



## **Certification and Tenure Information**

### **Certification Information**

#### **Q. What is Level II certification and why do I need it?**

A. Pennsylvania currently has two levels of certification. The initial certificate, Level I, is valid for a specific number of service years, during which time you must complete established requirements. Upon completion of those requirements, the Level I may be converted to a Level II certificate. If not converted, the Level I lapses. You cannot be employed in a Pennsylvania public school with a lapsed certificate. For additional information, please visit PDE's website at: <https://www.education.pa.gov/Educators/Certification/Pages/default.aspx>

#### **Q. How many years is the Level I certificate valid?**

A. The Level I certificate is valid for six (6) years of teaching. You must be working at least 50% in your certification area for the time to count against your certificate. Time worked in a private school does not count.

#### **Q. What is the process to apply for Level II certification?**

A. After completing at least three years of teaching, earning 24 credits past your bachelor's degree and completing a state approved Induction program, individuals must submit an online application through TIMS on the PDE website: TIMS.

The following link will take you to the User Guides for applicants:

<http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/TIMS/20476/page/1039597>.

The User Guides include instructions and screenshots. Start with User Guide 1.1 Logging in to TIMS to set up your user name and password. After you complete your application print the cover sheet and submit it to PDE with your official transcripts for the 24 credits. As part of the

online process, you will be able to pay the \$125 fee using a credit card, or select that you will send in a money order payable to the Commonwealth of PA.

***NOTE: It is your responsibility to send a copy of your Level II certificate to Human Resources.***

**Q. Are all credits acceptable to Level II certification?**

A. No. The following credits do not apply toward permanent certification: community college credits, continuing education units (CEU's), professional school credits (law school, seminary, theology, dental or medical school) unless relevant to your area of certification.

**Q. Are Act 48 credits acceptable for Level II certification?**

A. If the credits you earn are from a four-year accredited college or a state approved intermediate unit, they may be acceptable for Level II certification and for Act 48 credit. For Act 48 credit, you may also use 180 continuing education hours. These hours are not acceptable for Level II certification.

**Q. What is required for Act 48?**

A. All educators must maintain their certificates as active by earning every five (5) calendar years: six (6) collegiate credits or six (6) PDE-approved in-service credits or 180 continuing education hours or any combination of the above.

## **Tenure Information**

A temporary professional employee, whose work has been certified as satisfactory during the last four months of the third year of service, shall be recognized as having tenure.

- Three full calendar years of service are required to attain tenure.
  
- The three years of service must be within the same PA school district.
  
- Leave time and long-term substitute time do not count towards tenure.
  
- Level II certification is not required to acquire tenure.

### **Q: What is tenure?**

A: Under the Public School Code, tenure is a status enjoyed by professional employees that provides enhanced protection from termination of employment and layoffs. Temporary and professional employees attain tenure, and become professional employees, upon successful completion of a three-year probationary period. 24 P.S. § 11-1108.

### **Q: Do teachers acquire tenure in all public school entities?**

A: Yes, except with regard to charter school employment. Tenure rights extend to all professional employees working in school districts, intermediate units, and vocational-technical schools. 24 P.S. § 11-1121, 9-963(e), 18-1850.1(b)(9). Temporary professional employees on leave of absence from a school district to teach at a charter school can count that time toward tenure eligibility only at the discretion of the school district from which they are on leave. Tenured professional employees on such leave retain certain rights with respect to the school district from which they are on leave, but their tenure does not provide protection with respect to their employment by the charter school. 24 P.S. § 17-1724-A.

**Q: Once teachers earn tenure, is that status transferable if they decide to take employment in another school district?**

A: Yes. Under the current law, a teacher needs to earn tenure only once in Pennsylvania, and thereafter holds that status in all Pennsylvania school districts in which they are hired. 24 P.S. § 11-1108.

**Q: What is the length of the probationary period temporary professional employees must serve to earn tenure?**

A: Teachers must now serve a probationary period of three years, and have received a satisfactory rating during the last four months of the final year. 24 P.S. § 11-1108(b)(2). Prior to 1996, the probationary period was only 2 years.

**Q: Must all of the required probationary period for tenure be served at the same school district?**

A: Yes. 24 P.S. § 11-1108; Official Opinion of the Attorney General No. 73-1, 61 Pa. D.&C.2d 770 (Jan. 8, 1973).

**Q: Does a teacher have to be working during the entire probationary period to acquire tenure?**

A: Yes. In *Pookman v. Upper St. Clair Twp. School District*, 483 A.2d 1371 (Pa. 1984), the Pennsylvania Supreme Court explained the probation period's purpose is to ensure both school districts and non-tenured employees "have the benefit of having a full two year period in which to perform and in which to have that performance observed and critiqued." The court's reasoning applies with equal force to the present three-year probationary period.

**Q: Does service as a substitute teacher count towards the probationary period needed for tenure?**

A: No. *Kielbowick v. Ambridge Area School Board*, 668A.2d 1128 ( Pa. Cmwlth. 1995).

**Q: Can a temporary professional employee obtain tenure by working only part time for the entire three-year probationary period?**

A: Yes. Nothing precludes part time teachers from acquiring tenure, so long as they were employed as temporary professional employees and performed satisfactorily during the requisite probationary period. *States v. Punxsutawney Area School District, Teacher Tenure Appeal No. 10-85*, School Law Information Exchange, Vol. 23, No. 73 (1986).

**Q: If a temporary professional employee completes the requisite probationary periods, do they automatically acquire tenure?**

A: Temporary professional employees automatically become tenured professional employees when their work has been certified as satisfactory by the superintendent during the last four months of their probationary period with that school district. Notice of the attainment of this status shall be sent to the secretary of the school district, recorded in the records, and written notification sent to the employee. After attainment of this status, a temporary professional employee must be tendered a regular professional employee contract. 24 P.S. § 11-1108(b)(3).