



# Survey shows teachers more satisfied

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## Teacher Alliance Survey

Charleston Teacher Alliance surveyed its approximately 1,550 members about the start of the 2007-08 school year in Charleston County. Following are some of the responses that 557 teachers gave:

How many hours, if any, did you devote this summer preparing for the school year?

None: 3 percent

1-10 hours: 18 percent

11-20 hours: 20 percent

21-40 hours: 25 percent

41-60 hours: 14 percent

61+ hours: 20 percent

Compared to last year, I feel more prepared to be successful with my students.

I am more prepared this year: 45 percent

I am less prepared this year: 11 percent

About the same: 41 percent

I did not teach last year: 3 percent

The individuals presenting professional development (training) were prepared, organized, and experts in their field.

Strongly agree: 55 percent

Somewhat agree: 30 percent

Neither agree nor disagree: 8 percent

Somewhat disagree: 6 percent

Strongly disagree: 1 percent

There was very little wasted time during the professional development days.

Strongly agree: 35 percent

Somewhat agree: 29 percent

Neither agree nor disagree: 8 percent

Somewhat disagree: 19 percent

Strongly disagree: 8 percent

My classroom was ready when students returned to school.

Yes: 80 percent

No: 20 percent

Many Charleston County teachers were satisfied with the way this school year began, and that's a substantial change from just a few years ago, according to results of an annual Charleston Teacher Alliance survey.

More than 550 of the alliance's roughly 1,550 members responded to questions about the training they received and the time they had to prepare their classrooms, and their answers were evidence of the improvements that have been made. About 3,400 teachers work for the school district.

"It's a really positive survey and a compliment to the district," said Kent Riddle, a kindergarten teacher and new leader of the alliance, a teacher advocacy organization.

Many teachers weren't happy with the way the district kicked off the school year a few years ago. Teachers were required to attend a pep rally that many considered a waste of time, and training for teachers was done by the district instead of individual schools, making it more difficult to meet the needs of individual teachers, Riddle said.

The district has listened to teachers and changed, Riddle said. Most teachers reported that training sessions were tailored to their needs and would help them this year.

The district still has areas in which it can improve, such as ensuring that the two teacher workdays before school starts are set aside for teachers to work in their classrooms, Riddle said. While most teachers said that happened, 21 percent of teachers who answered the survey said it didn't. Three percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

The alliance wants teachers and principals to receive e-mails explaining that teacher workdays are supposed to be unencumbered time for teachers to work.

Schools Superintendent Nancy McGinley said she sent multiple e-mails to principals and associate superintendents about this issue and asked them to protect teacher workdays. If she learns schools are not adhering to her directive, McGinley said she'd follow up with them.

A smaller percentage of teachers this year, 16 percent compared with 25 percent last year, reported being pressured or required to attend summer trainings.

Although it's good to see the percentage drop, it's still an issue because teachers are not legally required to work outside of their 190-day contracts, Riddle said. And it's not that teachers aren't willing to give of their time, he said. One-third of teachers donated more than 40 summer hours to prepare for the school year, the survey shows.

The alliance's recommendation is that the district leadership clearly states that all meetings, planning time, classes and training outside of their 190 day-contract is voluntary. If teachers choose to participate, they would get written explanations of the compensation they would receive and when they would receive it.

McGinley said she agrees with the alliance on this issue and that she has directed principals and associate superintendents not to mandate attendance at functions beyond teachers' contracts. She said the survey results are evidence that the vast majority of principals are complying with the district's directive.

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