

Baltimore City Public School System (MD)*

GPA: 2.18

Rank: 8th place out of 50

Document Examined: Collective bargaining agreement, 2005 – 2007†

Data from the NCTQ database were drawn from Baltimore City's 2005 – 2007 bargaining agreement. The authors have confirmed that a new contract was approved in November 2007. In the interest of maintaining a clear, consistent, and reliable standard for the data analyzed in this report, however, we have adhered to NCTQ's coding. Find a more detailed explanation of this approach on page 14.

HIGHLY FLEXIBLE
FLEXIBLE
SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE
SOMEWHAT RESTRICTIVE
RESTRICTIVE
HIGHLY RESTRICTIVE

Introduction

This study of the nation's fifty largest school districts starts from a simple premise: district labor agreements should not make it difficult for schools to be nimble, smart, flexible, high-performing organizations.

In particular, the study focuses on provisions that may limit school leaders' ability to attract and retain excellent teachers, to identify and remove ineffective instructors, to use professional development as a tool of organizational improvement, and to manage school operations in a professional manner—i.e., to run the most effective school possible in terms of core instructional and educational activities, crucial areas where school leaders need enough authority to match their mounting accountability obligations and executive responsibilities in a results-based era.

The Grades

The scale on which districts were graded reflects the approach outlined above. Grades of A or B generally indicate provisions that con-

fer on school leaders the latitude to manage their schools in a professional manner. A grade of C generally means the agreement is silent regarding the provision in question—i.e., it neither affirms nor denies a school leader's right to take a specific course of action. Grades of D and F generally indicate provisions that impede or explicitly bar school leaders from exercising discretion in a given area.

Baltimore City's overall grade, therefore, reflects the degree to which district policies constrain school leaders' ability to make decisions on important management issues. It is in no way a holistic assessment of local education policy or school leadership, much less of school effectiveness.

Overall GPA: 2.18 (8th place out of 50)

Baltimore City's GPA is the average of its scores in three areas: Compensation, Personnel Policies, and Work Rules.

Baltimore City receives a Somewhat Flexible rating for its 2.18 GPA, ranking eighth among the fifty districts studied—and second among the five Maryland districts examined here. The district receives one F in each of the three major categories, dragging down otherwise decent scores.

Compensation: B- (76th percentile)

The Compensation grade combines four components: Credit for Previous Experience, Performance Pay, Hardship Pay for High-Needs Schools, and Extra Pay for Shortage Subjects.

Baltimore City's bargaining agreement gives schools the flexibility to raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teaching in a private school or working in a subject-related profession, but is silent on whether they may do so based on college-teaching experience. The district's contract gets high marks for allowing schools to reward teachers in high-needs schools and in shortage subjects (though it receives a B+ instead of an A on for excluding English as a second language as a subject for which teachers can receive extra pay). It receives an F, however, for barring school leaders from paying teachers extra on the basis of performance.

Compensation	B-
1. Credit for Previous Experience	B+
2. Performance Pay	F
3. Hardship Pay for High-Needs Schools	A
4. Extra Pay for Shortage Subjects	B+
Personnel Policies	C-
5. Tenure	N/A
6. Evaluation.	C+
7. Layoffs	C
8. Transfers	F
Work Rules	C
9. Professional Development	C
10. Subcontracting Operations‡	A
11. Faculty Meetings	F
12. Teacher Leave	C

Personnel Policies: C- (53rd percentile)

The Personnel Policies grade combines four components: Tenure, Evaluation, Layoffs, and Transfers.

Baltimore City's bargaining agreement allows school leaders to factor student performance, in general, into teacher evaluations, but bars them from considering test scores in particular. The agreement is silent on whether, during layoffs, school leaders may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority. The contract is also silent on whether internal job applicants must be given priority over new hires for vacant positions and on whether transferring teachers may "bump" less senior teachers from their jobs. However, the district reported to NCTQ that teachers do have bumping rights in practice, which, along with a requirement that school leaders select the most junior teacher in a certification area when transfers are necessary, drops it to an F for this component. Tenure rules in Baltimore City, as in most places, are set by state law, not local decision; therefore, the district did not receive a grade for that component.

Work Rules: C (82nd percentile)

The Work Rules grade combines four components: Professional Development, Subcontracting Operations, Faculty Meetings, and Teacher Leave.

Baltimore City's bargaining agreement is silent on whether schools must give teachers salary credit and/or stipends for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday and whether schools must provide leave for teachers to attend union activities. The contract receives an A for granting school leaders the right to subcontract operations to nonunion workers. It gets an F, however, for capping faculty meetings at one hour and requiring that time at faculty meetings be allotted for union matters.

Conclusion

Baltimore City shows promise in the Compensation category but is hampered by its F on the Performance Pay component. In the other two categories the district has ample room for improvement, with only two component grades above C. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners should negotiate aggressively to make contract changes that explicitly confer on school leaders the right to:

1. raise the starting salaries of teachers with all forms of relevant prior experience. (The bargaining agreement allows this for some forms but is silent on others.)
2. reward teachers on the basis of performance. (The bargaining agreement bars this practice.)
3. consider student test scores when evaluating teachers. (The bargaining agreement bars this practice.)
4. base decisions regarding teacher layoffs on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (The bargaining agreement is silent on this issue.)
5. base decisions regarding teacher transfers on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Of the three indicators directly addressing teacher transfers, the bargaining agreement requires school leaders to consider seniority on one and is silent on two.)

In addition, the board should amend provisions that:

6. cap the time allowed for faculty meetings and that require time at faculty meetings to be allotted to union matters. (While long meetings are not necessarily preferable, principals should have some discretion.)

* Readers are cautioned not to confuse the Baltimore City Public School System with Baltimore County Public Schools. This study looks at both districts.

† The data examined in this report come from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) database, "Teacher Roles, Rules and Rights." All data were culled from the NCTQ database in November 2007. In states that permit collective bargaining, NCTQ examined collective bargaining agreements, with the exception of Jordan School District in Utah, which does not have a bargaining agreement. In states where collective bargaining is either illegal or otherwise not practiced, NCTQ examined school board policies. Where a provision in state law precludes the possibility of a collective bargaining agreement or school board policy addressing a certain component in our study, we excluded it from our analysis, marking the component "N/A." Find a more detailed explanation of this report's methodology starting on page 14.

‡ This indicator refers to the right of school leaders to outsource school operations to nonunion workers. NCTQ uses the term "subcontracting" in its database, which we retain here in the interest of consistency.