



WORKING “TO-THE-RULE”

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does “work-to-rule” mean?

Working “to-the-rule” means performing our regularly assigned duties (“the rule” meaning those duties that are required) during the normal workday. It is meant to highlight the unpaid work educators do before and after school, on weekends, and during our lunch and planning periods.

Why do this now?

With only 1% set aside in the salary resource pool, the elected Washington County Board of Education members have not prioritized employees in the proposed budget for 2026-2027. In addition, they are making changes to health insurance benefits to shift more costs to employees. We need to send a collective message that 1% is not enough to recruit or retain employees for the workload and stress or to keep up with the cost of inflation.

What's the impact on WCPS?

Work-to-rule may impact students by causing the cancellation of extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports and may lead to delayed grading, reduced teacher availability before/after school, and a loss of support services. The intended impact brings the needs of employees to the attention of students, parents, and school communities to increase public advocacy for employees.

What activities are impacted during work-to-rule?

All voluntary work outside the duty day is impacted.

What if my principal asks me to do something on that list?

If you haven't already committed to a voluntary activity, politely and professionally let them know that your contract gives you the option to decline the request. A statement like this works well: “My contract gives me the right to decline that request, and because the Union is engaged in a work-to-rule contract action, I'm declining that request to support my colleagues and my students.”

Is this a strike?

No, strikes in Maryland are prohibited. Because working to the rule means performing our regular duties, we are not withdrawing our contractually required labor.

What if we all call in sick at once?

That is not an option. Legally speaking, a “sick out” is considered a withdrawal of labor like a strike and it is therefore also prohibited in Maryland.

I'm an untenured teacher. Can I get in trouble for doing this?

No. Working to the rule means performing your contractual duties.

What should I do with my work at the end of the day?

Keep a running list of the tasks you are not able to perform under the time constraints of the regular duty day. At the end of the day, send your administrator the list and ask him/her what you would like them to prioritize for the following day. Put up an auto response on your email after the end of your duty day, and let parents know that you will respond to them during the regular duty day.

What else can I do to support our union's efforts?

Do your best to participate in morning walk-in and afternoon walk-outs everyday of the work-to-rule. Do your best to attend other WCTA mobilizations and public actions. If you attend actions, then you know you are doing the best you can to win what you deserve. Bring kids and spouses.

How can parents and families support our efforts?

Email the Board of Education(BOE@wcps.k12.md.us) and request that they provide fair and adequate compensation and that they work with the county commissioners to secure the funding our schools need rather than the minimum the state requires. Provide public comments at WCBOE meetings and at the public budget hearing of the Washington County Commissioners. Be engaged in the electoral process and for candidates who share our values and support for employees.

DO's	DON'Ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Meet in the school parking lot together at the prescribed start of the duty day. Walk in the building together, as one.✓ Meet at the lobby at the prescribed end of the duty day. Walk out together.✓ Only take work home that is necessary for adequately planning for instruction.✓ Have your parent group leaders explain why we are calling for these actions, and how they can support educators.✓ Contact the Association regarding voluntary after-school activities for which you have made a commitment to determine your obligations to continue.✓ Support each other as best you can with ideas or materials that will require no unpaid time.✓ Continue to meet all contractual and instructional obligations during your duty day.✓ Encourage colleagues to join you. If they chose not to be involved, a simple statement such as "I know you support us in your heart" will suffice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Participate in illegal activities such as sick outs, work slow-downs, vandalism, etc. Working to rule means you perform your normal duties during your contractually-defined workday.✗ In any way break your paid extra-curricular contracts. In working to the rule, you need to honor all contracts you have with the Board of Education.✗ Use instructional time to discuss work to rule activities.✗ Block access to your school if informational picketing is occurring.✗ Carry signs on sticks if informational picketing is happening.✗ Participate in actions that would cost us the public support we've worked hard to build up. We should not alienate parents when we're fighting for safe schools. <p>Source / Credit: The Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO) Working-to-Rule-FAQ Document</p>