



Information Sheet: The Non-Reelection Process

My principal told me that I “wasn’t a good fit” is something that we tend to hear in late-February or early-March from some of our members. Knowing that the Principal can’t tell you much more than that (for fear of a grievance for unjust cause) doesn’t offer our members much comfort.

What does a non-reelection mean?

A “non-reelection” or “non-renew” is a term that districts must use to tell employees that they will not be invited back to teach in the District the following year. It does not mean the end of a teaching career for most members, but should cause some reflection by the member on their experiences this year. It does mean that the District will no longer interview or hire that member for any position within the District – this includes substitute positions and summer school.

When does a district have to notify a member about non-reelection?

A district must notify a member that they will be non-reelected by March 15 of every year. If a district has not notified a member by March 15, but later tells the member that they will not be invited back; that member should contact their Union as quickly as possible to discuss the situation.

Does it only happen to probationary employees?

In California, temporary and probationary employees have no “due-process” rights. This means that a District can choose to non-reelect a member and not tell them why. Permanent employees do have due process and the district must notify them, explain the reasons to them, and give them an opportunity to improve prior to firing them. While it is used usually with probationary employees, it is also used with some temporary employees. Temporary employees end their contract with the District on the last work day of the school year though and many principals will choose to just let them “ride off into the wind” and not hire them if they apply for a position at their school in the future. This is especially relevant if the principal believes that the member is overall a good teacher, but there is a personality conflict between that member and other staff members. They generally give the member the benefit of the doubt that they may find a better fit at another school site within the District.

Can I fight a non-reelection? Why won’t the Union protect me?

Unfortunately, the only way to beat a non-reelection is through the arbitration or unfair labor practice process which can take up to a year or more to complete. In addition to this, we must have a clear example of the member participating in a “protected union activity” like being an active site rep, dealing with grievances, filing grievances, striking, etc. We also have to have a clear example that the principal or district is retaliating against that member because of the protected activity. (Now, you may be able to see why the principal is not allowed to tell you much more than “you’re just not a good fit.”)

What if I quit? Does it go away?

Unfortunately, no. If the District has chosen to non-reelect a member, that member will still have to state that they've been non-reelected from this District on future applications; even if they resign or quit. If the member has a hunch that s/he'll be non-reelected and s/he tries to "beat them to the punch" by resigning before they notify him/her of the non-reelect, it doesn't negate the non-reelect notification by the District.

What does this mean for the future?

In all honesty, that's up to the member. On all future applications, the member will need to check the "Have you ever been non-reelected from a District?" box and they have the opportunity to explain the situation. Some members choose to explain the situation and some do not. Some members choose to explain the situation only at interviews while some just ignore the subject.

Through readings and discussions, we know that principals and school districts aren't looking for "the perfect teacher" and don't expect that from their first-year or second-year teachers. What they are looking for is someone who can learn from their experiences (both positive and negative) and grow as an educator.

I recommend that the member look inside him/herself and consider "is this job for me?" If s/he honestly answers "no", then s/he'll probably be happier seeking employment in another field. If s/he honestly answers "yes", then I recommend that they work with their coach, principal, co-workers and anyone else they can find to honestly reflect upon their experiences and think about what they would do differently if they were to do it again.

In many interviews, principals are sincerely looking for employees who can "grow." The current research shows that the first five years are critical for developing excellent teachers. It doesn't say that each of those first five years has to be perfect.