

## **Teachers' Unions: Are They Good or Bad?**

Teachers' Unions, just like all other workplace unions, are designed to protect the employees (in this case the teachers) from unfair treatment in schools. The unions make sure the school administration conducts itself according to the current contract that the teachers are working under. Each school's union is connected to a larger union that either operates on a state level or on a national level. If needed, the larger union will get involved to help protect a teacher's (or many teachers') rights.

On the surface teacher's unions appear to be a good thing. They make sure that there isn't anything unjust going on with the treatment of teachers. But this can also be a bad thing. Why? Well, the main reason is because the union, by design, is all about the teacher and cares nothing about the students. And in schools students should always be the number one priority.

### **What's Good about Teachers' Unions**

The fact that teachers and contract terms are protected by a union is a good thing. One of the main jobs of a union is to make sure that the new teachers that are hired are qualified for the job. Unions make sure that qualified candidates (candidates with proper certification) are hired before non-qualified candidates are hired. This helps students because it insures that the most qualified teachers are always the ones in the classroom.

The other good thing unions do is protect teachers that might be unfairly targeted by administrators. A teacher who is tenured can't be fired for no reason and without just cause. This means that an administrator can't simply get rid of a good teacher because the administrator wants to hire someone else or has a personal issue with the teacher.

### **What's Bad about Teacher's Unions**

The worse thing about unions is that they don't care if they protect a good teacher or a bad teacher. The union will protect a good teacher who's being fired for no reason and a child molester just the same. The union will give equal representation to both.

So this makes it difficult for a bad teacher to be removed and for a good teacher to be brought in as a replacement. A major process has to be completed in order to fire any tenured teacher.

Now, before we go any further, we should probably discuss tenure. Tenure is what teachers in most states are awarded after completing about three years of teaching in one school. According to most state laws, a teacher has to either be placed on tenure or the teacher has to be let go. If the teacher is tenured, there has to be a very good and provable reason to remove the teacher.

Not all states have tenure and some states are currently trying to get rid of it. But teacher unions are fighting the elimination of tenure because it would mean less job security for all teachers.

Finally, you might think that all teachers support their union but this isn't correct. In fact, many teachers don't like their unions but in many states the teachers are forced to belong to the union. Technically they aren't forced to belong but they are forced to pay union dues. So teachers figure if they have to pay the union dues then they might as well be protected by the union.

### **Final Words about Teachers' Unions**

In the end, there are positives and negatives to unions. It would be wrong to leave teachers vulnerable to the whims of school administrators. But it's also wrong to handcuff the decisions of administrators, especially when the decisions are made to benefit the students.

All decision in a school should be made with the student as the number one consideration. Too often this isn't the case. Far too many administrators have their own personal agendas and unions care very little about the students. However, getting rid of unions would probably make things even worse than they are now.

Perhaps the solution is to have a nationally funded union that only looks out for the rights of the students. Now that might not be a bad idea.