

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (NC)

GPA: 2.14

Rank: 9th place out of 50

*Documents Examined: Board policies (Collective bargaining is illegal in North Carolina)**

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 man-

age their schools in a professional manner. A grade of C generally means the agreement (or, as in this case, district policy) 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.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg'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: 2.14 (9th place out of 50)

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

Charlotte-Mecklenburg lands a Somewhat Flexible rating for its 2.14 GPA, ranking ninth among the fifty districts studied—and second among the three North Carolina districts examined here. The district earns the second-highest score in the Compensation category, behind only Anne Arundel County, but performs less strongly in the other two.

Compensation: B+ (95th 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.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg earns the second-highest score among all districts in this category. Board policy is silent on whether schools may raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teaching in a private school or college or working in a subject-related field. Board policy does, however, allow schools to reward teachers on the basis of performance, for teaching in high-needs schools, and for teaching shortage subjects.

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

Personnel Policies: D+ (41st percentile)

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

Board policy in Charlotte-Mecklenburg is silent on whether school leaders may factor student performance, including test scores, into teacher evaluations; whether, during layoffs, school leaders may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority; and whether transferring teachers may “bump” less senior teachers from their jobs. The district fares poorly on the other indicators making up the Transfers component, as board policy require schools to give internal job applicants priority over new hires for vacant positions and to select the most junior teacher in a certification area when transfers are necessary. Tenure rules in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, 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.

Board policy is silent on whether schools must give teachers salary credit and/or stipends for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday; whether school leaders may subcontract school operations to nonunion workers; whether the length of faculty meetings is capped; and whether time at such meetings must be allotted to union matters. It receives one F in this category, however, for requiring schools to grant teachers leave for union activities.

Conclusion

Board policy in Charlotte-Mecklenburg is stellar when it comes to teacher compensation but provides school leaders with less latitude to make decisions regarding personnel and work rules. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education should consider explicitly conferring on school leaders the right to:

1. raise the starting salaries of teachers with all forms of relevant prior experience. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)
2. consider student performance, including test scores, when evaluating teachers. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)
3. base decisions regarding teacher layoffs on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)
4. base decisions regarding teacher transfers on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Of the three indicators directly addressing teacher transfers, board policy requires school leaders to consider seniority on two and is silent on one.)
5. subcontract (i.e., outsource) certain school operations. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)

In addition, the board should amend provisions that:

6. allow classroom teachers to miss instructional time in order to attend union activities.

* 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, as in North Carolina, 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.