

# Dallas Independent School District (TX)

**GPA: 2.50**

**Rank: 4th place out of 50**  
(tied with Fairfax County)

*Documents Examined: Board policies (Collective bargaining is illegal in Texas)\**

HIGHLY FLEXIBLE
<b>FLEXIBLE</b>
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.

Dallas'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: 2.50

**(4th place out of 50—tied with Fairfax County)**

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

Dallas lands a Flexible rating, the second-highest possible, for its 2.50 GPA, ranking fourth among the fifty districts studied—and third among the six Texas districts examined here. The district's board policies' silence on several key indicators earned it seven Cs, but it also earned two As, bumping up its overall score.

## Compensation: C+ (71st 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.

Dallas board policy allows schools to raise the starting salaries of teachers with previous experience teaching in a private school, but is silent on whether they can do so for teachers with experience teaching college or working in a subject-related profession. Board policy is also silent on whether teachers can be rewarded on the basis of performance or for teaching in high-needs schools. Dallas receives one of its two As for allowing teachers to earn extra pay for teaching all four shortage subjects examined in the study.

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

### Personnel Policies: B- (82nd percentile)

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

Dallas's evaluation policies are stellar; board policy allows schools to factor student performance, including test scores, into teacher evaluations. Board policy is silent on whether school leaders may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority during layoffs, receiving a C for that component. On the issue of transfers, the record is mixed. Board policy gives school leaders the right to consider new hires on an equal footing with internal applicants, and it bars transferring teachers from "bumping" less senior teachers from their jobs. It does, however, require the district to choose the most junior teacher in a certification area when transferring is necessary, bringing its overall grade for that component down to a C+. Tenure rules in Dallas, 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.

Dallas board policy receives a C for every component in this category, due to its silence on whether teachers must be given 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; whether time at such meetings must be allotted to union matters; and whether school leaders must grant teachers leave for union activities.

### Conclusion

Dallas is a district where school leaders have some flexibility to assemble and lead strong teams, but its relatively quiet board policies could go further in securing for school leaders the freedoms they need to manage their schools effectively. To better equip its school leaders with such flexibility, the Dallas Board of Trustees should consider explicitly conferring on school leaders the right to:

1. raise the starting salaries of teachers with all types of relevant previous experience. (Board policy allows this form some forms and is silent on others.)
2. reward teachers on the basis of performance and for teaching in high-needs schools. (Board policy is silent on these issues.)
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 one and grants them flexibility on two.)
5. subcontract (i.e., outsource) certain school operations. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)

\* 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 Texas, 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.