

A Policy Briefing on Professional Rights and Responsibilities

Professional educators must be given the resources, structures, access, and freedom to fulfill their primary job responsibility: Helping students succeed. CTA believes that assistance from their peers can help educators improve instruction and increase student learning. Seniority rights ensure that students will benefit from instruction by experienced teachers.

Online Learning

CTA believes the advancement and application of instructional technology devices and materials provide new opportunities for developing skills, furthering research and expanding knowledge in our society. Technology can be used to promote educational equality within and among schools, school districts, colleges, and universities. "High quality" online instruction utilizes emerging technologies to help all students reach their full potential by preserving the fundamental structure of our public education system: A quality instructor who is provided the resources and access to make a dramatic impact on student success. It encourages regular and quality interaction between students, faculty and online classmates. All eligible students must be able to participate in distance education on an equitable basis without regard to economic or social status.

PAR Programs Must Aim to Help Teachers Enhance Their Skills

Peer assistance and peer review (PAR) programs must aim to help teachers develop practices to improve instruction and increase student performance. PAR programs help new and veteran teachers improve their knowledge and skills. A formal PAR program links a "participating teacher" with a "consulting teacher" who provides ongoing support through observing, sharing ideas and skills, and recommending materials for further study. In PAR programs, where consulting teachers may make recommendations that can affect the employment status of participating teachers, communications between the consulting teacher and the participating teacher must remain confidential to create trust in an environment which encourages exploration and innovation. Fair treatment of all participants is critical to the success of any PAR program, with special emphasis on due process rights, full funding and ample training for all parties.

The Seniority System Should be Encouraged

Research illustrates that teachers become more effective with experience; in every profession, your skill improves over time. The seniority system has demonstrated its equity and validity in protecting the rights of all employees. All personnel begin vesting in the system from the first day of service, and modification of the seniority system imperils job security for all employees. However, affirmative action which takes conscious account of race, disability, or sex may be necessary to achieve true equal employment opportunity. The choice between strict seniority and some accommodation of affirmative action is best made voluntarily by the employer and employee organization through collective bargaining or other forms of dialogue.