

Charleston Teacher Alliance (CTA)

2010-2011 Survey of School Opening Procedures in the Charleston County School District

Fast Facts

1. Survey was developed and reviewed by CTA leadership.
2. Survey was conducted between September 22nd and October 10th, 2010.
3. 1831 CCSD teachers/faculty participated in the survey.
4. This is the sixth annual survey of school opening procedures.

Analysis Overview

The general theme running throughout the comments in this year's CTA Survey of School Opening procedures was teacher furloughs. About 80% of the teachers surveyed did not believe furloughing teachers was the best way to balance the budget. 32% of the teachers surveyed believe the district has been reduced to the bare essentials, and 8% of those surveyed felt that there is no waste within the district. The comment sections indicated that teachers felt taken advantage of because district leaders know that dedicated teachers will come in on their own time and do the work of preparing the classroom even if workdays are furloughed. By operating in this way teachers feel the district is extorting their good nature. Teachers' comments also asked why the district could find money for new technology, building, programs and personnel when furloughs were taking place.

Morale also remains low based on survey results. Less than half of those surveyed felt valued by the district and nearly three fourths of those surveyed think the district views them as expendable. Teachers' comments indicated that furloughs were a significant factor in creating this viewpoint but many other issues were also involved. The recent release of individual teacher's MAP scores to the media was mentioned consistently throughout teacher comments. Teachers were very unhappy with these scores being used as an evaluation tool when that was not the intention of the test. Teachers from some schools that have changed locations or classrooms mentioned the lack of support given during the moves. Some teachers were promised monetary compensation that is yet to come, while others were promised manual labor help that did not show up. These teachers were basically forced to provide free manual labor to the school district or else their classrooms would have been in disarray on the first day of school. A lack of planning time came up multiple times throughout the comment sections of the survey. Over half of the teachers surveyed never get a lunch break. Many of these teachers do not get planning time on a daily basis either. This means no time to eat, no time to use the restroom, and no time to prepare the classroom for quality instruction. All these things must be done before, or after spending eight hours in the classroom. About 88% of those surveyed felt a lunch break would benefit morale, well-being and teacher effectiveness. District leadership is well aware of the fact that many teachers get no breaks during the day and very little has been done to address this problem. There were several comments mentioning frustration over programs implemented within the district that were not user friendly

and caused more work for teachers. The new Power Schools program was mentioned several times and survey data showed that well over half of the teachers using this new system are unhappy with it. Teachers' comments also mentioned restrictions on personal day usage on Mondays or Fridays, while others did not know why administrators should be allowed to ask the reason for using a personal day, or dock a teacher time for leaving a few minutes early to get to an appointment when they come to school hours ahead of the scheduled arrival time to get their classrooms ready.

As a whole, the district did a better job making sure basic materials were ready for the first day of school. Last year only 47% of those surveyed had materials ready while this year 63% of those surveyed indicated that they had received all essential materials. However, there is still a need for more improvement in this area. About 19% of those surveyed were still waiting for essential materials when taking the survey.

Local Administrators and local office staff received high marks for being ready for teachers and helpful in preparing the schools for students. 85% of those surveyed thought their administrators and office staff helped to make the beginning of the school year successful. 78% were satisfied with the cleanliness of classrooms after the summer, and 79% were satisfied with the overall condition.

Teachers' perception of specialist, coaches, coordinators, consultants, and other non-classroom support personnel remains fairly low. Only 24% of those surveyed view these positions as money well spent. 37% felt that the directives given by these positions are beneficial. Teachers remained strongly in favor of using early release days as workdays. Less than 3% of those surveyed supported having professional development on early release days. Most teachers (85%) also indicated that they feel no pressure to report inaccurate grades, however with 275 teachers indicating that this was a problem in their classrooms, the district should investigate this issue further.

CTA Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on survey results and teacher feedback.

The district and board need to make clear, measurable changes to show teachers that they are valuable and not expendable. The following actions would raise morale quickly.

- Re-write the teacher work hours policy so teachers are no longer considered exempt employees. Teachers would need to be directly involved in the drafting of this document which should also include a limit to the number of mandatory meetings that can take place during teachers planning times, before school, and after school.
- Stop ranking teachers using test that were not intended to evaluate teachers. Long before the newspaper unfairly embarrassed teachers using MAP scores, the district used that same list to reward other teachers.
- Stop Furloughing teachers' workdays.
- Eliminate early release day PD and turn this into workday time until the district can afford to pay teachers for the seven furlough days that were on the original 2010-2011 calendar.
- Stop hiring guest speakers when the CCSD is furloughing employees.

- Lead an effort to change the funding system that allows for new buildings, technology, programs, materials, and bonuses, but cannot afford to pay teachers.
- Do not expect/require teachers to move rooms or buildings for free.
- Investigate the altering of grades.
- It is time for the district to seriously examine the role of support personnel within the school system who have limited to no direct contact with students. Teachers surveyed indicate that having these "specialists" is not a good use of funds, and only a third of the teachers surveyed feel these positions benefit the classroom. The purpose of creating these jobs was to help teachers improve instruction, but survey results are showing that the positions are having a limited effect in this area. Specialist, coaches, IRTs, coordinators, and other support personnel need to be put back where they can have the most positive and direct impact on student success and that is in the classroom. Otherwise the district needs to explain why these positions are needed.