

# No Such Thing As Tenure

Iowa does not have “tenure” as it may sometimes be defined in the national debate. Currently, in Iowa, there is a process in place which allows school districts to dismiss teachers who do not perform at an acceptable level.

## ***General guidelines for teacher evaluations***

- 1) The school district sets acceptable levels of performance for the teacher.
- 2) The school district regularly evaluates the teacher’s performance.
- 3) The school district must communicate their expectations of performance and their evaluations to the teacher.
- 4) The teacher must comply with the school district’s expectations of performance and the teacher must meet objectives raised in the evaluations.
- 5) A teacher is always subject to termination provided the school district has followed the evaluation process.
- 6) The school district must evaluate and provide timely feedback to teachers on a regular basis.
- 7) All evaluations must be linked to the Iowa Teaching Standards which are in the Iowa Code.

## ***Termination Process***

Most school districts implement a 3-tier process for teacher evaluation.

**Tier 1**—is for beginning educators during the time they are issued an initial license. These educators are on an initial license for 2 years with the possibility of extension to a 3rd year if their performance does not meet district standards.

**Tier 2**—teachers are individuals who have achieved at least a Standard License issued by the BOEE. These teachers must complete a comprehensive evaluation every 3 years; during the other 2 years of the 3-year cycle they must complete and implement an individual professional development plan with the assistance of their immediate supervisor. The individual career development plan must be linked to district and building goals.

**Tier 3**—teachers are individuals who are not meeting district standards for performance. The process can be initiated at the district’s discretion at any time. When placed on Tier 3, the teacher has no more than 12 months to perform at a level acceptable to the district. Some districts have a two-part Tier 3 process; Awareness and Intensive Assistance. The Awareness step is approximately 3 months, with the teacher given specific expectations and more intense evaluations to be performed by the administrator. If there is also an Intensive Assistance Step, the evaluations are increased and the teacher must demonstrate substantial improvement in a period of time less than a school year.



The entire process for assistance (whether it's one or two steps) cannot exceed 12 months. At **any** time during the 12-month period, the district can determine the teacher has not met district standards for performance and begin the termination process. During the Tier 3 process, the teacher must comply with the district's requirements for improvement or the district will move to the termination process outlined in Iowa Code, Chapter 279.15-18.

School districts have sole discretion as to what acceptable levels of performance for teachers are (Iowa Code, Chapter 279.14(2)). If a teacher is deemed to perform below district standards after Intensive Assistance has been provided and termination procedures are initiated, the district has to comply with the provisions in Iowa Code Chapter 279.15-18.

Content of evaluations are not subject to the grievance procedure unless specific contract language is in place which allows it. Failure to follow the evaluation procedure can be grieved. If a notice of termination has been delivered to the employee, no grievance can be forwarded.

Iowa teachers **must** complete 3 consecutive years of successful teaching in one school district to complete probationary status (Iowa Code, Chapter 279.19). The probationary period can be extended to a 4th year. Teachers who have experience, but have taught in another state, must serve 3 years of successful teaching in Iowa before they are no longer probationary teachers. Once a teacher has completed the statutory probationary period in Iowa, he/she will still be subject to 1 year of probation if he/she moves to a new school district. The one year of probation for experienced teachers can be extended to a 2nd year.

Terminations of probationary teachers must be in compliance with Iowa Code Chapter 279.15-16. A probationary teacher does not have the right to appeal a notice of termination beyond the School Board level.