

# Guilford County Schools (Greensboro, NC)

**GPA: 2.62**

**Rank: 1st place out of 50**

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

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 manage their schools in a professional manner. A grade of C gen-

erally 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.

Guilford 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: 2.62 (1st place out of 50)

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

Guilford County lands a Flexible rating, the second-highest possible, for its 2.62 GPA, ranking first among the fifty districts studied, including the three North Carolina districts examined here. The district earns the third-highest score in the Compensation category and the second-highest score in the Personnel Policies categories. If not for its disappointing D+ in the Work Rules category, Guilford County could have achieved the desirable Highly Flexible designation.

## Compensation: B (90th 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.

Guilford County board policy allows schools to reward teachers on the basis of performance, for teaching in high-needs schools, and for teaching shortage subjects. It loses points on this final component, however, for identifying opportunities for extra pay in only two of the four subjects examined. Guilford County falters on the previous experience component; board policy is silent on whether teachers can earn higher starting salaries for previous experience of any type, earning a C for that component.

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

### **Personnel Policies: B (94th percentile)**

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

Guilford County earns the second-highest score among all districts in this category. Its evaluation policies are stellar; board policy allows school leaders to factor student performance, including test scores, into teacher evaluations. Board policy is silent on whether, during layoffs, school leaders may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority. On transfers, board policy gives school leaders the flexibility to consider new hires on an equal footing with internal applicants for vacant positions, and it bars transferring teachers from “bumping” less senior teachers from their jobs. It is silent on whether school leaders must choose the most junior teacher in a certification area when transfers are necessary. Tenure rules in Guilford 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.

Despite earning the top overall score, Guilford County board policy fares relatively poorly in the Work Rules category, receiving an F for requiring schools to give teachers salary credit for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday. On all other components it receives Cs. Board policy is silent on 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 devoted to union matters; and whether teacher must be granted leave for union activities.

### **Conclusion**

Guilford County is the most principal-friendly environment in this study, a place where school leaders have substantial ability to assemble and lead strong teams. On the other hand, the fact that Guilford County ranks first while bringing home a report card that features six component grades of C or lower shows just how unimpressive even “flexible” districts really are when it comes to empowering school leaders in key domains. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Guilford County 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. base decisions regarding teacher layoffs on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)
3. base decisions regarding teacher transfers on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Of the three indicators directly addressing teacher transfers, board policy is silent on one and frees school leaders from seniority considerations on two.)
4. subcontract (i.e., outsource) certain school operations. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)

### **In addition, the board should amend provisions that:**

5. mandate that teachers be given salary credit 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, 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.