

Final appeal set for teacher fired by Bronx Science 'quack' principal

By **CANDICE M. GIOVE**

Dr. Robert Drake, a chemistry teacher who lost his job at the Bronx High School of Science in 2005 after he criticized the school's principal, will finally have a hearing in October.

Although he is now teaching chemistry in Connecticut, Dr. Drake says that he would like to clear his name. The Department of Education has set a discontinuance of probation hearing for October 3..

He would have also liked to rid his Board of Education file of the unsatisfactory ratings and negative letters from Bronx Science principal Valerie Reidy, but has since been informed that the new teacher's contract does not allow the material to be removed. Dr. Drake was fired before that contract deal was reached. He was also placed on the City's "no hire list," which essentially prevents him from working in any City school for the rest of his life.

He lost his job as a science teacher after Principal Reidy allegedly ensured an unsatisfactory rating during his annual teacher review in 2004 -2005. On September 1, 2005, Dr. Drake, who was also a college mentor at the Bronx High School of Science, was set to be tenured, but was sacked before reaching that point.

Despite his previous year's satisfactory ratings, things dramatically changed for the highly qualified instructor, who holds a PhD and has three decades of teaching experience.

He was vocally opposed to the principal's insistence on the "pure discovery method," an instruction method

in which teachers are told not to prepare students by having them read textbooks. Instead, instructors are supposed to let students make discoveries on their own. It is a method discredited by many in the science community.

During his time at the school, Dr. Drake was also assigned the role of a college mentor. He was in charge of about 50 college-bound students, and aided them in sending out applications and writing recommendations. But according to Dr. Drake, Reidy said that he essentially ruined some students' chances of getting into their choices of colleges by missing important deadlines. Dr. Drake contended that he made certain that all applications were in order, and holds letters from parents to back his claims.

Then after he received unsatisfactory ratings, Dr. Drake became involved in the "No Quack" campaign, a movement against Valerie Reidy, who uses a "Dr." prefix, despite only receiving an honorary degree from her alma mater, the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

Dr. Drake distributed a "No Quack" flyer outside of the school's boundaries, and said that students with the yellow leaflets were rounded up and interrogated.