

Collective Bargaining Strengthens Schools

Collective bargaining allows educators to negotiate with school divisions for better working conditions for all school employees, better learning conditions for all students, and advocate for a stronger public education system.

Why Collective Bargaining Matters

- Collective bargaining is the process by which educators can negotiate wages, hours, and working conditions with the school division.
- [Research shows](#) teacher bargaining improves student test scores across all income levels.
- When educators have a safe and adequately resourced working environment, they can focus more time and energy on educating students.
- Teachers want what all families want for their schools: smaller class sizes, more school programs, better technology, and more support staff to give students the best educational experience.
- Collective bargaining helps all school staff, not just teachers: food service workers, counselors, nurses, librarians, office staff, and custodians all see conditions improve when staff can bargain.
- Collective bargaining supports the upward mobility of women and people of color, and unions provide democratic forms of problem-solving and decision-making that improve staff retention.
- Teacher unions [“Bargain for the Common Good”](#) and use their collective power to advocate for a better school environment for everyone.
- Research from the [Economic Policy Institute](#) finds collective bargaining narrows the pay gap between similarly educated public and private sector workers.
- Students in schools with active unions [do better on college admissions tests](#) like the SAT and ACT.
- Presence of active teachers’ unions improves [math and English scores](#) for Hispanic and Black students. Teachers are closest to the ground and know best what students need to succeed.
- Research finds that placing restrictions on teacher collective bargaining [decreases teacher compensation by 6%](#), making it harder to attract and retain quality teachers.
- Based on data from the 2017-2018 National Teacher and Principal Survey, educators in states where collective bargaining is limited or prohibited reported a [6% higher pupil/staff ratio](#) and had a larger share of respondents say [they would leave their current job immediately](#) for a higher paying job if possible. Bargaining creates better conditions for all staff and students.
- Policies that restrict collective bargaining hurt students. [An analysis of Wisconsin’s 2011 “Budget Repair Bill,”](#) which cut collective bargaining in the state, resulted in a drop in student achievement, lower teacher salaries, and higher teacher turnover.
- Collective bargaining increases the number of critical support staff and the amount of time children can spend in enriching environments like recess, art, and music classes. Virginia schools are still down thousands of support staff positions due to cuts made during the Great Recession and collective bargaining is one of the best avenues to restore these critical positions.

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- Collective bargaining prevents teacher burnout, one of the most common reasons for the overwhelming rates of early teacher resignations ([44% of teachers leave the field within five years](#)).
- Highly unionized divisions [dismiss more low-quality teachers and retain more high-quality teachers](#).

Virginia: One of the Worst States for Teacher Pay, Contributing to Shortages

- In Virginia, teachers make [32.7% less](#) than other comparable college-educated workers. This gap is the 3rd worst in the nation and contributes to major staffing shortages.
- Due to the teacher wage gap, [anti-union states have higher rates of high-quality teacher loss](#) to non-teaching fields.
- Virginia is already experiencing severe [K-12 staffing shortages](#), primarily in divisions where students face more barriers. This shortage is [likely to get much worse](#) without intervention.

Virginia Is Out of Step With Other States On Collective Bargaining

- Virginia should join the 44 states in the country that negotiate with their educators and pass a robust collective bargaining law allowing all public sector workers to bargain their contracts collectively. Until then, school boards and councils should approve collective bargaining ordinances as they arise to:
 - Allow unions to represent all types of education employees without arbitrary position restrictions.
 - Guarantee the right to join and participate in collective action without fear of retribution or coercion.
 - Provide access for employees to bargain for adequate wages, working conditions, and terms of employment.
 - Create open and transparent processes that let unions communicate with their membership during the bargaining and orientation process.
 - Start benefiting from the improved staff retention and student achievement that collective bargaining is shown to bring.

