

# Chapter Eight

## Working Conditions, Professional Development, and Levels of Satisfaction for Charter School Teachers

A common notion about charter schools is that they provide an opportunity for professionals to choose a school that matches their interests. Additionally, charter schools are expected to allow educators an opportunity to innovate and at the same time be held accountable for their work. It is also expected that charter schools will provide new professional development opportunities to teachers. We will explore these topics in this chapter as well as describe the working conditions of teachers and their levels of satisfaction with their schools and the particular conditions under which they work.

The following questions are addressed in this chapter:

- ❑ What are the working conditions of charter school teachers and staff, and how satisfied are the teachers with these conditions?
- ❑ What are the initial expectations of teachers, and how do these compare with their current experiences?
- ❑ How much and what kind of professional development time/opportunities do charter school teachers have?
- ❑ What kind of teacher induction plans do charter schools have for new teachers?
- ❑ Do charter school teachers have opportunities to work collaboratively, select texts, design courses?
- ❑ How much teacher/staff turnover is there in charter schools? What factors appear to be associated with turnover?

### **8.1 Working Conditions for Teachers and Staff and Levels of Satisfaction**

The quality of school facilities varied extensively among the charter schools. Therefore, it was not surprising to see an even split in the responses from teachers and staff concerning the quality of their school's facilities. Generally, teachers had a more positive view of their schools' facilities in 2002 compared with the surveys we administered in 1999-00. Approximately 47.5 percent of the staff were satisfied

or very satisfied with the school buildings and facilities. This is up from approximately 30 percent in the 1999-00 survey. On a related item, 38 percent of the teachers and staff agreed or strongly agreed that the physical facilities were good, while the rest were either not satisfied with the facilities or were uncertain. Again, this number is up from 26.3 percent in 1999-00.

Survey results indicate that the schools vary widely in the quality of their facilities and the availability of resources. This was also confirmed in site visits and interviews. Just under 45 percent of the teachers and staff indicated that they thought their school had sufficient financial resources (35 percent thought so in 1999-00). On a related item, 51.6 percent of the teachers and staff indicated that they were satisfied with the resources available for instruction. This is a slight increase from 46.9 percent in 1999-00.

Nevertheless, nearly half of the teachers and other staff are dissatisfied with their resources. A number of the staff stated that this was among the biggest weaknesses of their school. Parents and students occasionally mentioned this as well. This quote from a student illustrates how a lack of resources can affect teaching and learning:

*Well my teachers don't have what they need to teach me—why? Because they have broken books, board, work materials. I feel as though they need more. Lots of the teachers are really good but they need good material. My science teacher . . . she's great. She deserves more than she has to work [with].*

A number of items in the questionnaire addressed class size, an issue related to human and fiscal resources. It was clear that this was an important reason for seeking employment at a charter school and an aspect of the schools with which the teachers were particularly interested. Over 60 percent of staff disagreed that class sizes at their school were too large to meet individual student's needs.

Throughout the country, the limits of human and fiscal resources mean that schools may lack auxiliary staff such as janitors and secretaries. This can mean that teachers have to take on responsibilities beyond teaching. Unlike findings in Michigan and Connecticut, most teachers and staff in Pennsylvania charter schools reported that they did not have many noninstructional duties in addition to their teaching load. Nevertheless, some teachers considered this an issue. One teacher seemed to see it as the price she paid for greater autonomy at her charter school:

*The workload is now greater. I am performing many noninstructional tasks, for example we have no janitor or maintenance person. I can change programs easily now. I have greater freedom now to do what I want.*

### ***Autonomy of Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers***

On the whole, the teachers indicated that they have autonomy and can use their ideas and creativity in designing the curriculum at their schools. While we did not have a clear response to this from many teachers, we found that a number of the schools were exemplary in regard to this issue. Some of our findings particular to individual schools are included in the following examples:

- ❑ At a few schools, many of the teachers indicated they have a greater degree of autonomy than at other schools where they have taught.
- ❑ Responses from teachers in interviews or the open-ended questions on the survey confirmed that at one high school, the teachers are asked to experiment with specific techniques. To sum up what the teachers told us, we include the following comment: "I have been able to design and implement curriculum."
- ❑ Teachers at an urban school noted that they design the curriculum based on history, traditions, customs, and culture of African Americans.
- ❑ At one school, the teachers told us they were able to be innovative, but only after approval from the chief administrative officer.
- ❑ At one of the Philadelphia schools, the lead teachers are responsible for coordinating the department, but all teachers are encouraged to design and create new strategies and programs.

In the annual reports and interviews with school officials, we found evidence that there was a conscious effort at a number of charter schools to involve teachers in developing curriculum. Examples of this include the scheduling of weekly meetings for teachers to meet with a curriculum and technology specialist, the existence of teacher advisory committees to the charter school boards, and the use of teachers' meetings to establish goals and objectives for the year.

**Opportunities for Developing Innovative Instructional Practices**

The teacher survey asked teachers about their initial expectations and to compare these with what they are currently experiencing in their schools. They were asked whether their schools support/are supporting innovative practices and whether they will be/are autonomous and creative in their classrooms. As indicated in Table 8:1, there is a 17.5 percent discrepancy between expectation and current experience in the area of innovations and a 12.7 percent discrepancy between their expectation and current experience in the area of autonomy and creativity. These discrepancies are nearly identical to those observed in the 1999-00 survey.

Table 8:1 Teacher Expectations and Current Experience With Regard to Innovative Practices and Autonomy

	<i>Initial Expectation</i>					<i>Current Experience</i>				
	<i>False</i>	<i>Partly</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>STD</i>	<i>False</i>	<i>Partly</i>	<i>True</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>STD</i>
	<i>true</i>					<i>true</i>				
The school will support/is supporting innovative practices	1.3%	21.6%	77.1%	2.76	0.46	6.4%	33.9%	59.6%	2.53	0.61
Teachers will be/are autonomous and creative in their classrooms	2.3%	20.7%	77.0%	2.75	0.48	4.7%	31.0%	64.3%	2.60	0.58

Teachers submitted a variety of responses in terms of their autonomy. A large proportion reported that they are autonomous and creative in their classrooms. Others expressed that they are empowered in decisions related to curriculum, instruction, and day-to-day operation of the school. Several said their working

conditions are very flexible compared with work in previous schools. Some teachers became aware of innovative practices or opportunities to be innovative when they joined their charter school. One teacher stressed that the most positive aspect of her school was the following:

*Freedom to create curriculum, focus on helping students develop in ways that are not traditionally attended to, curriculum focuses on real world, not standardized tests . . . teachers have control over decision making for the school.*

There were, however, some barriers to autonomy and opportunities to innovate. Some complained about the lack of time available to create unique lessons. One teacher described the relation between resources and ability to innovate:

*Teachers are encouraged to be creative in their approach. However more resources would make it easier for them to accomplish this, especially by giving them more time to make plans instead of researching for materials.*

### **Teachers' Salaries**

Charter school teachers had average annual salaries of \$34,400. This can be contrasted with the state average of \$52,333. This indicates a salary gap of nearly \$18,000 between the average charter school teacher salary and that of teachers in other public schools in Pennsylvania. The gap is slightly smaller \$16,599 when we compare teachers in charter schools with those in host districts. At least some of these differences, however, are likely to be due to differences in education and experience of charter and noncharter teachers and to differences in financial resources and the cost of the factors of production. Thus, we estimated a statistical model (similar to the models used to examine student achievement in Chapter 12) that allowed us to compare charter schools only with noncharter schools that were matched on factors such as years of experience, levels of formal education, and per-pupil expenditures.<sup>1</sup> Here, we find that the charter-noncharter discrepancy persists, with the typical charter school paying its teachers \$11,325 less than comparable noncharter public schools across the Commonwealth. This estimate of the charter-noncharter salary discrepancy is similar to the one reported (using the same statistical methods) in the 2000 report. There the discrepancy was approximately \$9,800. However, one must interpret these comparisons with some caution given inflation. Table 8:2 contains the average salaries figures for the various comparison groups.

Table 8:2 Average Teacher Salary in Charter and Noncharter Public Schools, 2001-02

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<sup>1</sup> This estimate was derived by estimating an ordinary least squares regression model on teacher salary data for all noncharter school districts in Pennsylvania. The model regressed average teacher salary at the district level against variables representing teacher education and experience along with per-pupil expenditures. To generate the predicted value for charter schools, we enter mean values on each of the predictor variables in order to generate the predicted value for teacher salary conditional upon these mean values. The analysis is based on all Pennsylvania public schools and uses 2001-02 salaries. Readers are invited to contact the authors for details on the analysis.

	Mean	St. dev	Min	Max
Charters	\$34,400	\$3,881	\$20,600	\$42,099
Host Districts	\$50,999	\$6,239	\$41,353	\$68,628
Similar Schools	\$45,725			
All PA	\$52,333			

Note that there were 5 missing values for the charter schools and a similar number of the noncharter public schools. State average was taken from PDE web site, which did not provide measures of variation.

From this analysis we can still see that charter school teachers have salaries that are substantially lower than what one would expect and what these teachers might receive in regular public schools. These differences can be explained in part by the charter schools' need to divert resources to purchase or renovate facilities. Tentative findings reported in the chapter on finance highlight that charter schools are in fact devoting a lower proportion of their expenditures to capital investments than traditional public schools.

Table 8:3 includes data on how the teachers and staff at Pennsylvania charter schools rated their levels of satisfaction with salary and benefits as well as various other aspects of their current working conditions.

Table 8:3 Levels of Teacher and Staff Satisfaction with Working Conditions

	<i>Not very satisfied</i>					<i>Very satisfied</i>	Mean	STD	Median
	1	2	3	4	5				
Salary level	10.9%	18.6%	37.9%	21.8%	10.7%	3.03	1.13	3	
Fringe benefits	9.3%	15.1%	32.2%	27.0%	16.4%	3.26	1.18	3	
Resources available for instruction	8.7%	13.5%	26.2%	27.7%	23.9%	3.45	1.23	4	
School buildings and facilities	9.2%	17.0%	26.2%	24.5%	23.0%	3.35	1.26	3	
Availability of computers and other technology	6.8%	11.7%	20.2%	26.0%	35.3%	3.71	1.25	4	
School governance	9.0%	13.9%	31.2%	26.0%	19.8%	3.34	1.20	3	
Administrative leadership of school	9.5%	12.2%	23.3%	24.9%	30.0%	3.54	1.29	4	
Evaluation or assessment of your performance	6.3%	8.4%	21.8%	35.5%	28.0%	3.71	1.15	4	

Just over 32 percent of the teachers and staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the salaries they received, while 29.5 percent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their salaries. A large proportion of the staff (37.9 percent) indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their salaries. These numbers are slightly more positive than responses from 1999-00. The

teachers and staff were generally more satisfied with the fringe benefits than with salary. Satisfaction with fringe benefits was down slightly from 1999-00.

We now look at other indicators of satisfaction: the differences between what staff expected before starting employment at the charter school and how that compares with their current experiences.

## **8.2 Initial Expectations and Current Experiences of Teachers and Staff**

A number of identical items were used in the surveys to examine and compare the charter school staffs' "initial expectations" as opposed to "current experience" (See Appendix A, Teacher/Staff Results, Question 16). In general, it is clear that the teachers and other staff were content with their schools and satisfied with the services they provide. It is interesting to note, however, that there were statistically significant differences between what was initially expected and what the educators were currently experiencing on all variables. What the staff were reporting as "current experience" was significantly less positive than their "initial expectations."<sup>2</sup>

The biggest differences between initial expectations and current experience were on the following items:

1. The school will have/has effective leadership and administration.
2. Students will receive/receive sufficient individual attention.
3. Teachers will be/are able to influence the steering and direction of the school.
4. Students will/are receiving appropriate special education services, if necessary.
5. There will be/is good communication between the school and parents/guardians.

This does not imply that teachers and staff were not satisfied with these aspects of their school. Rather, it infers that they had high expectations in these areas that did not correspond with what they were currently experiencing.

While these findings are rather striking, it is important to consider their educational significance. Likewise, it is important to consider likely explanations for these findings. Given the feedback we received from teachers and staff, it seems that teachers simply expected too much. A large portion of the teachers were seeking jobs at schools that were not yet in operation. Given such a situation, expectations are understandably high. Since many of the teachers are also very young, their expectations may be higher than normal. Unfortunately, we do not have comparable data from regular public schools.

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<sup>2</sup> Because these questions are actually nonparametric in nature and the variables are ordinal, the marginal homogeneity test was used to compare the paired distribution of responses. This also found significant reductions in expectations on all items ( $p = .001$ ).

Between the 1999-00 survey and the 2001-02 survey there were many differences. The percentage of respondents answering "true" on the current experience question increased for eight items and decreased for six items.

On most items, the difference between initial expectations and current experience actually decreased between the two years, which suggests areas where improvements were being made, even if the initial expectations were still not met. These areas of improvement are listed below and ranked according to improvements.

1. Teachers will be/are able to influence the steering and direction of the school.
2. There will be/are new professional opportunities for teachers.
3. The school will support/is supporting innovative practices.
4. Students will have/have access to computers and other new technologies.
5. The school will have/has effective leadership and administration.
6. There will be/is good communication between the school and parents/guardians.
7. Teachers will be/are committed to the mission of the school.
8. Students will receive/receive sufficient individual attention.
9. Students will be/are eager and motivated to learn.

It is interesting to note the discrepancies in the factors that influence teachers/staff to join a charter school. Teachers/staff were asked about their initial expectations and current experience in the quality of instruction and teachers' empowerment. There was a 17.9 percent difference between their expectations (78.8 percent) and current experience (60.9 percent) that the quality of instruction will be/is high. In terms of teacher empowerment, there is a large difference between teachers' expectations and current experience in influencing the steering and direction of the school.

The gap between teachers' expectations and their current experiences is a warning sign for charter schools. Although there are differences between teachers/staff's initial expectations and current experience, teachers/staff generally are still positive about their schools.

### **8.3 Professional Development in Pennsylvania Charter Schools**

Our main source of information on professional development plans was annual reports submitted by the schools in August 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002. We also collected information on professional development opportunities during interviews with charter school staff. Teacher/staff surveys included still other items regarding professional development. The annual reports often included the number of days or hours devoted to professional development as well as some details about the nature of the training. We also used data on professional development reported by PDE.

One widely used, though imperfect measure of a school's commitment to professional development is the number of days its teachers are engaged in

various in-service activities. PDE collects data for all schools on the number of teacher absence days for professional development activities. The obvious limitation to this indicator is that it fails to capture professional development activities that do not require teacher absences. Thus, it excludes such activities as teachers reading books and engaging in discussions on their own; teachers taking evening, weekend, or summer courses; and so on. Also, teacher shortages in many districts are compelling administrators to find professional development activities that do not require teacher absences and hence the need for scarce substitutes. Many administrators schedule professional development activities during the afternoon hours—hours during which teachers are normally in the school building.

School personnel apparently interpret the survey question differently. Some, it appears, read it as covering only those professional development days enumerated in teacher contracts. Others appear to interpret the question as covering all such activities, whether called for by contract or not. In spite of these limitations, this indicator provides a useful picture of at least one aspect of professional development in Pennsylvania charter schools.

In our October 2000 report, we calculated the number of professional development days by dividing the number of teacher absences per school by the total number of teachers.<sup>3</sup> This yields an estimate of the number of days for the “typical” teacher. Unfortunately, it does not allow us to observe variations among teachers. Next, we compared the number of professional development days in charter schools and noncharter schools.

From this analysis we found that, on average, charter school teachers have 7 days of professional development each year, compared with 5 days for noncharter public schools. It is important to point out, however, that the charter school totals were influenced by 4 schools that reported between 17 and 50 days of professional development per year. These outliers clearly weighted the charter school total. At the same time there were apparently 10 charter schools that did not report these data to PDE and were not included in these figures.

It was clear from the documentation and interview data that a number of schools had high expectations in terms of professional development for their classroom teachers. The charter school teachers seemed to have support for professional development opportunities from their schools. The support included release time from teaching, scheduled time built into teacher’s schedules, and tuition reimbursement. One school noted that it had established a professional development committee that helps plan and arrange for professional development activities. Graduate level classes were emphasized by many as an important and sometimes required form of professional development. In one urban school, the teachers are expected to enroll in graduate classes approved by the board of education of the local school district. At another school the teachers develop their own professional development goals and discuss these with the CAO.

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<sup>3</sup> We attempted to replicate this analysis with updated information, but the data reported by charter schools for 2000-01 and 2001-02 are incomplete and inconsistent.

The format for professional development opportunities include workshops, conferences, in-service training, outside training, and graduate courses. The content of professional development opportunities includes methods of teaching, technology, student assessment, and classroom management. For example, some teachers attended conferences dealing with reading programs and curriculum development. Several teachers indicated that they attended in-service training sessions dealing with at-risk students, classroom management, and discipline. Others reported that the training sessions were focused on software and computers.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the cited professional development consists of sessions prior to the start of school in September plus weekly or monthly staff meetings at the school. Some schools allot only a few hours a month or week for professional development while others allot a number of days. While the schools were not always very specific about how they use these days or hours, it appears that the topics addressed reflect the changing needs of the staff.

Below we have included examples of how the school staff described the amount and scheduling of the professional development activities at their schools:

- Teachers have professional development activities every Friday from 2:30 to 4:30.
- Two weeks of professional development prior to school opening, with topics such as standards, writing across the curriculum, portfolio assessment, progress reports, inclusion, differentiated instruction, conflict resolution, and peer mediation
- Employ consultants from local colleges and universities to present on topics such as classroom management and dealing with inner-city youths.
- One and one-half hours each day dedicated to teacher planning and professional development
- Weekly faculty meetings with teacher-initiated professional development
- One weekend each quarter is designated for professional development.
- Professional development model that assumes teachers are capable of self-direction and self-initiated learning
- Weekly staff meetings and summer days set aside for professional development and team-building
- Certified staff are reimbursed for graduate courses and encouraged to work toward additional certification.
- On-site graduate classes offered through local college
- All staff participate in five days of training in their academic subject area.

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<sup>4</sup> According to the national School and Staffing Survey (Choy, Chen, & Ross, 1998) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, public school teachers across the nation take part in a variety of professional development activities. A majority (64 percent) of public school teachers participated in sessions dealing with methods of teaching in their field, 51.4 percent with student assessment, 50.9 percent with cooperative learning in the classroom, 47 percent with use of educational technology for instruction, and 30 percent conducted in-depth study in their subject.

- ❑ All teachers meet with school administrators at beginning of the school year to discuss skill areas needing improvement; plan is reviewed twice during the year.
- ❑ Fifteen days devoted to developing teachers' technical proficiencies with instructional materials

### **8.4 Teacher Induction Plans**

Generally speaking, the teacher induction plan is for new teachers and includes training and orientation activities at the beginning of their first year of teaching. Some schools reported that the teacher induction plan covered ongoing training throughout the teachers' first year.

Many schools conduct training for all their staff, not just new staff, while others have separate orientations, workshops, and mentoring for the new teachers. Almost all charter schools provided information on their induction plans in the 2001-02 annual reports. Most schools provided a copy of their induction plan, while others provided plan summaries. Most schools considered the induction plan to be an orientation to the school and a program to help teachers become more effective and develop their goals for the year.

The purpose of the teacher induction activities was most often to familiarize new teachers with the school and to better prepare them for their work in the classrooms. Topics covered in the orientation or initial meetings at the school included such things as the history of school, school mission and goals, policies and procedures, personal attributes, meetings with students and staff, overview of classroom duties, curriculum development, state academic standards, classroom observation, policies and procedures training, and strategies to improve teaching performance.

The most common element of the induction plan was mentoring of new teachers. Several teachers indicated that the school assigned a mentor to help them increase their general professional knowledge, instructional techniques and practices, classroom management, and student assessment. The induction coordinator or mentor was often the CAO, curriculum specialist, director of instruction, other experienced or "lead" teachers, or a teacher education professor from a local college or university.

Most schools required participation in workshops. A few schools expected the new teachers to develop their own professional plan during the induction period. One school expected the new teachers to work with the director of instruction to build professional competence, while at another school the new teachers worked with a curriculum specialist on a weekly basis and attended other meetings/workshops to help them improve instruction. A number of schools required the new teachers to have extra days/weeks of preparation and training before the start of the school year (most required about one week, some as long as two weeks).

One criticism we heard from a number of CAOs during our 2002 interviews as well as during our 1999-00 interviews is that teacher education programs at the

universities and colleges are not preparing teachers to work in urban classroom settings. This appears to be one of the factors related to teacher turnover.

### **8.5 Turnover of Teachers and Staff in Pennsylvania Charter Schools**

One factor that is limiting to charter schools is the relatively high rates of attrition among teachers and staff. We addressed this issue in our October 2000 report. Among the 30 schools participating in that study, nearly 40 percent of the teachers left during or between the 1998-99 and 1999-00 school years. During this same time period, fewer than 10 percent of the CAOs left or were replaced. During or just after the 2000-01 academic year, more than 24 percent of charter school teachers left their respective schools—a notable drop in attrition from the previous two years. Nevertheless, charter schools continue to have a much higher teacher attrition percentage than noncharter public schools. The attrition rate for all Pennsylvania public schools was 6.5 percent, while charter host districts had a turnover rate of 8.5 percent.

Some factors that could affect these percentages include the urbanicity of a school's location, the racial and economic makeup of the district, and the years of experience of the teachers. When comparing charter schools with noncharter schools matched on these variables, we still see similar differences in attrition rates.

One item on the teacher/staff questionnaire that provided a related indicator of attrition was the question, "Do you plan (hope) to teach here next year?" Eighty-six percent of the staff indicated that they wished/intended to return the next year. This was an increase from approximately 75 percent in 1999-00. Based on conversations with charter school CAOs and teachers, it is clear that the level of attrition at some of the charter schools was extremely high, while at others nearly all professional staff were returning. For those teachers/staff who planned not to return next year (14 percent), their dissatisfaction was with school governance, administrative leadership, resources available for instruction, lack of a teachers' union, and salary levels. These sources of dissatisfaction and job insecurity seemed to factor into their decisions to leave.

While a majority of staff indicated that teachers were not insecure about their future at their particular school, 36.2 percent of the teachers and staff indicated otherwise. This number is nearly identical to the percentage in 1999-00. There are numerous possible reasons for this insecurity. It could be due to uncertainty about the charter school reform as a whole. The role of the particular school in its community and its ability to live up to its mission could also be issues. The lack of teachers' unions, tenure, and other contributors to job security could also be factors. One teacher at a school with an exceptionally high turnover rate noted a problem with "job security . . . the headmaster could fire someone on the spot." However, some argue that being able to easily dismiss inadequately performing teachers helps the school realize its mission.

Regardless of the reasons for turnover, it is clear that high turnover can be problematic to morale and to student achievement. A large number of staff, parents, and especially students complained about the high staff turnover. One

student complained that “We don't have any teachers or principles [sic] that stay for the whole year.” Another student lamented, “We don't learn, teacher gave up on us. Teachers leave all the time . . .” One parent explained:

*When a teacher is replaced the young ADULTS need to know why. Esp where an excellent motivated teacher leaves and the next day is replaced by a person who completely changes the course of that period and undermines and unmotivates top students. He is hurting the students who really care and give it their all.*

Further study is needed to examine the factors behind teacher attrition. For now, however, it is safe to speculate that the substantially lower salaries that charter schools can pay teachers is one important factor behind these high levels of attrition.

## 8.6 Summary

The atmosphere of a school greatly influences a teacher's job satisfaction. Factors such as facilities, autonomy, and salary are important to teachers. Both site visits and teacher surveys indicated that the facilities and resources of charter schools vary widely. Naturally, teacher satisfaction with these issues varies widely as well.

Many teachers have come to charter schools seeking autonomy in creating and implementing curriculum. We found evidence at a number of charter schools that there was a conscious effort to involve teachers in developing curriculum. Teachers indicated that they thought they had autonomy in curriculum decisions and freedom to utilize creative approaches to curriculum. Indeed, many teachers report that they have considerable flexibility and opportunities for creativity in their day-to-day activities. The teachers are encouraged in their collaborative work efforts through programs of team teaching, mentoring, and staff members creating presentations.

While charter school teachers make considerably less than their public school counterparts, not all are dissatisfied with their salary, with some 32.5 percent reporting they were satisfied or very satisfied. It is worth noting that salaries may be lower due to the need to divert funding to the renovation and development of facilities.

There was a measurable difference between initial teacher expectations and current experience on many topics. Statements relating to topics such as effective school leadership and administration, students receiving sufficient individual attention, teachers' ability to influence the steering and direction of the school, students receiving appropriate special education services, and communication between the school and parents/guardians had the largest decline from initial expectations to current experience. However, many teachers were hired before the school opened, many were young teachers, and some simply expected too much. Despite these figures, many teachers are still quite satisfied with their teaching environment.

Data from our October 2000 report indicate that charter schools devote considerably more time to teacher professional development activities than

noncharter schools. A strong emphasis on graduate study was frequently reported, with some programs requiring it. The format for professional development opportunities included workshops, conferences, in-service training, and graduate courses. The content of professional development opportunities included methods of teaching, technology, student assessment, at-risk students, and classroom management. A school's teacher induction program also falls under the category of professional development. Schools generally held meetings to orient new teachers to the school, help them become more effective, and teach them to set goals. The induction plans often included a mentoring program.

Although staff turnover declined from 1999-00 to 2001-02, the rates of turnover are still much higher than at traditional public schools. Lower salaries appear to be a major factor; job security may be another. About 14 percent of the staff did not plan to return to the school the following year. Further studies can explore the reasons for high turnover in charter schools and provide guidance on how to recruit, train, and keep qualified staff. As one parent emphasized:

*I would like to see greater teacher retention. Good teachers who are experienced in the curriculum are vital. Because of the long history of teachers leaving after a very short stay with the school it may be in everyone's best interest for the school district to discuss/investigate this issue with the administrators of the charter school. We had a very good experience with our son's kindergarten at this charter school and would like for it to remain approved as a charter school. We would like the environment to be teacher-friendly –whether there needs to be adjustments in salary, "work load", etc. I would recommend the school to any child . . . contingent on the school's ability to get and retain good teachers.*