

Pinellas County School District (St. Petersburg, FL)

GPA: 1.93

Rank: 16th place out of 50
(tied with Long Beach and Palm Beach County)

*Document Examined: Collective bargaining agreement,
2005 – 2008**

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. Pinellas 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: 1.93 (16th place out of 50— tied with Long Beach and Palm Beach County)

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

Pinellas County receives a disappointing Somewhat Restrictive rating for its 1.93 GPA, ranking sixteenth among the fifty districts studied—and third among the nine Florida districts examined here. Not particularly strong in any one category, the district's contract provides ample room for improvement.

Compensation: C (48th 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.

Pinellas County's bargaining agreement gives schools the flexibility to raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teaching in a private school or working in a subject-related profession, but is silent on whether they may do so based on college-teaching experience. The contract also allows schools to reward teachers on the basis of performance, but limits the amount they may pay. The bargaining agreement is silent on whether schools can reward teachers in high-needs schools and receives an F for barring schools from rewarding teachers of shortage subjects.

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

Personnel Policies: C- (53rd percentile)

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

Pinellas County's bargaining agreement is silent on whether school leaders may factor student performance, including test scores, into teacher evaluations; whether they may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority during layoffs; whether transferring teachers may "bump" less senior teachers from their jobs; and whether school leaders must select the most junior teacher in a certification area if transfers are necessary. The contract does require, however, that internal job applicants to be given priority over new hires for vacant positions, giving the district a D+ for the Transfers component. Tenure rules in Pinellas 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: C (82nd percentile)

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

Pinellas County's bargaining agreement 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

Pinellas County's report card is dominated by Cs, suggesting that, although school leaders are less constrained here than in some other districts, there is still substantial room for improvement across the board. To better equip its school leaders with the flexibility they need to manage their schools effectively, the Pinellas County School Board 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 in high-needs schools. (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 layoffs on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (The bargaining agreement is silent on this issue.)
6. 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 two.)
7. subcontract (i.e., outsource) certain school operations. (The bargaining agreement 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, 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.