

Baltimore County Public Schools (MD)*

GPA: 1.86

Rank: 22nd place out of 50 (tied with Chicago)

Document Examined: Collective bargaining agreement, 2003 – 2007†

Data from the NCTQ database were drawn from Baltimore County's 2003 – 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 confer 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 County'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: 1.86
(22nd place out of 50—tied with Chicago)**

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

Baltimore County receives a disappointing Somewhat Restrictive rating for its 1.86 GPA, ranking twenty-second among the fifty districts studied—and fourth among the five Maryland districts examined here, trailing even neighboring Baltimore City. The district receives no component grades above C+, leaving ample room for improvement.

Compensation: D+ (33rd 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 County's bargaining agreement gives schools the flexibility to raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teaching in a private school, but is silent on whether they may do so based on prior experience teaching college or working in a subject-related profession. The agreement is also silent on whether schools may reward teachers on the basis of performance or for teaching in high-needs schools. It receives an F for barring school leaders from rewarding teachers of shortage subjects.

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

Personnel Policies: C + (71st percentile)

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

Baltimore County's bargaining agreement is silent on whether school leaders may factor student performance, in general, into teacher evaluations, though it grants them the right to consider student test scores in particular. The agreement is also silent on whether, during layoffs, school leaders may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority; whether internal job applicants must be given priority over new hires for vacant positions; and whether transferring teachers may "bump" less senior teachers from their jobs. The contract does, however, free school leaders from considering seniority when forced to transfer teachers. Tenure rules in Baltimore County 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: D + (65th percentile)

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

Baltimore County's contract receives an F for requiring schools to give teachers salary credit for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday. The agreement is silent on whether school leaders may subcontract operations to nonunion workers; whether the length of faculty meetings is capped; whether time at such meetings must be allotted for union matters; and whether schools must provide leave for teachers to attend union activities.

Conclusion

Baltimore County's bargaining agreement allows school leaders some latitude when it comes to making personnel decisions, but in other areas it is quite restrictive. Overall, the district earns a disappointing two Fs and no As or Bs. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Baltimore County Board of Education 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. reward teachers in high-needs schools and teachers of shortage subjects. (The bargaining agreement is silent on the former and bars the latter.)
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 is silent on two and grants school leaders flexibility on one.)
6. subcontract (i.e., outsource) certain school operations. (The bargaining agreement is silent on this issue.)

In addition, the board should amend provisions that:

7. mandate that teachers be given salary credit for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday.

* Readers are cautioned not to confuse the Baltimore County Public Schools with the Baltimore City Public School System. 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.