



**CSP Grant School Surveys, Year 3 (2022)**  
**PARENTS Topline Findings & Complete Survey Results**  
**Prepared for Bluum by the FDR Group**  
**August 1, 2022**

---

## **OVERALL RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PARENTS**

A total of 2,149 parents responded to the invitation to participate in the 2022 CSP grant school survey. The survey was conducted between May 5 and June 1, 2022, and parents from all 19 CSP grant schools participated. Many of the questions are repeated from the questionnaire that was originally fielded in the inaugural 2020 study, allowing the tracking of results and trends. To prepare for this year's survey, the FDR Group conducted 8 telephone interviews with school leaders and other leaders in the field to develop hypotheses and lines of inquiry, and a virtual focus group with parents to develop new questions and assess item validity.

The survey results indicate that parents are broadly satisfied with their charter schools and give them high ratings on specific evaluative criteria such as teacher quality, communication, and safety. Parents believe their children are learning, and they would not hesitate to recommend their charter school to other parents. There are hints of slightly declining evaluations over time; while these declines may be considered trivial, they occur in enough places to be cumulatively worth noting.

### **I. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the charter schools their children attend.**

Parents trust their charter school to do what is right for their child and believe children are happy heading off to school each day. Most definitely intend to send their child to the same charter school next year.

- 65% of parents are very satisfied with their child's charter school, another 27% somewhat satisfied. In the 2020 parent survey, 70% were very satisfied and 25% somewhat satisfied.
- About half (49%) *strongly* agree and 37% somewhat agree with this statement: "I trust this school to do what is right for my child." In 2020, 55% strongly agreed and 34% somewhat agreed.

- 72% say their child will “definitely stay in this school” in the next school year, another 13% say “probably stay.” Only 9% indicate they will probably change schools to look for a better fit. These results are similar to the 2020 results where 74% of parents said their child would definitely stay, 16% probably stay, and 5% probably change.
- 66% report their child is happy on a day-to-day basis when it’s time to go to school; only handfuls say their child is unhappy (3%) or indifferent (7%). About one in four (24%) say it’s mixed. Again, there has been little to no change since 2020 (66%, 3%, 6%, and 25%, respectively).
- Parents overwhelmingly agree that “The school welcomes parents into the building”—60% agree strongly, 27% agree somewhat. Here there has been a decline from 2020’s results where 69% agreed strongly and 22% agreed somewhat.

## **II. Charter schools receive very good marks on specific criteria.**

The findings below focus on the criteria that parents deem “absolutely essential” for a good school to have. The results show that parents believe their own child’s charter school is delivering on what’s critical to them: quality teachers, safety, good communication, and personalized instruction.

- Almost 9 in 10 parents (89%) say it is absolutely essential for a school to have “top-notch teachers who love working with kids”—on a list with 11 items, this is the criterion parents value most, and the vast majority gives their child’s school positive ratings in this regard (52% excellent, 37% good). In the 2020 survey, parents gave virtually identical ratings (53% excellent, 38% good).
- In a separate item, nearly all parents say that “The teachers in this school seem to really care about the students” (66% agree strongly, 27% agree somewhat). This is similar to the 2020 survey findings where 69% agreed strongly and 24% agreed somewhat.
- Almost 8 in 10 (78%) say “communicating with parents” is absolutely essential to a good school, and the vast majority believes their charter school is doing well on that criterion (47% excellent, 36% good). These ratings are virtually identical to the 2020 parent survey (46% excellent, 37% good).
- More than 7 in 10 (73%) say “having a safe and orderly atmosphere in the building” is absolutely essential, and the vast majority says their charter school is doing either an excellent (52%) or good (36%) job on this score. In the 2020 survey it was 56% excellent, 38% good.
- More than half (55%) say “an emphasis on personalized instruction for each student” is absolutely essential to a good school, and a large majority gives their charter school positive ratings on this criterion (30% excellent, 45% good). Ratings are essentially unchanged from the 2020 survey (29% excellent, 48% good).

- Almost half (47%) think it is absolutely essential for a school to offer “specialized programs in specific areas such as the arts, or science and technology”; here, most give their charter school positive ratings, with 34% saying excellent and 41% good. Parents’ ratings have improved on this measure—in 2020, 25% said excellent and 42% good.
- Almost half (48%) think of “class size” as an absolutely essential criterion of a good school. Most are satisfied with their current school on this front, with about a third (34%) giving it an excellent rating and 51% giving it a good rating. (This item was not asked in the 2020 survey.)

The charter schools get less glowing ratings on some criteria, but these are typically criteria that are less important to parents. For example, only about a third (32%) say “having extra-curricular activities such as sports and music” is absolutely essential, and less than half give their child’s school a positive rating—15% excellent, 34% good. At the same time, schools sometimes get high ratings on criteria that are less important to parents. For example, only 21% say that to them it is absolutely essential for a school to have “an ethnically diverse student population.” But most give their child’s school positive ratings on this front—21% excellent, 39% good.

Some students are attending newly opened or expanded charter schools, and we asked their parents to tell us how they feel the process has gone. Most (54%) say the school expansion process went pretty smoothly overall; 23% say it hit some manageable challenges; and only 4% say it was extremely difficult. According to parents, the more common problem area for schools when they were first opening or expanding was “procedures such as bus schedules, parking, or student pick-up” (35%). Half (50%) of those reporting challenges indicate that things have been getting better while 13% they’ve stayed about the same; 6% say that things have been getting worse.

### **III. Parents say their children are learning.**

Parents feel their own child is learning a lot and would recommend their charter school to other families. The prevailing perception among parents is that, despite the pandemic, their own child’s academic achievement has held steady.

- The overwhelming majority of parents agrees with the statement: “I feel that my child is learning a lot at this school” (63% strongly, 29% somewhat). In the 2020 survey it was 67% strongly, 27% somewhat.
- Asked if they would recommend their charter school to a family looking for a “top-notch public school for their child,” 77% would definitely recommend it while 9% would tell them to look elsewhere. In 2020, 81% said they would definitely recommend the school and 5% that they would tell them to look elsewhere.

- Only 23% feel that their child's academic achievement has slipped as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic—68% say it has not. Another 22% feel their child's work habits have weakened—68% say they have not.
- When it comes to "having good ratings and high test scores," a majority of parents says their child's school is doing either an excellent (29%) or good (45%) job. In 2020, it was excellent 33%, good 43%.
- When it comes to "focusing on preparing students for college," a majority of parents says their child's school is doing either an excellent (28%) or good (38%) job. The ratings were better in 2020 when 39% said excellent and 39% good.

#### **IV. Parents believe their schools have solid reputations and strong word of mouth.**

Parents say that their child's charter school delivers on what it promises—and most parents themselves are ambassadors for their schools. A majority also reports that their charter school has a good reputation and is in demand in their community.

- Parents overwhelmingly believe there's either a perfect (31%) or close (40%) match between how their child's charter school "advertises or markets itself" and their experiences at the school.
- Most (63%) reject the statement: "I have sometimes been confused or frustrated by the school's approach to teaching," but about 1 in 3 agree (9% strongly, 24% somewhat).
- Most are contributing to the positive word of mouth about their child's charter school, agreeing that "I tell as many parents as possible to send their children to this school" (35% strongly agree, 38% somewhat agree).
- Most report that people in their community tend to have either a positive reaction (41%) or are curious (39%) when they hear their child attends the charter school; very few (3%) hear a negative reaction; another 15% say the reaction tends to be neutral.
- Most (57%) believe their child's charter school is in high demand, only 7% say it is not (more than 1 in 3 don't know). Almost 8 in 10 (78%) *disagree* with the statement: "This school has a negative reputation in my community" (65% *strongly disagree*).

#### **V. How parents choose their charter schools**

Parents in Idaho must opt in to send their children to charter schools, and parents' decision-making process is important for both schools and the state to understand. In the current survey, about half of parents (49%) had a child who had been attending a regular public school during the preceding year, 25% had a child who had been attending another type of school (charter school, private school, or home school), and for 25% this was their child's first school. What can we learn about how these parents picked their current school?

- *Top of the list for parents is academics and instruction.* When parents were given a list of eight items to consider and asked to choose which were very important to them when making their decision to pick their child's current charter school:
  - "The academic program or instructional approach appealed to me" was the most selected consideration (78%).
  - This was followed by the school's reputation—52% say they "heard great things about the school from other people."
  - 40% said "the traditional public school was a poor fit for my child."
  - And, although not perfectly comparable due to different question wording, these results parallel teachers' thinking about how parents choose. In this year's survey with teachers in CSP grant schools, 54% of teachers thought parents picked their charter school because of its mission and instructional approach, and 37% thought it was because the traditional public school was a poor fit.
- *Parents care about the school's mission.* In their search for a school:
  - The most common method parents employed was to carefully review the school's mission or instructional approach (62%).
  - This was followed by having in-person conversations with other parents, teachers, or students (55%); doing research to compare schools (52%); and visiting the school (50%).
  - Smaller numbers listened or talked to school leadership (38%) or relied on social media (35%).