

Charleston Teacher Alliance 2010-2011 Survey of School Climate And Administrative Leadership

Fast Facts

- This survey was developed and reviewed by CTA Leadership.
- The survey was conducted between March 27th and April 18th.
- 1,700+ teachers participated in this survey.
- This is the sixth survey conducted by the CTA addressing administrative leadership.

Survey Overview

This survey has five separate sections. The first section focused on current issues in the CCSD. The second section addressed school climate and working conditions. The next three sections focused on the administrative leadership of principals, area superintendents, and the district superintendent.

Current Issues

Teachers want their workdays to be protected from furloughs. Only 2.4% of those surveyed about the issue reported preferring workdays furloughed if the district decides to furlough teachers next year. 34% of teachers surveyed believed that the district's budget has been reduced to the bare essentials. 874 teachers reported submitting suggestions for ways that the district could save money, but only 27 survey respondents reported that their idea(s) had been implemented. 86% of those surveyed reported having at least one duty free lunch each week. Of the 239 teachers who reported not having a duty free lunch, over half of the reports came from twelve schools (Baptist Hill, Burns, Chicora, Dunston, Haut Gap, Mary Ford, Lincoln, Morningside Girls Academy, North Charleston ES, North Charleston HS, Stall, and West Ashley HS).

School Climate

Nearly 75% of the teachers surveyed believed that their school had a positive climate and a good working environment. This is a 6% increase from last year's survey. Exceptions to this positive view came from Burke HS, Daniels Jenkins, Laing, Morningside Girls Academy, North Charleston ES, West Ashley HS, Ron McNair 6th Grade Academy, St Andrews MS, and St. Johns HS. At these schools, less than 50% of the teachers surveyed believed their school to have a positive climate and working environment.

Planning time remains inconsistent throughout the district with 14% of teachers surveyed having less than one hour of planning time per week while 55% of teachers reported having three or more hours per week. 38% of the teachers surveyed believed that the planning time provided was sufficient. This has increased from last year when 30% of the teachers surveyed thought they were given enough planning time.

The amount of hours teachers are working continues to be a major concern. 59% of the teachers reported working over fifty hours per week. 27% of the teachers thought that the hours required were reasonable and only 8% believe that the district could not do more to help reduce these work hours without compromising student achievement. Statistics concerning teacher work hours remain unchanged from last year. This would indicate that the district has taken no actions to help reduce their teachers' work loads.

Recommendations

Teachers' work load is the most common concern sent to the CTA. There are currently no policies in place to protect teachers from excessively long school days and extra duties. The 35 + 5 hours policy was eliminated several years ago, and the new policy does not put any definable limits to the work load and duties teachers are expected to carry. With well over half of teachers surveyed now working 50 plus hours a week the district can no longer delay addressing this issue. **If the district values teachers, clear and measurable actions must be taken at the district level to protect teachers from unnecessarily large workloads.** Based on teacher feedback the CTA recommends the following:

- Reduce paperwork: Each school and department should analyze what they send to teachers, eliminate what is not essential to student achievement, and consolidate repetitive paperwork. All schools and departments should report what paperwork will be eliminated. (Overly detailed lesson plans, meeting minutes, communication logs, and being required to write standards on the board and work all came up multiple times.)
- Fewer meetings: Meetings rob teachers of valuable planning time and extend the teachers' school day. The district should limit TCT meetings and after school meetings to monthly instead of weekly events. Teachers have the professional knowledge to meet with their colleagues when needed.
- Protect planning time: Planning times are most teachers' only chance to plan, or do simple things such as use the restroom. Let teachers decide how to use this time and minimize meetings during planning time.
- Eliminate PD on early release days and allow teachers to meet with parents or plan lessons during this time. 90% of teachers surveyed (1,611 teachers) believe early release days would be better spent allowing teachers to work unencumbered in their classrooms.
- Reduce teacher duties: Lunch duty, recess duty, arrival duty, and dismissal duty. This will cost money, but when the economy improves this would not be an unrealistic goal. Teachers are the only professionals that work an eight, nine or ten hour day without a break. It is time that they got one.
- Reduce class size before implementing any new programs. All schools have had an increase in class size, and non-Title I schools have endured multiple increases in class size. If the district does not have enough money to reduce class size, then they should not have enough money to start new programs and initiatives. When the budget situation improves, class size reduction should be the first place money goes.

Principals

Principals received positive scores from teachers on most survey questions. The highest marks came in the areas of teacher evaluations (88% positive), conducting productive meetings (84% positive), providing productive feedback (82% positive), and overall principal effectiveness (81% positive). The above mentioned percentages all improved by five or more percentage points compared to last year. The lowest scores came in areas of principals tolerating ineffective staff and teachers (61% positive), protecting teacher planning time (59% positive), and principals modeling effective instructional techniques (53% positive).

While most schools showed positive results, some schools had more concerning results. Nine schools had over half of their respondents indicate that they worried about principal retaliation if they were to report a concern or disagree with administration (CE Williams, Daniel Jenkins, EB Ellington, Hursey, James Island Charter, Laing MS, Morningside Girls Academy, Ron McNair 6th grade Academy, and Sanders Clyde). Six schools had 50% or more of their respondents disagree with the effectiveness of school leadership (Burke HS, James Island Charter, Morningside Girls Academy, Ron McNair SGA, School of the Arts, and St Andrews MS).

Area Superintendents

Results for the Area Superintendents improved in most areas when compared to last year's results. However, the overall percentages remained low. 46% of teachers reported having never seen their Area Superintendent in the school. 46% of the teachers felt that the Area Superintendent shared his/her roles and responsibilities with teachers. This increased from 30% last year. 36% of teachers surveyed would consult the Area Superintendent on issues that could not be addressed by the principal. This improved from 29% last year. Overall, 39% of the teachers surveyed believed their Area Superintendent was an effective leader. This improved by 5% from last year. 41% of those surveyed were not sure about the effectiveness of their Area Superintendent.

District Superintendent

Overall, the District Superintendent received mixed ratings. 70% of teachers surveyed ranked the Superintendent as an effective leader, and 74% considered her an effective communicator. These are notably good scores in general, but more so in the context of our current budget situation and the cuts that have come with it. Scores were lower in the area of eliminating non-essential spending (41% positive) and seeking teacher input (58% positive). However, both areas receiving lower percentages of approval have improved when compared with last year's results.

District Superintendent
(Percentage of respondents who reported positively)

	2009	2010	2011
-Visible and accessible to teacher	68%	64%	63%
-Effectively communicate with teachers	77%	72%	74%
-Seeks teacher input	48%	46%	58%
-Eliminated nonessential spending	45%	35%	41%
-An effective leader	73%	72%	70%