

# School District of Philadelphia (PA)

**GPA: 1.71**

**Rank: 31st place out of 50**  
(tied with DeKalb County and Milwaukee)

*Document Examined: Collective bargaining agreement, September 1, 2004 – August 31, 2008\**

HIGHLY FLEXIBLE
FLEXIBLE
SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE
<b>SOMEWHAT RESTRICTIVE</b>
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. Philadelphia'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: 1.71 (31st place out of 50—tied with DeKalb County and Milwaukee)

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

Philadelphia receives a disappointing Somewhat Restrictive rating for its 1.71 GPA, ranking thirty-first among the fifty districts studied. Although the district receives an A and a B+ in the Compensation category, its report card is dominated by Cs and Fs, leaving ample room for improvement.

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

## Compensation: C + (62nd 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.

Philadelphia's bargaining agreement allows schools to raise starting teacher salaries for previous experience teaching in a private school or working in a subject-related profession, 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 but bars them from rewarding teachers of shortage subjects.

## Personnel Policies: C (59th percentile)

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

Philadelphia's bargaining agreement is silent on whether school leaders may consider student performance, including test scores, when evaluating teachers. On layoffs, Pennsylvania law stipulates that teachers with less seniority must be laid off before their more senior colleagues, precluding the district's bargaining agreement from addressing the issue. Philadelphia's contract requires that internal job applicants be given priority over new hires for vacant positions and is silent on whether transferring teachers may "bump" less senior teachers from their jobs. However, the district reported to NCTQ that senior teachers do not enjoy bumping privileges in practice, raising its grade for that component to a C. State law also requires that the district to select the most junior teacher in a certification area if transfers are necessary, removing it from the calculation for the Transfers component. Tenure rules in Philadelphia, 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: D- (29th percentile)**

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

Philadelphia's contract receives Fs for requiring schools to give teachers stipends for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday and to grant teachers leave to attend union activities. The bargaining agreement is silent on whether school leaders may subcontract school operations to nonunion workers and whether the length of faculty meetings is capped, but it does require that time at faculty meetings be allotted to union matters, dropping it to a D for that component.

### **Conclusion**

Philadelphia gives school leaders some flexibility when it comes to compensating teachers, but very little in other areas. Its D- for the Work Rules category is especially disappointing. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Philadelphia School Reform Commission 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 of shortage subjects. (The bargaining agreement bars this practice.)
4. consider student performance, including test scores, when evaluating 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 is silent on one. The third is governed by state law and therefore outside Philadelphia's jurisdiction.)
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 stipends for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday.
8. require time at faculty meetings to be allotted to union matters. (While long meetings are not necessarily preferable, principals should have some discretion.)
9. 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.