

Jordan School District (Salt Lake City, UT)

GPA: 1.25

Rank: 44th place out of 50
(tied with Jefferson County, KY)

*Document Examined: Board policies (Collective bargaining is permitted, but not required in Utah)**

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 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. Jordan'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: 1.25 (44th place out of 50—tied with Jefferson County, KY)

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

Jordan receives a Highly Restrictive rating, the lowest possible, for its 1.25 GPA, ranking forty-fourth among the fifty districts studied—and nineteen spots below neighboring Granite School District. Although the district receives one B+, the rest of its component grades are Cs and Fs, significantly constraining school leaders.

Compensation: D- (10th 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.

Board policy in Jordan allows schools to raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teaching in private schools, but is silent on whether they may do so based on previous experience teaching college or working in a subject-related profession. Jordan receives Fs on the remaining three components, as its board policies bar schools from rewarding teachers on the basis of performance, for teaching in high-needs schools, and for teaching shortage subjects.

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

Personnel Policies: D- (18th percentile)

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

Jordan board policy allows school leaders to factor student performance, in general, into teacher evaluations, but bars them from considering test scores in particular. The district also reported to NCTQ that in practice school leaders may not consider student performance at all when evaluating tenured teachers, giving the district an F for that component. Board policy is silent on whether school leaders may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority during layoffs. The district receives an F for the Transfers component; board policy requires school leaders to give internal applicants priority over new hires for vacant positions; allows transferring teachers to “bump” less senior teachers from their jobs; and requires schools to select the most junior teacher in a certification area if transfers are necessary. Tenure rules in the Jordan School District, 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.

Jordan 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

Relative to the other districts in this study, Jordan significantly constrains the authority of its school leaders, particularly when it comes to compensating teachers and making personnel decisions. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Jordan 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 allows this for some forms but is silent on others.)
2. reward teachers on the basis of performance. (Board policy bars this practice.)
3. reward teachers in high-needs schools and teachers of shortage subjects. (Board policy bars both practices.)
4. consider student performance, including test scores, when evaluating teachers. (Board policy is silent on this practice in general, but bars it for test scores in particular.)
5. base decisions regarding teacher layoffs on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)
6. base decisions regarding teacher transfers on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Board policy requires school leaders to consider seniority on all three of the indicators directly addressing teacher transfers.)
7. 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. The documents that NCTQ examined for each district differed depending on the state in which that district is located. In states that either mandate or 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.