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 commonly 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 questions that are addressed in this chapter include the following:

- 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?
- What kind of teacher induction plans do charter schools have for new teachers?
- How much and what kind of professional development time/opportunities do charter school teachers have?
- Do charter school teachers have opportunities to work collaboratively, select texts, design courses?
- Do teachers think they have enough time to develop innovative instructional practices?
- How much teacher/staff turnover is there in charter schools? Does this vary with salaries, scope of professional development opportunities, and other factors?
- Are there any innovative practices in the area of professional development that other schools might emulate?

8.1 Working Conditions for Teachers and Staff and Levels of Satisfaction

School Facilities and Available Resources

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. Approximately 30 percent of the staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the school buildings and facilities. On a related item, 26.3 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.

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 over 35 percent of the teachers and staff indicated that they thought their school had sufficient financial resources. On a related item, 46.9 percent of the teachers and staff indicated that they were satisfied with the resources available for instruction.

A number of items in the questionnaire addressed class size. 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 but not yet necessarily satisfied.

While a majority of staff indicated they were not insecure about their future at their particular school, 35 percent of the teachers and staff indicated otherwise. It is not clear if this insecurity is due to uncertainty about the charter school reform or due to the role of the particular school in its community and its ability to live up to its mission. Similarly, 22.6 percent of the teachers and staff indicated that they did not plan/hope to be teaching in that particular school next year, as compared with 77.4 percent who intended to return. Unlike findings in Michigan and Connecticut, most teachers and staff reported that they did not have many noninstructional duties in addition to their teaching load.

Autonomy of Pennsylvania Charter School Teachers

We found that–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 one of the middle schools, we learned that the day-to-day operations and any decisions related to curriculum and instruction are the responsibility of the staff.
- At one elementary school, all of the surveys from teachers indicate that they are autonomous and creative in their classrooms; at a few other schools, many of the teachers indicated likewise.

- At one high school, the teachers are asked to experiment with specific techniques. Responses from teachers in interviews or the open-ended questions on the survey confirmed this was the case. To sum up what the teachers told us, we include the following comment: "I have been able to design and implement curriculum."
- In terms of professional development, the teachers at one school are encouraged to explore areas that are relevant to them and the community they serve.
- 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 (CAO).
- 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 submitted by the schools, we found evidence that around 35 percent of the teachers are heavily involved in the development of the curriculum. In an additional 15 percent of the schools, we found that the teachers were autonomous in terms of curriculum- and instruction-related matters. At a few schools there was clear evidence that decisions about curriculum and instruction were in the hands of the CAO, another administrator, or the board.

We found evidence at a number of charter schools that there was a conscious effort 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 and the use of teachers' meetings to establish goals and objectives for the year.

Collaborative Work of Charter School Teachers

Forty-five percent of teachers did not comment about a collaborative working environment. Forty-two percent of teachers indicated that they have opportunities to work collaboratively. Some teachers reported that they have a team-teaching plan that pairs a teacher who has strengths in a specific area with a teacher who has strengths in another area. Others said that teachers are continually discussing new trends in education. Several indicated that they have mentors and continue to learn from one another. One teacher expressed that they work "within nations" and collaborate in this manner. Thirteen percent of teachers indicated that they do not work collaboratively. Several teachers indicated that teachers only work collaboratively at monthly staff meetings.

We found clear evidence in slightly more than half of the charter schools that the teachers in the schools work collaboratively. At many of these schools, the teachers were encouraged to work collaboratively. In 70 percent of the schools from which we collected information regarding teacher collaboration, we found that collaboration was promoted through mentoring and team teaching.

Although this is not innovative to public schools, we think it is a positive program and that it seemed to be implemented well.

- A few schools pair teachers who complement each others' skills and abilities.
- At one school the teacher mentoring program, staff workshops, and presentations about what is being learned are used to encourage collaboration.
- We were told at another school that they use the mentoring program to promote learning from one another as well as for continuous evaluation.
- One school reported that it intended to hire more experienced teachers in the future to mentor the newer teachers.
- In the responses to the open-ended questions, a number of teachers noted that teamwork with other teachers and staff was the greatest strength of the school.
- One school organized "nations" within the school to promote teacher collaboration.

It is important to point out that while collaboration of teachers was being encouraged and was working in many schools, in a few instances teachers indicated that there was little collaboration aside from occasional or monthly staff meetings.

Time for the Development of Innovative Instructional Practices

The teacher survey asked about teachers' initial expectations and compared these with what teachers 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 15 percent discrepancy between expectation and current experience in the area of innovations and a 13 percent discrepancy between their expectation and current experience in the area of autonomy and creativity.

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

	Initial Expectation					Current Experience				
	False	Partly true	True	Mean	STD	False	Partly true	True	Mean	STD
The school will support/*is supporting* innovative practices	1.1%	25.2%	73.8%	2.73	0.47	6.8%	34.2%	59.0%	2.52	0.62
Teachers will be/*are* autonomous and creative in their classrooms	1.7%	19.9%	78.4%	2.77	0.46	3.6%	31.5%	64.8%	2.61	0.56

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 that their working conditions are very flexible compared with work in previous schools.

Less common but still prevalent in some teachers' perceptions were that they were now aware of innovative practices or opportunities to be innovative at their schools.

Teachers' Salaries

Charter school teachers had average annual salaries of $30,048.[1] This can be contrasted with annual teacher salaries of $48,457 in the state. The teachers at charter schools have fewer years of experience than their counterparts in traditional public schools; therefore, their salaries are lower. We used a regression model to estimate the relationship between teacher salaries and a number of predictor variables including educational level, average years of experience, and per pupil expenditures at the noncharter public schools. With this analysis we were able to predict that charter school teachers should be earning, on average, $39,831a year.[2] In other words, comparable noncharter public school teachers with these characteristics would have an average annual teacher salary of $39,831.

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 charter school 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.

Just under 30 percent of the teachers and staff were satisfied or very satisfied with the salaries they received, while 32 percent were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their salaries. A large proportion of the staff (38 percent) indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their salaries. The teachers and staff were generally more satisfied with the fringe benefits than with salary. The level of satisfaction with salaries decreased noticeably from the previous year, while teachers' satisfaction with fringe benefits increased slightly between 1999 and 2000.

Later in this chapter, the rate of attrition among teachers is described. One important factor behind the large proportion of teachers leaving charter schools is likely to be due to the higher salaries they can receive in regular public schools.

Table 8:2 includes data on how the teachers and staff at Pennsylvania charter schools rated their levels of satisfaction with various aspects of their current working conditions.

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[1] 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 1998-99 salary values. Readers are invited to contact the authors for details on this analysis.

[2] Readers are invited to contact the authors regarding details on the regression analysis.

Table 8:2 Levels of Teacher and Staff Satisfaction with Working Conditions

	Not very satisfied 1	2	3	4	Very satisfied 5	Mean	STD	Median	N	Don't know	Miss-ing
Salary level	12.8%	19.2%	38.6%	22.7%	6.8%	2.91	1.09	3.00	516	8	13
Fringe benefits	7.0%	13.8%	30.9%	31.1%	17.1%	3.38	1.13	3.00	485	34	18
Resources available for instruction	7.5%	17.2%	28.5%	26.9%	19.8%	3.34	1.19	3.00	494	22	21
School buildings and facilities	13.9%	23.4%	31.3%	20.7%	10.8%	2.91	1.19	3.00	518	2	17
Availability of computers and other technology	7.9%	14.5%	20.5%	24.8%	32.3%	3.59	1.29	4.00	517	7	13
School governance	9.9%	10.8%	32.5%	28.4%	18.5%	3.35	1.19	3.00	493	22	22
Administrative leadership of school	7.0%	11.4%	24.0%	28.1%	29.5%	3.62	1.21	4.00	516	5	16
Evaluation or assessment of your performance	5.7%	9.5%	22.5%	37.0%	25.4%	3.67	1.12	4.00	476	41	20

Overall, 70.2 percent of teachers/staff were very or somewhat satisfied with their school's mission statement, and 56.4 percent were very or somewhat satisfied with the ability of the school to fulfill its stated mission. Section 7.4 contains more details about teachers' satisfaction with their school's mission. Just over 62 percent of the teachers and staff indicated they were very or somewhat satisfied with evaluation of their performance; 57.6 percent were very or somewhat satisfied with school leadership; and 57.1 percent were very or somewhat satisfied with availability of computers and technology. Teachers/staff were least satisfied with school buildings and facilities (31.5 percent were satisfied with facilities).

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 B, 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 interested 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."[3]

[3] 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).

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. Parents will be/are able to influence the direction and activities at the school.
3. Support services will be/are available to students.
4. Students will receive/receive sufficient individual attention.
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.

Between the 1998-99 survey and the 1999-00 survey there were many similarities and some differences. For instance, on the items dealing with initial expectations and current experience were nearly the same. In a number of items, the difference 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. Students will have/have access to computers and other new technologies
2. School personnel will be/are accountable for the achievement/performance of students
3. Teachers will be able to influence the steering and direction of the school
4. The school will support/is supporting innovative practices

Ratings on three items actually decreased, which suggests areas where things are getting worse. These are listed below:

1. Teachers will be/are autonomous and creative in their classrooms.
2. The school will have/has small class sizes.
3. The quality of instruction will be/is high.

It is interesting to note that there are 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 21.4 percent difference between their expectations (74.1 percent) and current experience (52.7 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 that they are able to influence 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 and August 2000.[4] 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 included the number of days or hours devoted to professional development as well as some details about the nature of the training. In addition to this information we used data on professional development reported by the 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 activities during the afternoon hours–hours during which teachers are normally in the school building.

Schools apparently interpret the survey question differently. Some schools, it appears, read it as covering only those professional development days enumerated in teacher contracts. Other schools 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.

We calculated the number of professional development days by dividing the number of teacher absences per school by the total number of teachers. 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.

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[4] All but 5 charter schools provided information on their professional development plans in the 1999-00 school year.

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 this 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 to 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. At this particular school, the teachers are expected to be taking Ph.D. or M.A. courses and working toward a degree.

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.[5]

Most of the cited professional development consists of 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. More than half of the schools reported that they have professional development activities/opportunities in their schools with a duration from 30 minutes to 4 and a half hours per week. 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. At the school that was closed, we were informed that no money was available for professional development.

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

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[5] 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.

- Teachers work year-round schedules with schools providing opportunities for attending summer professional development programs away from school.
- Teachers attend mandatory professional development activities, monthly workshops.
- Weekly staff meetings with professional development sessions. Also all teachers are encouraged to participate in other learning activities outside of the school
- All school training sessions are hosted by the school plus release time is given for outside workshops.
- Ten school days set aside for professional development. Also, 60 minute staff meetings once a week after school that focus on trends in education and educational research
- At least 2 hours per week
- Monthly staff meetings cover discipline, classroom management, curriculum, conflict and peer mediation, assessment, attendance, and grade recording.
- 31 total days set aside for professional development (during August and throughout school year)
- Training for two weeks prior to school, plus six full days during the school year
- Three weeks of staff development before school year along with 8-10 days during the school year, early dismissal days, conferences, workshops, and presentations
- Two hours a week
- 4.5 hours a month, and 3 workshops during the year
- Required participation in two week preservice session, one week session at the end of the year, and a two-hour in-service seminar each week; teachers are also sent to conferences.
- Weekly three-hour meetings
- Monthly half-day staff meetings
- Self improvement through courses; reimbursement for half the cost of approved courses
- Minimum of 12 full days set aside for professional development utilizing outside agencies/consultant groups to provide the training
- funds are provided for teachers to attend at least two required training sessions in addition to half-day in-service during the school year.
- 40 hours of professional training a year in such topics as first-aid/CPR, working with at-risk students, etc.
- Teacher meets with the curriculum specialist, plus 1.5 hour monthly staff meetings
- Funds are set aside for staff to attend local, regional, and state conferences.
- Teachers are asked to do a self-assessment of their professional development needs and propose options for growth.

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. Two-thirds of the schools provided information on their induction plans in the 1999-2000 annual reports. Many of the schools did not provide very specific details about their induction programs but, coupled with interview data and documentation collected from the schools, we were able to assemble an overview of the practices and trends in terms of teacher induction plans. A handful of schools noted that they held meetings at the school to cover orientation issues. Most of the 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 teachers, or a teacher education professor from a local college or university.

Some schools required participation in workshops while others provided optional 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 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. Not uncommon was to find that a number of schools required the new teachers to have extra days/weeks of preparation and training before the start of the school year (this ranged from 15 to 96 hours). One school required a month-long training session for new teachers.

One criticism we heard from a number of CAOs is that teacher education programs at the universities and colleges are not preparing teachers to work in urban classroom settings. One school administrator said that this was very important for their own teachers as well as for teachers in

surrounding schools. Therefore, they were exploring options with the district to conduct more lengthy preservice training programs for new teachers with no experience in urban schools.

8.5 Turnover of Teachers and Staff in Pennsylvania Charter Schools

One factor that is limiting the charter schools is the relatively high rates of attrition among teachers and staff. Among the 30 schools participating in our study, nearly 40 percent of the teachers left during or between the 1998-99 and 1999-00 school years. During this same time period less than 10 percent of the CAOs left or were replaced.

An 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?" Three-quarters of the staff indicated that they wished/intended to return the next year. This was essentially the same proportion that the previous year reported that they did not intend to return. Based on conversations with charter school CAOs and teachers and based on an examination of the attrition figures on a school-by-school basis, it is clear that the level of attrition at some of the charter schools was extremely high, while at other schools nearly all professional staff were returning.

For those teachers/staff who planned not to return next year (22 percent), their dissatisfaction was with school governance, administrative leadership, resources available for instruction, ability of the school to fulfill its stated mission, and evaluation of their performance.

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 are an 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 varies 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. We found clear evidence in slightly more than half of the charter schools that the teachers work collaboratively. 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 30 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 the effectiveness of the leadership and administration, good communication between parents/guardians and school, availability of support services to students, parental ability to influence the direction and activity of at the school, and students receiving sufficient individual attention had the largest decline from initial expectations to current experience. There is also a large decrease between teachers' expectations and current experience regarding the degree to which they are able to influence the steering and direction of the school. Other areas that teachers currently felt less positive about were class size, emphasis on academics, and parental involvement. One must note that there are some explanations for these figures including that many teachers were hired before the school opened, some teachers simply expected too much, and many were young teachers. Despite these figures, many teacher are still satisfied with their teaching environment, and about 75 percent planned to returned to the school the following year.

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. Some schools allot only a few hours a month or week for professional development while others allot a number of days. These opportunities often take the shape of summer workshops, release time for conferences, and frequent meetings and workshops within the school year. Most of the cited professional development consisted of weekly or monthly staff meetings at the school. The content of professional development opportunities included methods of teaching, technology, student assessment, 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.