

Chapter Seven

Teacher and Staff Characteristics

One of the stated goals of Act 22 is to provide enhanced professional development opportunities for teachers. Moreover, the charter concept makes certain assumptions about the attitudes and behaviors of teachers and staff. In this chapter we provide a general profile of charter school teachers and staff; and in the following chapter we will examine working conditions, professional development, and levels of satisfaction for charter school teachers and staff. Questions that will be addressed in this chapter include the following:

- How many teachers and staff do charter schools employ?
- What are the demographic characteristics of charter school teachers (gender, race/ethnicity, age)?
- What proportion of teachers and staff are devoted to instruction? What role do other staff play?
- How much and what kinds of experience/education and training do charter school teachers have? How does this compare with other Pennsylvania teachers?
- What proportion of teachers are certified to teach in their area? What are the credentials of those who do not hold PA teaching licenses?
- Why do teachers/staff choose to join a charter school?
- Are teachers/staff aware of the school's mission?

7.1 Description of Charter School Teachers and Staff

There are two main sources of data for the findings reported in this section. One is from the questionnaires we collected from a sample of teachers and staff in May 1999, spring of 2000, and again in spring of 2002. The other main source is data collected and reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The source of the data and information is included when reporting findings.

Survey Sampling of Teachers and Staff

In sampling teachers and staff, we included all instructional staff and key administrators at each of the 76 schools¹ participating in our study. Seventy-seven

¹ We received complete teacher/staff surveys from 73 of the 76 schools in the spring of 2002. We distributed surveys to 2 of the other 3 schools, but did not receive completed surveys.

schools were open at the onset of the 2001-02 academic year. One school closed in January 2002, leaving 76 schools that we visited and administered surveys.

In our most recent survey, 1,706 teachers and staff completed and returned surveys from the 1,990 that were targeted (85.7 percent response rate). All but 3 schools took part in this component of the evaluation. All participating schools are included in the analysis. One school had a response rate just under 40 percent; 19 schools had a 100 percent response rate, 32 schools had response rates between 80 percent and 99 percent, and the remaining schools had response rates between 50 and 80 percent. The overall response rate of 85.7 percent was 2.7 percent higher than the 2000 sample and 12.7 percent higher than the 1999 sample. The item response for each survey question was typically 95 percent or higher. Appendix A includes specific information about the achieved sample.

Given the large number of surveys and given that all but three charter schools were sampled, we think the sample provides a representative picture of the teachers and staff at the charter schools.

Gender

In terms of gender differences, 72.8 percent of the teachers and staff were female and 27.2 percent were male. Among the principals/directors, there was a more even balance, with slightly more males than females. There was little change in the distribution of teachers and staff in the three years that surveys were conducted. Female teachers and staff are still the majority in charter schools, just as they are in other public schools.

Race/Ethnicity

From the data we collected from the charter school survey, we determined that 68.3 percent of teachers/staff were white, 24.4 percent African American, 5.3 percent Hispanic, 1.5 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, and 0.5 percent Native American. In comparison with the previous sample (1999-00 school year), there is a marked increase in the percentage of white staff (up from 54.8 percent) and a marked decrease in the percentage of African-American teachers/staff (down from 34.6 percent) and Hispanic teachers/staff (down from 6.8 percent).

Age

The age distribution among the Pennsylvania charter school teachers indicates that they are younger than teachers in the traditional public schools. Among classroom teachers in 2001-02 (n=1,188), 47.6 percent were in their 20s, 25.3 percent were in their 30s, 15.7 percent were in their 40s, and 11.2 percent were 50 or older.² The classroom teachers were the youngest among the various groups of staff, while the principals/directors were considerably older.

In comparison with the 1998-99 and 1999-00 academic years, charter school teachers in the 2001-02 school year are slightly older. The percent of charter school teachers older than 49 more than doubled between 1999-00 and 2001-02. It was

² Two respondents indicated they were younger than 20 years old.

hard to find comparison data for regular public schools in Pennsylvania, but comparisons with national data indicate that the charter school teachers are younger than their regular public school counterparts (see Table 7:1).

Table 7:1 Age Distribution of Charter School Teachers Compared with National Distribution

Age Group	Pennsylvania <i>Charter School Teachers</i>			National Public <i>School Teachers</i> 1996-97 (NCES, 2000)
	1998-99	1999-00	2001-02	
under 30	50.5%	52.3%	47.8%	11.0%
30-49	43.5%	42.3%	41.0%	64.2%
older than 49	6.1%	5.4%	11.2%	24.8%

Role and Proportion of Staff Devoted to Instruction

Among the 1,706 teachers and staff sampled in 2002, 67.2 percent indicated that they were teachers, 10.6 percent teaching assistants, and 4.2 percent special education teachers. Approximately 9 percent indicated that they were Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), principals, or other key administrators; and 9.1 percent indicated that they had some other title or position. In comparison with data from 1999-00, the percentage of staff that indicated that they were classroom teachers increased slightly from 81.5 percent in 2000 to 83.1 percent in 2002.

State-level data show that charter schools have roughly the same percentage of professional personal who are classroom teachers as do all public schools. Table 7:2 illustrates the increase in the numbers of charter school classroom teachers (driven by the increase in the number of charter schools).

Table 7:2 Classroom Teachers as a Percentage of All Professional Staff

	1999-00		2000-01		2001-02	
	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total
Charter Schools	81.5%	670	83.1%	1,143	83.1%	1,511
All PA Public Schools	83.6%	115,673	83.3%	118,080	82.8%	119,548

Source: Public Schools Professional Personnel 2001-02, PDE

Distribution of Teachers and Staff by Grade Level

Teachers and staff were asked to indicate which grade they work with most. Teachers appear to be somewhat evenly distributed by school level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school), but larger differences exist by particular grade levels. Other staff members are concentrated in grades K-2 (this is driven by a high number of teaching assistants in these grades). Figure 7:1 illustrates the distribution of all teachers and staff by grade level as well as the distribution of

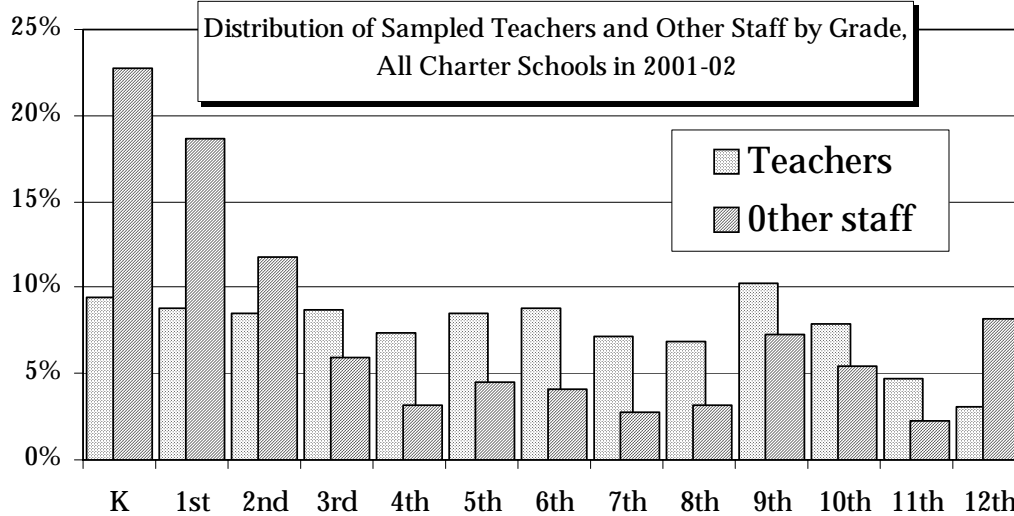


Figure 7:1 Distribution of Sampled Teachers and Other Staff by Grade, 2001-02
 Note: 120 teachers and 231 other staff indicated that grade level was not applicable for their position.

teachers only across the various grade levels. Just over 23 percent of the staff indicated that the grade level with which they were working was not applicable because they worked in administration, in the provision of support services, or because they worked with a number of grade levels.

7.2 Educational Background and Years of Experience of Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers and Staff

Certification of Teachers

Of the 1,140 staff who indicated they were teachers in the 2002 sample, 70.4 percent reported that they are currently certified to teach in Pennsylvania. This is a decrease from 81.8 percent in 1998-99 and 75 percent in 1999-00. On the other hand, the percentage of staff who were certified in another state remained at 4.3 percent, the same level as in 1999-00. The percentage of staff who were working to obtain certification also increased from 17.9 percent in 1999-00 to 20.9 percent in 2001-02. The percentage of teachers who were not certified and were not working to obtain certification has increased from 2.9 percent to 4.4 percent between 1999-00 and 2001-02. This information should be considered indicative and not conclusive. For example, among the 50 teachers who reported that they are working to obtain certification, many may be working for a second certification. It may also be the case that the “teachers” who are working to obtain certification are, in fact, only teaching assistants and did not answer the question on role in school correctly.

Most teachers reported that they were teaching in a subject area in which they are certified to teach, although approximately 11.5 percent of the teachers indicated they were not certified in the subjects they taught. This is the same

percentage as the previous year. Since the regulations require only 75 percent of the charter school staff to be certified, one can assume that charter schools have more uncertified teachers than do traditional public schools. It is important to point out, however, that many school districts have a large number of teachers on emergency certification.

Teacher Education

In terms of formal education, the charter school staff appear to be well qualified (see Tables 7:3 and 7:4). Among those 1,117 teachers who had completed a university degree, 71.2 percent had a B.A. as their highest college degree, 26.9 percent had an M.A., 1.1 percent had a 5- or 6-year certificate, and 0.8 percent had a Ph.D. Over 38 percent of the staff were working toward another degree. For the most part (i.e., 78.2 percent), they were working toward an M.A.

Table 7:3 Role and Amount of Formal Education, 2001-02

<i>Role</i>	<i>Did not complete high school</i>	<i>Completed high school</i>	<i>Less than 4 years of college</i>	<i>College graduate BA/BS</i>	<i>Graduate courses, no degree</i>	<i>Graduate/professional degree</i>
Teacher	0.0%	0.6%	1.0%	38.5%	30.8%	29.1%
Teaching assistant	2.3%	36.3%	34.5%	19.3%	4.7%	2.9%
Special ed. teacher	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.8%	31.8%	42.4%
CAO/key administrator	0.0%	3.4%	9.0%	10.3%	13.1%	64.1%
Other	0.0%	9.7%	17.2%	18.6%	17.9%	36.6%
Total (N=1,627)	<0.1%	5.4%	6.6%	31.7%	25.4%	30.7%

Table 7:4 Role and Highest Academic Degree, 2001-02

<i>Role</i>	<i>Bachelors</i>	<i>Masters</i>	<i>5- or 6-year cert.</i>	<i>Doctorate</i>
Teacher	71.2%	26.9%	1.1%	0.8%
Teaching assistant	81.6%	6.1%	12.2%	0.0%
Special Ed. Teacher	57.7%	35.2%	4.2%	2.8%
CAO/Principal	27.6%	48.8%	7.1%	16.5%
Other	51.9%	42.5%	2.8%	2.8%
Total (N=1,470)	65.7%	29.7%	2.2%	2.4%

Note: Figures based upon sample of teachers and staff. There were 236 surveys with missing data, because a considerable portion of the teaching assistants and staff in the “other” category did not complete a B.A. degree.

The percentage of teachers who had a B.A. increased from 71 percent in 1999 to 75 percent in 2000. In 2002, that percentage dropped to 70.3 (teachers and special education teachers combined). However, the percentages of teachers who

had an M.A. and a 5- or 6-year certificate decreased from 26.4 percent to 22.2 percent between 1999 and 2000, then increased to 28.8 percent in 2002. The percentage of teachers who had a doctorate decreased from 2.8 percent in 1999 to 2.5 percent in 2000 to 0.9 percent in 2002. Table 7:5 highlights these changes between the three samples.

Table 7:5 Level of Teacher Education by Survey Year

<i>Degree</i>	<i>1999 (n=212)</i>	<i>2000 (n=275)</i>	<i>2002 (n=1,188)</i>
Bachelors	71.0%	75.0%	70.3%
Masters	24.5	20.7	27.5
5- or 6-year certificate	1.9	1.5	1.3
Doctorate	2.8	2.5	0.9

Years of Experience

Most of the experience for charter school staff was in public schools. About 24 percent of the accrued experience of charter school teachers was in private and/or parochial schools. Table 7:6 contains the results by role and school type.

Table 7:6 Years of Experience by Role and in Various Types of School, 2001-02

	<i>Private School</i>	<i>Parochial School</i>	<i>Charter School</i>	<i>Public School</i>	<i>Total Yrs. of Experience*</i>	<i>Years at Current School</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Teacher	0.59	0.93	1.92	2.63	6.08	1.88
Teaching assistant	0.93	0.99	2.10	1.72	5.76	2.05
Special ed. teacher	0.56	0.92	1.65	5.99	9.11	1.61
CAOs/key admin.	1.55	1.29	2.31	8.88	14.13	2.23
Other staff	1.16	0.34	1.84	3.39	6.90	1.81
Total, all teacher/staff (N=1,706)	0.76 (2.76)	0.91 (2.96)	1.95 (1.08)	3.30 (6.88)	7.54 (8.25)	1.91 (1.06)

* Total years of experience as an educator in the school types/roles listed in the table
 Note: Standard deviations for the totals are in parentheses.

On average, the teachers had 6.27 years of experience as educators (this does not include related experience outside the school types noted in Table 7:6). This is an increase from 4.75 years of experience reported by teachers in the 1999 sample and 4.80 years reported in 2000. Overall, the levels of formal education and amount of working experience of the charter school staff is similar to charter school teachers in other states we have studied. In terms of years at current school, we can see that the CAOs and key administrators have, on average, spent

more years at their charter schools than the teachers have (2.23 years versus 1.88 years, respectively).

7.3 Reasons to Seek Employment at a Charter School

A number of possible reasons for teachers and staff to seek employment at a charter school were listed, and the staff were asked to rate each reason on a 5-point scale according to how relevant each reason was in influencing their decision to seek employment at the charter school. (Table 7:7 includes a rank-ordered list of the results on this question.)

Table 7:7 Reasons for Seeking Employment at This School (Rank Ordered According to Means), 2001-02

	<i>Not important</i>		<i>Very important</i>			<i>Mean</i>	<i>STD</i>	<i>Median</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>			
Opportunity to work with like-minded educators	3.1%	4.1%	18.9%	36.1%	37.7%	4.01	1.00	4
Safety at school	5.9%	7.8%	18.8%	26.0%	41.5%	3.89	1.20	4
My interest in being involved in an educational reform effort	4.6%	6.8%	20.8%	33.3%	34.6%	3.86	1.10	4
This school has small class sizes	8.2%	6.9%	23.2%	24.1%	37.5%	3.76	1.25	4
Academic reputation (high standards) of this school	7.9%	7.0%	27.7%	27.5%	29.8%	3.64	1.20	4
Parents are committed	9.5%	10.1%	26.0%	28.0%	26.3%	3.52	1.24	4
Promises made by charter school's spokespersons	11.0%	10.3%	24.9%	28.2%	25.6%	3.47	1.28	4
More emphasis on academics as opposed to extracurricular activities	10.0%	8.8%	32.2%	29.7%	19.3%	3.40	1.18	3
Convenient location	19.9%	13.7%	28.1%	18.2%	20.0%	3.05	1.38	3
Difficult to find other positions	39.4%	15.5%	20.4%	12.2%	12.5%	2.43	1.42	2

Two intrinsic factors were among the most important factors for seeking employment in charter schools: the opportunity to work with like-minded educators and interest in an educational reform effort. Other factors that influence teachers/staff to join a charter school are small class sizes, academic reputation, committed parents, and promises made by charter schools' spokespersons. The least important factor rated by teachers/staff was difficulty in finding other positions. Nevertheless, 24.7 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that "difficulty in finding other positions" was an important factor in seeking their position.

Many factors that were important in influencing decisions to seek employment at the charter schools were related to a better working environment: for

example, safety at school, working with small classes, and high academic standards.

It is interesting to note that the rank order and relative strength of these factors was largely unchanged between 1998-99, 1999-00, and 2001-02.

7.4 School Mission

Charter schools provide choices for parents. Additionally, charter schools allow teachers to choose learning communities in which to work that match their interests and skills. Note that the choice premise of the charter concept assumes that teachers choose schools according to mission and that this, in turn, makes them more likely to work harder for student outcomes. In this section, we shall explore three general questions related to school mission: (i) how familiar are teachers and staff with the mission of their school? (ii) do teachers and staff believe the mission of their school is being met? and (iii) are charter schools able to fulfill their mission?

All but 36 staff members (2.1 percent) indicated that they were aware of their school's mission. Of those who indicated they were familiar with the mission of the school, 29.6 percent thought the mission was being followed "very well," while 42.9 percent thought it was being followed "well," 22.6 percent "fair," and 5.0 percent "not very well." These figures indicate that most teachers and staff thought their school was living up to its mission.

In comparison with previous years' surveys (1998-99 and 1999-00), teachers and staff in 2001-02 were slightly more aware of their school's mission. The proportion of the teachers and staff that thought the mission of their school was being followed reasonably well (i.e., the percentage of teachers and staff who thought the mission was being followed "very well" and "well" was virtually unchanged from 2000 (up from 72.4 percent to 72.5 percent) and up slightly from 70.4 percent in 1999. As in the previous years, these figures indicate a general satisfaction among the teachers and staff in terms of their school's ability to live up to its mission.

In another section of the questionnaire, the staff were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with a number of aspects of the school, including school mission statement. Here, 35.6 percent of the staff indicated that they were "very satisfied" with the mission of their school, while another 35.6 percent indicated that they were "satisfied" with it. While the teachers and staff were generally quite satisfied with the schools' missions, they were not equally convinced that the schools could fulfill them. Nearly 15.6 percent of the staff indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their school's ability to fulfill its mission, while 27 percent were uncertain. Still, 34.9 percent of the staff indicated that their school could fulfill its mission, and 22.5 percent were very convinced that their school could do this.

When comparing the two items in Table 7:8, note a significant difference in level of satisfaction in terms of the school’s ability to fulfill its mission ($Z = -17.382$, $p = 0.00$).³ Hence, there is a significant difference between the “ideal school” represented by the school mission and the “actual school” represented by the perceived ability of the school to fulfill its stated mission. The difference between these two items has increased over the past 4 years, even though one would expect the difference to decrease over time. This difference—in part—can be explained by the presence of new schools and the large rate of teacher attrition in the charter schools.

Table 7:8 Level of Satisfaction with the Mission of the School, 2001-02 (N=1,649)

	Very dissatisfied					Very satisfied	Mean	STD
	1	2	3	4	5			
School mission statement	2.0%	4.4%	22.4%	35.6%	35.6%	3.98	0.97	
Ability of school to fulfill its stated mission	5.1%	10.5%	27.0%	34.9%	22.5%	3.59	1.10	

7.5 Summary

This chapter contained descriptive information about teachers and staff in Pennsylvania charter schools. A majority of the teachers in charter schools are female, while slightly more principals and directors are males. This generally measures up to the figures for traditional public schools in Pennsylvania. Also, in comparison with traditional public schools, the teachers of charter schools are generally younger. It was found that the majority of teachers in charter schools are white, with African-American teachers second. Since 1999-2000 the percentage of white teachers has increased while the percentage of African-American teachers has decreased. There are few Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Native American teachers in Pennsylvania charter schools.

Background information and data on staff experience were also collected. The percentage of teachers certified in Pennsylvania dropped from the previous year’s study, and the percentage of teachers certified in other states remained the same. The percentage of teachers working toward certification increased from 1999-2000. The vast majority of teachers with university degrees had attained a B.A. as their highest level of education. However, about a third of the teachers stated they are working toward another degree. The average years of experience among surveyed Pennsylvania charter school teachers was just over six years, an increase over 1999-2000.

When teachers were asked why they chose to seek employment in the charter school, the response that was highest rated was “opportunity to work with like-

³ Wilcoxon signed ranks test was used to analyze the difference between these two variables. This nonparametric procedure tests the hypothesis that the two related variables have the same distribution. It makes no assumptions about the shapes of the distributions of the two variables.

mindful educators.” Teachers also sought to be involved in an educational reform effort and to work in a safe environment. The reason rated least important by teachers was difficulty finding work elsewhere.

Teachers were also asked about the mission statement of their school. The teachers seemed to be quite familiar with their school’s mission statement. However, they were not as confident in the school’s ability to fulfill the mission.