

City of Chicago School District (IL)

GPA: 1.86

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

*Document Examined: Collective bargaining agreement, July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2007**

Data from the NCTQ database were drawn from Chicago's July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2007 bargaining agreement. The authors have confirmed that a new contract has been approved. 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. Chicago'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 Baltimore County)

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

Chicago receives a disappointing Somewhat Restrictive rating for its 1.86 GPA, ranking twenty-second among the fifty districts studied. As shown below, Chicago's report card contains a striking disparity, tying for first place in one category and last place in another.

Compensation: F (tied with Cleveland for last place)

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

Along with Cleveland, Chicago received the worst score of all districts in this study in the Compensation category. The district's contract bars schools from rewarding teachers in high-needs schools or in shortage subjects. Though Chicago's bargaining agreement is silent on whether schools can reward teachers on the basis of performance, the district reported to NCTQ that this is barred in practice, giving the district an F

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

for than indicator, as well. The contract does receive a C for allowing school leaders to raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teaching in a private school or working in a subject-related field. Still, a teacher new to the district can qualify for only the third step out of thirteen on the district's salary scale, which further lowered its score.

Personnel Policies: B+ (tied with Austin for first place)

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

Chicago turns 180 degrees in this category, tying Austin for the top score. Chicago's bargaining agreement allows school leaders to consider student performance, including test scores, when evaluating tenured teachers, though it is silent on whether the practice is permissible for nontenured teachers. The contract also grants school leaders the right to retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority during layoffs. On the question of transfers, the agreement gives school leaders the flexibility to consider new hires on an equal footing with internal applicants for vacant positions and does not allow transferring teachers to "bump" less senior teachers from their jobs. It does, however, require school leaders to choose the most junior teacher in a certification area if transfers are necessary, dropping its grade for that indicator to a C+. Tenure rules in Chicago, 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- (71st percentile)

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

Chicago's contract receives an F for requiring schools to give teachers salary credit and/or stipends for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday. The bargaining agreement is silent on whether school leaders may subcontract school operations to nonunion workers; whether they must grant teachers leave to attend union activities; and whether the length of faculty meetings is capped. However, it does grant school leaders the right to decide whether to devote time at such meetings to union matters, earning it a B for that component.

Conclusion

Chicago provides school leaders with substantial flexibility when it comes to making personnel decisions, but very little when it comes to issues of teacher compensation. Moving forward, the district would do well to give school leaders the same level of discretion in other areas as they do when it comes to personnel policies. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the mayor and the Chicago 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 is silent on this issue.)
3. reward teachers in high-needs schools and teachers of shortage subjects. (The bargaining agreement bars these practices.)
4. consider student performance when evaluating nontenured teachers. (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 grants them flexibility on two.)
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 and/or stipends for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday.

* 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.