



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

OVERALL RESULTS OF SURVEY OF TEACHERS

This is a report of the 2022 survey results conducted among classroom teachers working in CSP grant charter schools and responding to the online survey. Many of the questions repeat the original questionnaire fielded in the inaugural 2020 study, allowing the tracking of results and observation of trends.

The survey of teachers netted 367 completed questionnaires from 19 CSP grant schools. The survey was fielded online between May 3-31, 2022. All findings below refer to the current school year unless otherwise stated. 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 was conducted with teachers to develop questions and assess item validity.

Much has changed over the past three years of the CSP grant. The number of schools benefitting from the grant has grown from 8 to 19. There are now three cohorts of schools being surveyed, as each year has brought new members to the pool of participants. The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have certainly been felt across Idaho and the nation.

Here is a quick, overall summary of what we found:

Teachers working at CSP grant charter schools have good things to say about how their schools are doing. They report that the morale and quality of their buildings' teaching corps is good, that their leadership is sound, and that teaching and learning are taking place. Yet comparisons of this year's survey results to the 2020 survey show substantial weakening on key measures. Our analysis looks at several explanations for the weakening trends and concludes that they are probably a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I. CSP schools are doing well overall.

The Idaho charter schools that have received CSP grants are doing well according to the classroom teachers responding to the 2022 survey. Teachers report their schools are on the right track, sought-after, and staying true to their mission.

- About 3 in 4 (74%) feel their school is on the right track these days while only 11% say it's headed in the wrong direction.
- More than 6 in 10 (62%) report their charter school is experiencing high demand, although 11% say it's not, and 1 in 4 (26%) are not sure.
- Most (55%) say their school has stayed true to its mission and culture, with another 37% saying it has struggled somewhat. Only 5% say their school has lost its way.

II. School leaders get good marks.

Teachers give the leaders of their schools broadly positive ratings on a series of key dimensions – by large majorities they feel their leaders care about them, are approachable, communicate well, and promptly solve problems in the building.

- Leadership's communication and trust with staff: 33% excellent, 37% good
- Solving problems in the building promptly: 28% excellent, 42% good
- My administrator is easy to approach with problems and suggestions: 59% very, 26% somewhat
- The administration genuinely values and cares about me and my colleagues: 63% very, 23% somewhat

III. Teacher morale and quality are good.

Teachers report feeling a strong sense of personal accomplishment, and that the morale and quality of their building's teaching corps are good. They would like to have professional development matched to their level of experience and focused on how to reach struggling students.

Teacher morale

Most teachers are satisfied working in their school, reporting high levels of efficacy and professional fulfillment. The vast majority expect to return next year.

- Over half (56%) are *very* satisfied working in their school with another 33% *somewhat* satisfied
- The sense of morale and enthusiasm among their schools' teachers: 35% very high, 45% could be a little better, 19% could be a lot better
- Workload is manageable, 52%; struggle to cope, 35%; completely overwhelmed, 13%
- I have a strong sense of personal accomplishment – I feel I'm making a difference: 58% very, 34% somewhat

- 67% would stay at their current charter school if they could choose to work in any school; 69% will definitely return to their current school next year, 11% probably will

Teacher quality and professional development

Teachers have good things to say about the instructional staff at their buildings. They say that they work as a team and that hiring and keeping quality staff is a priority at their school. Most say the professional development they've recently undergone has made them better teachers. Most also say however that the professional development seemed to be generalized rather than relevant to their experience, and they'd particularly appreciate help on how to reach students falling between the cracks.

On teacher quality

- Give their school excellent (44%) or good (40%) ratings when it comes to having a staff that works as a team, with a shared vision
- Teacher hiring process at their school: 35% very rigorous and highly selective; 40% somewhat so
- 56% say it is unlikely that a teacher who was a poor fit would have their contract renewed; 27% say likely

On professional development

- 31% it contributed a lot to making them a better teacher; 42% contributed some – 24% only a little or not at all
- Most (56%) say the professional development was one size-fits-all; 40% say it was relevant to their level of experience
- 34% want additional professional development on how to better reach students falling between the cracks; 22% on improving classroom management and student behavior; 20% on implementing their school's specific program or teaching approach; 13% on learning more content in their subject area
- Interestingly, only 5% want professional development on how to better use technology and the Internet in teaching; 3 in 4 (76%) say they have become more effective at using technology in their teaching practice, post-Covid

IV. The focus is on student learning.

Student learning and achievement

Teachers believe their charter schools are doing a good job of focusing on academic standards and achievement among their students. Most add that they rely on classroom assessments to guide their instructional practice. However, large majorities also believe the pandemic has hurt student achievement and work habits.

- Most teachers (68%) say student learning and achieving high standards is always their schools fundamental focus while only 28% instead say this sometimes gets overshadowed by other goals and priorities
- Teachers give their school excellent (48%) or good (42%) ratings when it comes to focusing on academic achievement and student learning
- Most teachers rely a lot (40%) or some (37%) on classroom assessments, such as MAP or STAR, to make decisions about their instructional practice; only 15% instead say they rely on them a little or not at all

Still, teachers report that the pandemic has led to challenges to the culture of learning:

- About 7 in 10 (71%) believe student work habits have weakened as a result of Covid
- About 6 in 10 (62%) believe student achievement has slipped
- Asked to choose among 5 areas for professional development, a 34% plurality would pick “how to better reach students who are falling between the cracks”

Student behavior

Most teachers speak approvingly about student behavior and morale in their buildings but concerns are emerging.

- When it comes to “Maintaining a culture of respect and good behavior in the building” 35% give their school an excellent rating with another 32% giving it a good rating
- More than 8 in 10 say “Most of the students at our school are excited to be here” (38% strongly agree, 46% somewhat agree.)

Much as they did with regard to student learning, teachers also point to emerging concerns about student behavior as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic:

- 76% see a larger number of students with emotional or behavioral issues
- 22% would pick “improving classroom management and student behavior” when asked to choose among 5 areas for professional development

V. Parents are engaged.

CSP grant charter school teachers believe their schools foster trust with parents and communicate well with them. They split over whether the pandemic has made it more challenging to deal with parents. There are some concerns that too many parents do not understand a given school’s teaching methods.

- 85% say that most parents trust their school to do what is right for their child
- 85% say their school does an excellent or good job of communicating with parents clearly and promptly about what’s going on in the school
- 80% say their school does an excellent or good job of “involving parents in helping the school succeed”

- 43% say “Dealing with parents has become more challenging as a result of Covid,” while 41% say it has not

Most teachers believe that parents have picked their charter school because of its mission, and most also believe that their schools are marketing themselves accurately. That said, half think too many parents sign up for the school without understanding.

- Most teachers (54%) believe that parents typically chose their charter school because of its mission and instructional approach; a significant though smaller proportion (37%) believe parents are at the school because they had to leave a traditional school that was a poor fit for their child; and only 4% cite practical considerations such as location
- 21% say how the school markets itself is a perfect match to what happens inside, with another 50% saying it’s a close match (50%); only 23% say there is no match or only partial
- 50% say “too many parents sign up for our school without understanding what it’s about”
- 35% say “too many parents are confused by our school’s approach to teaching methods”

VI. But the trend data reveal a falloff.

Although teachers’ evaluations are broadly positive, they have declined noticeably since the inaugural CSP grant survey of 2020. Moreover, these declines appear across an array of important measures in critical areas such as school leadership, school atmosphere, student behavior, and teacher morale. Below we describe some of these declines: they are significant but hardly disastrous. We also offer some thoughts about why these declines have taken place.

On leadership

- 33% of teachers rate their leadership’s communication and trust with staff as excellent, a 21-point drop from 54% in 2020
- 28% give their school an excellent rating on solving problems in the building promptly – down 16 points from 44% in 2020
- 59% now say the statement “my administrator is easy to approach with problems and suggestions” comes *very close* to their view, a drop from 77% in 2020
- 63% now say the statement the administration genuinely values and cares about them comes *very close* to their view, down from 75% in 2020

On the schools and student achievement

- In the current survey, a 55% majority of teachers say their school has stayed true to its mission and culture, while it was substantially higher (73%) in the 2020 survey
- 48% now give their school an excellent rating on focusing on academic achievement and student learning, down from 65% in 2020

- 40% report that they rely on assessment data “a lot” for their own instructional practice, a 17-point drop from the 57% who reported doing so in 2020
- 35% of teachers give their school an excellent rating on maintaining a culture of respect and good behavior in the building, down from 57% in 2020

On teacher quality and morale

- In this survey, 35% describe their school’s teacher hiring process as “very rigorous and highly selective,” while 49% did so in 2020, a 14-point drop
- 27% now say it’s likely that their school would renew the contract of a teacher who was a poor fit, compared with 11% who did so in 2020 – a 16-point increase
- While 58% now say the statement “I feel part of a team of quality professionals working to achieve a shared vision” comes *very close* to their view, 78% did so in 2020, a 20-point drop
- While 2 in 3 (67%) in this survey say they would work at their current charter school if they could choose any school, 81% said as much in 2020, a 14-point drop

Not all measures have worsened.

To be sure, not all measures and ratings have changed or worsened. For example, teachers are as likely to report they have professional autonomy and initiative across both time points (very close: 62% currently, 61% in 2020). In both surveys, similar proportions give their school excellent ratings on the commitment to educating under-served or struggling students (44% currently, 49% in 2020). Similar proportions in both time points say, “I have the resources I need to do my job effectively” (very close: 44% currently, 41% in 2020). Finally, the 52% who now say their workload is manageable is slightly higher than the 44% in the 2020 survey; the proportion saying they struggle to cope has declined to 35% from 48% in 2020.

It should also be noted that we are often calling attention to weakening trends within the highest positive categories, e.g., “excellent” ratings or “very close to my view.” Looking at our first leadership data point above, for example, we report that the proportion of teachers giving *excellent* ratings to leaders’ communication and trust with staff have indeed declined by 21 points since 2020. But when combining good *and* excellent ratings, the decline is less dramatic (70% compared with 82% in 2020.)

Alternative explanations for the declines.

Below we consider several possible explanations that might account for the changing trend numbers between 2020 and 2022: 1) that the added cohorts to the CSP grant are faltering; 2) that the decline is driven by one or two schools that are stumbling badly; and 3) that the pandemic has led to challenges shared across most schools. The survey data support the conclusion that the pandemic has been the driver of declining trends.

1) *Does the addition of cohorts explain the decline?*

The pool of CSP grant charter schools has expanded, growing from 8 schools in the first cohort of 2020, to 12 in 2021, to 19 in 2022. It could be that adding new schools to the pool has degraded the overall quality ratings. Is it that the additional schools are watering down the results, that perhaps the quality and standards of selection have been lowered while the best applicants had already been picked? Or is it the opposite – that each new cohort brings an initial enthusiasm and commitment that decays over time? What does a comparison among the three cohorts’ results for the 2022 survey show? A closer look at the data indicates that the cohort explanation is very unlikely.

A systematic comparison of the responses to the 2022 survey shows little variation and trivial difference across the cohorts. Each of the cohorts has experienced similar declines. For example, while 33% of the total sample give their school leaders an excellent rating on communication and trust with staff, the results are much the same among Cohort 1 teachers (33%) and Cohort 2 (29%.) While 48% of the total sample give their school an excellent rating for its focus on academic achievement and student learning, the numbers doing so are similar for Cohort 1 (52%) and Cohort 2 (46%).

2) Is this a one bad apple story?

It is unlikely that a single CSP grant charter school is driving down the results. It is accurate to say that different schools have fared differently in teacher perceptions over the past few years – some better, some worse. But a school would have to have contributed a vastly disproportionate number of teachers to the survey sample to be responsible for the declines. The number of teachers responding to the survey is relatively well dispersed across the 19 buildings. Looking closer at the largest charter school in terms of representation in the survey, it contributed 55 respondents (or 15%) out of a total sample size of 367. But although sizable, this school’s 2022 evaluations are very positive and very close to its 2020 outcomes and therefore cannot be responsible for the decline across the two surveys.

3) Is it the pandemic?

Finally, it is possible that the pandemic has had a negative impact on CSP grant charter schools across the board, and this appears to be the explanation that best fits the data. How do teachers respond when they are asked directly about the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Fully 76% of all teachers in this survey say “I see a larger number of students with emotional or behavioral issues” in the wake of the pandemic. Teachers working in the initial two school cohorts have similar views (70% of Cohort I, 76% of Cohort II).
- 71% of all teachers say that “On the whole, students’ work habits have weakened” in the wake of the pandemic. Cohort I (69%) and Cohort II (73%) are not different.
- 62% say “On the whole, student academic achievement has slipped” in the wake of the pandemic. Cohort I (58%) and Cohort II (64%) teachers are about the same.

Nor is it likely that the mere mention of Covid-19 triggers uniformly negative reactions – teachers make distinctions among the different consequences of the pandemic. For example,

far fewer (43%) teachers believe that “dealing with parents has become more challenging” because of the pandemic. They even point to a positive outcome: 76% say “I am more effective at using technology in my teaching practice” in the aftermath.