Education Law §3020-a through the collective bargaining process. If you are a tenured employee of the NYCDOE, you are advised to review your collective bargaining agreement and any amendments and/or revisions thereto to determine whether your rights may deviate from the provisions described below. If you have any questions, you should consult with the UFT and/or an attorney.

Tenured individuals cannot be disciplined or removed from employment except for "just cause" pursuant to Education Law §3020. The procedures for such discipline or removal are set forth in Education Law §3020-a, Education Law §3020-b, and the Commissioner's Regulations 8 NYCRR Ch. II, Sub. C, Part 82-3.

Charges

1. The employing board of education ("board") must determine, by a majority vote, that probable cause exists to bring a disciplinary proceeding against the tenured employee ("employee").
2. If the board finds probable cause, the tenured employee must be provided with a written statement specifying:
a.) the charges in detail; b.) the maximum penalty the board will seek if the employee is found guilty of the charges or that will be imposed if the employee does not request a hearing; and c.) a copy of this form outlining the employee's rights. The charges must be sent by certified or registered mail, return receipt requested or by personal delivery.
3. Charges cannot be brought more than three years after the alleged incompetency or misconduct, except when the charge is of misconduct constituting a crime when committed.

Suspension Pending Hearing

The employee may be suspended pending a hearing on the charges and the final determination thereof. An employee may be suspended without pay if: a.) the employee has pleaded guilty to or has been convicted of certain felony drug crimes or a felony crime involving the physical abuse of a minor or student; or b.) the employee is charged with misconduct constituting physical or sexual abuse of a student. Employees suspended without pay due to charges constituting physical or sexual abuse of a student, are entitled to an expedited probable cause hearing.

Termination Without Hearing

The employee shall be terminated without a hearing upon conviction of a sex offense as defined by Education Law §305(7-a)(b)(2). Employees acting as school administrators or supervisors shall be terminated without a hearing upon conviction of defrauding the government as defined by Education Law §305(7-b)(b)(2).

Hearing Request/Failure to Request

1. Within 10 days of receiving charges, the employee must provide a written request to the clerk or the secretary of the employing board if the employee desires a hearing on the charges.
2. In the written request for hearing, the employee should indicate the name and contact information for the attorney who will represent the employee, if any. Such attorney shall be authorized to receive all correspondence related to the proceeding on the employee's behalf.

Rights of Tenured Employees (cont.)

3. If the employee does not request a hearing within 10 days of receipt of the charges, the employee shall be deemed to have waived the right to a hearing if there is an unexcused failure to request a hearing.
4. If the employee waives his right to a hearing, the board shall proceed, within fifteen days, by a majority vote to determine the case and fix the penalty, if any, to be imposed.

Hearing Officer Selection Process

1. Within 3 business days of receipt of the written hearing request, the clerk or secretary of the board shall notify the commissioner of the need for a hearing.
2. Upon receipt of such notification, the commissioner shall request that the American Arbitration Association provide a list of names of individuals to potentially serve as hearing officers along with relevant biographical information concerning the individual. The commissioner shall forthwith send such list to both parties.
3. For charges brought pursuant to §3020-a, the employee and the board must notify the commissioner of their agreed upon hearing officer selection within 15 days of receiving the list of potential hearing officers. If the parties fail to agree or fail to notify the commissioner of their selection within 15 days, the commissioner shall appoint a hearing officer from the list.
4. For charges brought pursuant to §3020-b, where an employee has received two consecutive ineffective ratings, the employee and the board must notify the commissioner of their agreed upon hearing officer selection within 7 days of receiving the list of potential hearing officers. If the parties fail to agree or fail to notify the commissioner of their selection within 7 days, the commissioner shall appoint a hearing officer from the list.
5. For charges brought pursuant to §3020-b, where an employee has received three consecutive ineffective ratings, the commissioner shall appoint a hearing officer from the list.

Pre-Hearing Conference

1. The pre-hearing conference shall be private.
2. The hearing officer shall hold a pre-hearing conference within 10-15 days of receipt of notice from the commissioner confirming his or her acceptance to serve in such position, in the case of a standard or expedited §3020-a hearing.
3. For expedited §3020-b hearings where the employee has received 2 consecutive ineffective APPR ratings, the hearing officer shall hold a pre-hearing conference within 7 days of receiving notice confirming the hearing officer's agreement to serve.
4. For expedited §3020-b hearings where the employee has received 3 consecutive ineffective APPR ratings, the hearing officer shall hold a pre-hearing conference within 5 days of receiving notice confirming the hearing officer's agreement to serve.
5. At the pre-hearing conference, the hearing officer has the power to: a.) issue subpoenas; b.) hear and decide motions and applications made by either party; c.) set a schedule for full and fair disclosure of witnesses and evidence for both parties; and d.) set the time and place for hearings to ensure that the hearing is conducted within the statutory timelines.
6. Generally, pre-hearing motions must be made on written notice to the hearing officer and adverse party at least 5 days before the pre-hearing conference. Any pre-hearing motions not made as provided for herein shall be deemed waived. However, for expedited hearings, written notice to the adverse party shall be made no later than 2 days before the pre-hearing conference.

General Hearing Procedures

1. The hearing will be conducted by a single hearing officer.
2. The employee shall have a reasonable opportunity to defend his or herself, including making any additional motions and applications and an opportunity to testify on his or her own behalf, however, the employee shall not be required to testify.
3. Each party has the right to be represented by counsel, and may subpoena and cross-examine witnesses. All testimony shall be under oath.
4. An accurate record of the hearing shall be kept at the expense of the commissioner. Upon request, the employee is entitled to a copy of the record without charge.
5. If the hearing officer needs to be replaced and the parties fail to notify the commissioner of their mutually agreed upon replacement within 2 business days, the commissioner shall select the replacement.

Rights of Tenured Employees (cont.)

6. At the conclusion of the testimony, the hearing officer may allow the parties to submit memoranda of law; however, such submission may not delay the date that the hearing officer is required to render a decision.
7. In general, hearings must be completed within 60 days of the pre-hearing conference. Please see below for the time periods applicable to particular expedited hearings.
8. In general, all evidence must be submitted within 125 days of the filing of charges and no additional evidence shall be accepted after such time, absent extraordinary circumstances beyond control of the parties.

Expedited Hearing Based on Revocation of Certification

1. If the charges are based upon revocation of the employee's certification, an expedited hearing must be held.
2. The hearing shall commence within 7 days of the pre-hearing conference and is limited to one day. The hearing may not be adjourned except upon request of a party and only for good cause as determined by the hearing officer.

Expedited Hearing Based on Charges Constituting Physical or Sexual Abuse of Student

1. If the charges are based upon allegations of physical or sexual abuse of a student, an expedited hearing must be held.
2. The hearing shall commence within seven days after the pre-hearing conference and shall be completed within sixty days after the pre-hearing conference. Adjournments may not be granted that would extend the hearing beyond 60 days, except where the hearing officer determines that the delay is both substantially beyond control of the requesting party and an injustice would result if the adjournment were not granted.

Expedited Hearing Based on Two Consecutive Ineffective APPR Ratings

1. The Board may bring charges alleging incompetence based upon two consecutive ineffective APPR ratings, in which case an expedited hearing would be held, but the board is not required to bring charges.
2. The hearing must begin within 7 days of the pre-hearing conference and be completed within 90 days following the date that the employee requested the hearing. Adjournments may not be granted that would extend the hearing beyond 90 days, except where the hearing officer determines that the delay is both substantially beyond control of the requesting party and an injustice would result if the adjournment were not granted.
3. The charges must allege that the board has developed and substantially implemented a teacher or principal improvement plan for the employee following the first evaluation in which the employee was rated ineffective and the immediately preceding evaluation if the employee was rated developing.

Expedited Hearing Based on Three Consecutive Ineffective APPR Ratings

1. The Board shall bring charges alleging incompetence where any teacher or principal receives three consecutive ineffective APPR ratings, in which case an expedited hearing must be held.
2. The hearing must commence within 5 days of the pre-hearing conference and be completed within 30 days following the date that the employee requested the hearing. Adjournments may not be granted that would extend the hearing beyond 30 days, except where the hearing officer determines that the delay is both substantially beyond control of the requesting party and an injustice would result if the adjournment were not granted.

Decision

1. With the exception of expedited hearings, the hearing officer shall render a written decision within 30 days of the last hearing date.
2. For expedited hearings, the hearing officer shall render a written decision within 10 days of the last hearing date.
3. The commissioner must immediately forward copies of the decision to the parties.
4. The hearing officer shall render a written decision that includes findings of fact and conclusions, based upon the findings of fact, as to each charge and shall state the penalty, or other action, if any, against the employee on each charge.

Rights of Tenured Employees (cont.)

5. In those cases where a penalty is imposed, such penalty may be a written reprimand, a fine, a suspension for a fixed time without pay, or dismissal.

6. In determining penalty, the hearing officer shall give serious consideration to the penalty recommended by the board, and if the hearing officer imposes a different penalty, then the hearing officer must indicate the reasons for the alternate penalty based upon the record.

7. Within 15 days of the receipt of the hearing officer's decision, the board shall implement the decision. If the employee is acquitted of the charges, he or she must be restored to his or her position with full pay for any period of suspension without pay and the charges expunged from the employment record.

8. The hearing officer shall indicate in the decision whether any of the charges brought by the board were frivolous as defined by the Civil Practice Law and Rules §8303-a. If the hearing officer finds that all of the charges were frivolous, the hearing officer shall order the board to reimburse both the employee and the department reasonable costs that were incurred. If the hearing officer finds that some, but not all of the charges were frivolous, the hearing officer shall order the board to reimburse a portion of the reasonable costs incurred to the department and the employee.

Appeal

1. Not later than 10 days after receipt of the hearing officer's decision, either the employee or the board may make an application to the New York State Supreme Court to vacate or modify the hearing officer's decision pursuant to Civil Practice Law and Rules §7511.

2. The filing of the pendency of an appeal shall not delay the implementation of the hearing officer's decision.

Restoration of Rights

If an employee who was convicted of a felony crime as specified in Education Law §3020-a(2)(b) has his or her conviction reversed, the employee, upon application, shall be entitled to have his or her pay and other emoluments restored, for the period of time extending from the date of suspension to the date of the decision.

*Pursuant to §§ 30-2.14 and 30-3.17 of the Rules of the Board of Regents, educators whose Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPRs) include results from the State's growth model (i.e., teachers of grades 4-8 ELA and Mathematics; principals of buildings including those grade levels; and principals of buildings including all of grades 9-12) or any other measures based on the grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics State assessments will receive both an "original" evaluation and a "transition" evaluation. This process will continue through the 2018-19 school year, during the time that the State transitions to new ELA and Mathematics learning standards and assessments and during that time the State will explore potential revisions to the evaluation framework. The "original" evaluation will include the results of the State's growth model and any other measures based on the grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics State assessments. This evaluation is provided for advisory purposes only and cannot be used for employment related decisions. Affected educators will also receive a "transition" evaluation that excludes the above referenced measures. During the transition period, only this transition score and rating will be used for purposes of employment decisions, including tenure determinations and for purposes of proceedings under Education Law §§3020-a and 3020-b.