

Tenure Survey of MTSBA Members, Conducted December 2004 – January 2005

A legislator (or legislators) are reportedly planning a tenure reform bill that would reduce the number of years to earn tenure from 3 to 2. The bill would also eliminate the word "tenure" from the law, but would replace it with an equivalent term of "good cause" or "just cause." Please identify your individual opinion regarding the merit of such proposed changes.

	Response Percent	Response Total
I would strongly support these changes	2.2%	2
I would support these changes	9.9%	9
I don't care about these changes	2.2%	2
I would oppose these changes	47.3%	43
I would strongly oppose these changes	38.5%	35
Total Respondents		91
(skipped this question)		43

1. 1
2. I believe the current 3 year is a valid measure and allows for time to improve for those in need of improving. The district has some flexibility in the current 3 year process and as recruiting becomes more and more of an issue this flexibility for those struggling could potentially become an issue.
3. I have no issue with tenure, but I would like to see the time increased not decreased for "just cause". More flexibility is needed not less, letting a teacher go has always cost us money, the rules for firing need to be addressed.
4. Tenure should not be established with "teach-time" but rather with standards of professional understandings, skills and performance demonstrations. Our legislature should be looking toward that change rather than these "surface" changes that simply "rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic."
5. I believe that two years is not enough time to do the necessary work to insure that a teacher has the essential skills to teach in this district.
6. a. don't like "just cause" wording. b. teachers are already quite protected under the present tenure laws. c. ?? Will state tenure laws conflict, in any way, with future "No Child Left Behind" provisions for a school or teacher not meeting AYP for several years.
7. I support the elimination of the word tenure but would be very hesitant to reduce the years from 3 to 2. I would hope there was no impact on RIF with the changes associated with good or just cause.
8. If they choose to eliminate or temper tenure, they need to allow for the release of a teacher who is not performing. If my child is in their classroom, even after tenure, I would want recourse to hold them accountable to expectations. I do not know whether good cause or just cause is more appropriate.
9. I believe an administrator needs at least 3 years to decide if a teacher is suitable for their position. I actually do not believe in tenure at all.
10. Districts need the flexibility to not rehire staff when a poor fit between employee and district are observed. Two

	years may not be enough time to make an informed decision.
11.	The only good thing about tenure is that you have until the fourth contract to determine the quality of an employee. I am strongly in favor of some kind of elimination of tenure. I ask you, in this day of mandatory highly qualified teachers how do you eliminate the dead weight?
12.	None
13.	The devil's in the details. I'd want to consider this one very carefully. Non renewal is easy at the present time. I see just cause as more difficult.
14.	I'm led to believe by the terms that it might present an easier avenue to release a tenured teacher and if so I definitely would support the change.
15.	I oppose reducing the number of years from three to two. The more time a district has to evaluate a new teacher the better. Eliminating the word "tenure" is ok but is really a meaningless effort. "Tenure" in the public school context only means just cause or good cause. I suppose it is a good idea to clean up the language a bit but I do not think it is really worth the effort or time - especially when you consider the much more important and significant issues on our legislative plate this year.
16.	I believe teacher tenure fosters mediocrity. Good teachers are in the profession because they genuinely care for kids and want to give them the very best possible education. They have little to worry about when pondering continued employment. Poor and mediocre teachers hide behind tenure and due process making it difficult for administrators to improve or remove them. If any change is made it should be to increase the amount of time required to gain tenure.
17.	First - I presume you are referring to teachers gaining tenure. Two years is a very short period of time. Second - I am confused as to the terms 'good cause' or 'just cause'. Are we talking in reference to not offering a contract after the initial period (3 or 2 years), because currently our 'no reason' policy for non-renewal has not been upheld in court. Therefore, changing this to any 'cause' would not allow districts to just 'let go' and employee who may not be a natural fit for the district.
18.	Reducing the number of years to attain tenure would not allow districts sufficient time to work with teachers who are in need of assistance. With the shortage of teachers in various areas, districts may be taking the additional year to hopefully work on improving the skills of a marginal teacher. Reducing the years required to attain tenure would cause districts to release a teacher who may be on his/her way to becoming an excellent instructor but the district does not want to risk the effort required to terminate a tenured teacher if the teacher does not improve.
19.	I feel that the current law is adequate. At this time of potential education funding reform I do not think adding this into the mix would do anyone much good. The education community must be as united as possible to insure public support.
20.	It would be viewed as "automatic tenure". I have been in administration for 5 years. When I was teaching, I was committed to the profession. I assumed most teachers were. I have found that there truly are teachers who do not have students' best interests at heart. I also know it takes 3-5 years before a teacher is comfortable in his/her role as a teacher. Three years is not too many to decide if the teacher fits the system or is adequate for students. I had a situation this past year with a first year teacher who was non traditional. If there was any way he could have sued the district to gain re-employment, he would have done so. I do not believe in tenure; even as a teacher I did not. I believe if one is doing his/her job, they will be kept. If one is inept, they should go. I think it would be a tremendous task to prove "good cause" or "just cause". We have a daunting task of working with our students to help them all achieve "proficiency". We need top notch teachers who work as well with the at-risk as with the academically gifted.
21.	I am truly concerned of the number of applicants that we are having apply to our districts. Without a three year "grace" period we may be stuck with incapable educators.
22.	Fine the way it is.
23.	Our tenure laws are already quite strong. Often, issues with a new staff member do not arise immediately. The first year of a teacher's time in a district is spent surviving and learning the ropes. The next year is crucial to finding out what this person is about and trying to correct problems. This is a time consuming task and results are not often known in the short-term. There have been times that the third year is what becomes the make or break year for that staff member you have been working with. Further, I have encountered situations where an outgoing administrator hired a person to fill a position with no real concern for what effect that person will have in the upcoming years when that administrator is no longer with the district. While it is difficult to make a decision for a staff member who is in their third year, what is best for the children and citizens of the district compelled me to release these staff members before they acquired tenure. With the pressures of NCLB and the requirements that they place on a system, a district needs the full three-year period to assess their new staff members for competency.
24.	Tenure is such a hard object to overcome if a teacher is found to not be competent. I believe three years is the minimum for such a protection. It is too hard to get and train teachers in two years. It needs to be three.
25.	I believe the administration in school districts should have a full three years to evaluate the performance of an employee before granting tenure. As it is, I think there are far too many teachers working under tenure who give

	poor performances in their work. Lowering the requirements for tenure would only complicate the process of evaluation.
26.	Many times the third year is were we are able to see if the improvements asked of the teacher are making a difference.
27.	I do not wish to do away with tenure, but I support it in It's present form only.
28.	Many master agreements already support "good or just cause" for non-tenured.
29.	I would not respond to this publicly.
30.	Our administrative team is currently working with a certified staff member that has marginal abilities as a teacher. As a new hire, it was difficult in year one to determine if the difficulties experienced by this individual were simply the result of being new in the field or actually due to deficit skills. By being granted 2 additional years beyond the initial year to work with this individual before making a firm decision on non-renewal or not, my administrative team was provided ample time to evaluate and remediate skills in an attempt to advance this individual to a level that would be acceptable to our District for long-term employment. By reducing the "tenure period" to 2 years, I believe both teachers and administrators will find it difficult to make employment decisions on marginally skilled teachers [and administrators].
31.	Tenure should be eliminated or significantly changed to make it easier to remove teachers from the classroom.
32.	Tenure needs to be eliminated altogether. This seems like the first step in creating instant tenure. Schools would be forced to eliminate teachers who show promise, but districts do not want to take a chance on.
33.	I oppose any legislation to decrease the amount of time to grant tenure.
34.	I think it is important for districts to have an adequate number of years to assess the quality of their new teachers before guaranteeing tenure. I am unclear about the impact of changing the wording and would need to have more information on what this change would mean in real terms before I could support the legislation.
35.	not sure what the thinking or motive is behind this idea. Is it to make tenure easier to obtain with the thought that it is now too difficult? and does the change in language affect teacher dismissal in any way?.
36.	Although I believe that we should definately reward our quality teachers, we also need to have the means to choose whether or not an individual is the right person for our district and that could take longer than 2 years, however I would like to know more about this before I would 'strongly' oppose it.
37.	In this day and age, I don't see the need for tenure. I would like to see it eliminated. All it does is protect the incompetent teacher or the teacher that refuses to upgrade their teaching skills. With all the change that is taking place with teaching tools, tenure is not good for students. Of course, all this would depend on the definitions of "good cause" or "just cause"
38.	I am philosophically opposed to "tenure," employment should be based upon effectiveness in the classroom, not number of years in the classroom. I would be opposed to any effort to reduce the period of time associated with the granting of "tenure." In the teaching profession, it is not always possible to identify within a two year period how effective a teacher new to the district will be, especially since they are learning the district's philosophy at the same time. The second portion of the question relates to replacing the word "tenure" with "good cause" or "just cause" - since I am unfamiliar with the specific language of the law, I don't have an opinion on this change.
39.	I am personally opposed to tenure at any timeframe. By shortening the opportunity for a new teacher to prove themself to the board There will be more pressure to perform on the newer teacher. I think you will see it result in fewer retentions of new teachers who are on the bubble and an increase in the turnover at particular schools. New, young teachers can take some time to get their "legs" under them. This bill will diminish their opportunity to succeed.
40.	"Just cause" for termination is typical in business. If we can eliminate the concept of tenure and replace it with employment status typical of any workplace, I would view that as positive. If course, the devil is in the details.
41.	Districts need at the very least 3 years to identify a good teacher vs a bad teacher. I don't like tenure to begin with. I feel that there are some teachers that teach to tenure then get lazy. This appears to be an attempt to remove school boards right and ability to manage their employees.
42.	Two years is too short a time period to evaluate the professional skill and ability of a teacher.
43.	The goal is to transform a beginning teacher into an extraordinary teacher. The current three-year tenure law allows the school district time to provide professional development, time to assess the teacher's effectiveness, and time to decide whether to grant tenure. This process should not be rushed.
44.	Teachers may be considered as skilled as their peers the first day they teach, but they have much to learn. Good professional development, mentoring, and administrative leadership turns a potentially good teacher into a great teacher. Two years is not enough time to do this. I'm not sure of the intent of good or just cause and would want to know more before I could support this.

45.	I believe school districts need the full three years to assess the quality of teachers before granting tenure. I believe the present system works very well and HPS works hard to provide quality supervision and support to the new educators.
46.	Tenure is a term from the past. Good or just cause is the same thing...and we just need to have our little duckies in a row not matter what when dealing with people. The public's opinion would improve...they think tenure is a no win... it does put the burden on the admin/eval process and rightfully it should be.
47.	Teachers would likely not allow this to pass. It could cause animosity between the teachers union and MTSBA. In effect we still need just cause and remedial effort to release teachers other than for financial concerns if they have been with us for several years.
48.	I am not aware of any complaints concerning tenure. If a problem exists, I am not aware of it or of advantages to changing the bill.
49.	We might be inclined to support something like this if the 3 years was changed to 6! It is already very difficult in some cases to determine whether a teacher has what it takes in 3 years.
50.	The tenure law really applies to those poorer teachers that we as administrators think we can salvage. The first year year is usually filled with evaluations both written and verbal. If the teacher still needs some assistance the second year usually involves a plan of remediation and guidance or mentoring. The third year is needed to see if the teacher will use these suggestions to become a better instructor..
51.	The three years are needed to determine if a teacher is an excellent teacher or not. I would wish to have the ability to replace a less than excellent teacher before the 5 years rather than 2 years.
52.	The question does not provide me with sufficient information to answer this question with certainty. If the word "tenure" is eliminated and we can dismiss anyone regardless of tenure for good or just cause then what is the purpose of reducing from 3 to 2. I need more information.
53.	These are issues dealt with primarily by supt., board, and principals. I would defer to their opinion.
54.	Over a long period of observing beginning instructors, it takes three years to determine if a neophyte teacher is a keeper or not. Two years is not enough time. Of course, there are exceptions, but certainly not the rule.
55.	Tenure is a question in itself. I feel that having time to work with a teacher provides them an avenue to develop and the district greater opportunity to evaluate for the future.
56.	While the general concept of tenure seems weak to me (if you do a good job, why would you need tenure protection?), I understand the need for the protection of employment rights. I have seen good teachers crucified for coaching or political reasons. That being said, there are times we place teachers on plans of improvement that realistically could take more than a year to bring the final results desired. I like more time to work on those issues before tenure makes decisions for us.
57.	This would merely give the union a stronger hold on school districts in the state. It is difficult to evaluate the total performance of a teacher in two years --- we need the three years to give both the teacher and the school district adequate time.
58.	a district needs this much time, or more, to identify teachers who fit within the district's needs and expectations. It would not further quality education by shortening the time period to evaluate new employees.
59.	The present law regarding Tenure is a fair law for both the teacher and the school district in that both sides have enough time to evaluate the individual and environment in which they work. Present law will protect the teacher a little more than if two years is used as a bench mark in that if the district is in doubt the teacher will not be with the district past the second year.
60.	I see the first years of teaching as a time of learning. Two years is insufficient to determine if a teacher has what it takes.
61.	Sometimes it takes three years to get an accurate reading on the effectiveness of a teacher.
62.	After 31 years as Clerk in our system and 8 years teaching in another system, I feel that tenure is not a very good thing, particularly if it is too easy to get. It many times saddles districts with poor to average teachers who, when they become tenured, slip down to becoming bad teachers--- with the school then having no recourse in getting rid of these teachers. I'm not sure what the wording changes refer to.
63.	In my opinion, just cause should always be allowed in termination of a teacher, or other school employee. I also think three years is a perfect number to allow the instructor to show that he/she is capable of handling the position in which he/she has been trusted to fill. An example could be that it's worked for years and we have more important issues to address than tenure.
64.	I would need to see the actual wording. Our district has some real challenges even with the current language. We have chosen as a board to review non-tenure case by case.
65.	Anything that would give us the freedom to remove the below average veteran teacher would be of interest to me.

66.	I would hope the language would give districts more options in dealing with teachers. Staff should be employed or fired on their ability to teach, not their years employed
67.	Tenure as it stands now really allows school administration the opportunity to see the actual teacher over a period of time...those who have weak skills and knowledge levels can be truly evaluated over a period of time that would indicate success or failure. Those that cannot measure up to the district's academic expectations or behavioral expectations may be simply non-renewed at year one, two, or three. It provides a great opportunity to see the real teacher, the real professional, and the real kid person...are we always correct over the three year period, not always but the relation of success or failure is on the plus side...
68.	I feel the current system allows for development of teacher skills so that when tenure is granted there is a good understanding of that person's capabilities.
69.	Basically, I believe that for some teachers it may take up to 3 years to become proficient. If the law is replaced with with 2 years, prospective teachers would be removed prior to their ability to learn. With 3 years, the District still has the option to non-rehire at an earlier period if they wish to do so.
70.	I haven't thought about this a lot but I would recommend the term stay at three years.
71.	I would prefer to get rid of tenure for teachers. Each year he/she should remain employed based upon productivity with students and curriculum and be accountable for such. If there are deficiencies these should be addressed through the proper procedures. Education is changing rapidly, teachers can't afford to be stagnant. Everyone should be interested in doing what is best for our students.
72.	Regardless of what you call it, 2 years is too soon to make a determination regarding keeping a marginal or early career teacher.
73.	Our present system allows us to work with new teachers and help them become better over a three year period. I feel this is still needed before we grant tenure.
74.	I would just as soon see tenure go away. A teacher doesn't necessarily become a better teacher because they are tenured, nor do they because they automatically get a raise (steps & lanes) every year. It would make it more difficult to weed out those who perform at a lesser level. I feel we need to pay on a merit system rather than just another year's experience.
75.	I am first opposed to the reduction in years. 360 work days is not enough time contributed to earn tenure. Having to define good cause or just cause will be difficult.
76.	Two years is too short of a time period to earn tenure. It is too difficult let teachers go after they receive tenure. I would judge it to be the same if the wording were "good cause" or "just cause."
77.	The only question I have is why there is any time aspect if tenure is eliminated? Any teacher, first year or not, deserves good cause for being released.
78.	Because we are a very small school district with low pay and remote location, we have a hard time finding qualified teachers and often have to take "whatever we can get" which sometimes (too often) means poor teachers. If we were stuck with a poor teacher for 2 years and then had to go through a hearing process to replace him/her with a good teacher, it would be a burdensome process for the entire school. Particularly in a small district, friendships are made and people will often rally around one who is perceived as being "picked on" regardless of their poor teaching performance. We encounter a good deal of strife every time we "let go" a non-tenured teacher as it is. Letting go a tenured teacher is practically impossible and we would be stuck with very poor teachers that were hired initially because they were the only applicants, not because of their teaching ability.
79.	I THINK IF YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TENURE THEN THREE YEARS GIVES YOU A GOOD INDICATION OF WHAT TYPE OF TEACHERS YOU HAVE.
80.	Teacher tenure is one of the problems with our system. A job for life. All teachers should have non-tenured status. If anything, the law should be increased to five years. Sounds like this legislator is a teacher.
81.	I'm not sure exactly the difference between terminating a tenured teacher, or terminating a teacher for just cause. I suspect it is not very different and I believe the tenure laws are already very liberal and would not support tenure after 2 years.
82.	The question doesn't make sense because it says it is changing tenure from 3 to 2 years and then says it's eliminating tenure. Which is it - or explain what you mean a little better, please . . . I would favor the removal of the word "tenure" and instead go by the just cause standard/approach.
83.	Tenure needs to be revamped. I disagree with shortening the process. I would recommend that a new system of teacher evaluation be developed. Any system that provides such a significant level of job security should have a long probation period. Because all class groups have a unique character, the current three year tenure is a satisfactory evaluation period should tenure be retained.
84.	I makes it even harder to get rid of poor teachers.
85.	

- 86.** Occasionally a teacher comes along that needs that third year of provisional status before either tenure or dismissal is considered.
- 87.** It takes more than three years begin to understand and comprehend basic teaching. We need to have at least 3 years to work with teachers before making a decision on whether they should stay on at our district or not.
- 88.** Sometimes teacher performance is on the bubble and 1 additional year to observe their performance would be beneficial.
- 89.** While it would be nice to eliminate tenure, I do have a concern regarding reducing the number of years to earn tenure. Three years gives administrators an opportunity to work with teachers who, with help and support, can become good teachers. But sometimes they need that 3rd year to demonstrate they are improving their skills. If tenure is given at the end of 2 years, for some teachers it will not be enough time to attain the skills and we may end up losing some potentially good teachers. For those who don't make it sometimes you know that at the end of two years, but in other cases you may need that 3rd year to determine.