

Los Angeles Unified School District (CA)

GPA: 1.68

Rank: 34th place out of 50 (tied with Detroit)

*Document Examined: Collective bargaining agreement, 2004 – 2006**

Data from the NCTQ database were drawn from Los Angeles's 2004–2006 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. Los Angeles'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: 1.68 (34th place out of 50—tied with Detroit)

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

Los Angeles receives a disappointing Somewhat Restrictive rating for its 1.68 GPA, ranking thirty-fourth among the fifty districts studied—and second among the four California districts examined here. Although the district's report card boasts a B+ here and there, it also contains four Fs, suggesting that school leaders in Los Angeles must operate under significant constraints.

Compensation: B- (81st 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.

Los Angeles's bargaining agreement allows schools to raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teach-

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

ing in a private school or working in a subject-related field, but is silent on whether they may do so for college-teaching experience. The agreement is also silent on whether schools may reward teachers on the basis of performance. The contract allows schools to reward teachers in high-needs schools and in shortage subjects, though it limits the scope of rewards in both cases.

Personnel Policies: D+ (47th percentile)

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

Los Angeles's bargaining agreement allows school leaders to factor student performance, in general, into teacher evaluations, though it is silent on whether they may consider test scores in particular. On layoffs, California law stipulates that teachers with less seniority must be laid off before their more senior colleagues, precluding Los Angeles's collective bargaining agreement from addressing the issue. The contract gets low marks for requiring that internal job applicants be given priority over new hires for vacant positions, while state law again precludes the bargaining agreement from ruling on the other indicators that make up the Transfers component. Tenure rules in Los Angeles, as in most places, are also governed by state law, not local decision; therefore, the district did not receive a grade for that component.

Work Rules: F (24th percentile)

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

Los Angeles's contract receives Fs for requiring schools to give teachers salary credit for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday and to grant teachers leave for union activities. The bargaining agreement is silent on whether school leaders may subcontract school operations to nonunion workers, but gets low marks for capping the length of faculty meetings at one hour and requiring that time at faculty meetings be allotted to union matters.

Conclusion

Los Angeles grants its principals more flexibility than most when it comes to compensating teachers, but its score for the Work Rules category is near the bottom of the heap. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Los Angeles 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. pay teachers on the basis of performance. (The bargaining agreement is silent on this issue.)
3. consider student test scores when evaluating teachers. (The bargaining agreement 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, the bargaining agreement requires school leaders to consider seniority on one. The other two are governed by state law and therefore outside the district's jurisdiction.)
5. subcontract (i.e., outsource) certain school operations. (The bargaining agreement is silent on this issue.)

In addition, the board should amend provisions that:

6. mandate that teachers be given salary credit for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday.
7. cap the length of faculty meetings and that require time at faculty meetings to be allotted to union matters. (While long meetings are not necessarily preferable, principals should have some discretion.)
8. 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, 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.