

Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VA)

GPA: 1.73

Rank: 29th place out of 50
(tied with Polk County)

*Documents Examined: Board policies (Collective bargaining is illegal in Virginia)**

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 (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.

Virginia Beach'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: 1.73 (29th place out of 50—tied with Polk County)

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

Virginia Beach receives a disappointing Somewhat Restrictive rating for its 1.73 GPA, ranking twenty-ninth among the fifty districts studied. Although the district receives two Bs, its report card is dominated by Cs and Fs, leaving ample room for improvement.

Compensation: C- (43rd 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.

Virginia Beach board policy allows schools to raise starting teacher salaries based on previous experience teaching in a private school, but is silent on whether they may do so for experience teaching in college or working in a subject-related field. Board policy also allows schools to reward teachers on the basis of performance, though it is silent on the permissible scope of such rewards. It is silent on whether schools may reward teachers in high-needs schools and bars them 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	D +
5. Tenure	N/A
6. Evaluation.	C
7. Layoffs	C
8. Transfers.	F
Work Rules	C-
9. Professional Development.	C
10. Subcontracting Operations†	C
11. Faculty Meetings.	B
12. Teacher Leave	F

Personnel Policies: D+ (41st percentile)

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

Virginia Beach board policy is silent across the board in this category: on whether school leaders may consider student performance, including test scores, when evaluating teachers; whether they may retain an outstanding young teacher over one with greater seniority during layoffs; whether they must give internal job applicants priority over new hires for vacant positions; whether transferring teachers may “bump” less senior teachers from their jobs; and whether school leaders must transfer the most junior teacher in a certification area if transfers are necessary. The district reported to NCTQ, however, that in practice internal job applicants do have priority and transferring teachers do have “bumping” rights; therefore, the district received an F for that component. Tenure rules in Virginia Beach, 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- (71st percentile)

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

Virginia Beach board policy is silent on whether schools must give teachers salary credit and/or stipends for professional development activities outside the scheduled workday and whether school leaders may subcontract school operations to nonunion workers. Board policy gives school leaders the flexibility to set the length of faculty meetings, but its grade in this category suffers for requiring schools to grant teachers leave to attend union activities.

Conclusion

Of the eleven indicators on which it was graded, Virginia Beach receives only two grades above C+, suggesting that school leaders enjoy few real guarantees of flexibility. To better equip its school leaders with the authority they need to manage their schools effectively, the Virginia Beach School Board 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 in high-needs schools and teachers of shortage subjects. (Board policy is silent on the former and bars the latter.)
3. consider student performance, including test scores, when evaluating teachers. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)
4. base decisions regarding teacher layoffs on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)
5. base decisions regarding teacher transfers on individual merit and performance rather than seniority. (Board policy is silent on all three indicators directly addressing teacher transfers.)
6. subcontract (i.e., outsource) certain school operations. (Board policy is silent on this issue.)

In addition, the board should amend policies that:

- 7 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, as in Virginia, 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.