



Advisory Memo

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TEACHER VOICE/TEACHER CHOICE

Teacher Satisfaction in NYC Charter Schools

DEMOCRATS
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Public Charter Schools Are More Teacher-Friendly Than Co-Located Counterparts, Educators Say

Democrats for Education Reform believes that a satisfied teaching force is crucial if education reforms are going to be sustained and impactful. This is one reason we support the idea of creating new public schools using state charter school laws. In New York City, we now see that teachers who choose to work in public charter schools that share facilities with traditional zoned public schools show greater workplace satisfaction than their host school colleagues, according to a review of Department of Education school survey data.

These charter school teachers reported receiving more feedback from their school leaders, and claimed, in significantly higher percentages, to be working in schools that set higher standards in the classroom and make student learning a priority.

For several years, policymakers have concentrated efforts on meeting the still-not-satisfied demands of parents for better schools for their children. We believe, however, that the voices of these teachers who specifically opt to work in alternative public schools paint an eye-opening picture that should be carefully considered when it comes to important policy debates. Not only do these teacher-supported charter schools deserve a “green light” for expansion in the city, but their staff’s comments on the type and level of feedback, the setting of high standards for students and adults, and the overall prioritization of student learning should help drive important policy directives for the entire Department of Education.

Background

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has made space-optimization a cornerstone of his education agenda since

assuming control and responsibility of the city’s public schools in 2002. By allowing public charter schools to share underutilized space in public school buildings, the city has removed one of the most significant barriers to the creation of new charter schools (a lack of affordable/feasible real estate in the city) and, in doing so, has dramatically expanded the number of quality public school offerings in neighborhoods like Harlem and Central Brooklyn, which have lacked great school options for decades.

Since 2007, the New York City Department of Education has conducted citywide surveys of parents, teachers and students, in both traditional and charter schools, in order to gauge the learning environment in each school. Since accountability is a hallmark of the charter school movement, these surveys serve as useful tools in comparing the dispositions of key members in school communities.

Comparing Co-Located Schools

An effective way of comparing teacher responses from public and charter schools is to juxtapose survey responses from teachers who work in a co-located school. Of the 125 charter schools in New York City, more than two-thirds share space with a public school.¹ Since the variable of a school building is constant in the two sample groups, a more accurate conclusion can be drawn. In other words, comparing the answers of two teachers that work in the same building and with students from the same neighborhood, but for two different schools, will yield sharper answers than comparing the answers of two teachers who work in different school buildings with different pools of students.

¹ New York City Independent Budget Office, Fiscal Brief, February 2010

When comparing teachers within the same school, co-located charter school teachers reported higher satisfaction than their public school counter-parts. They feel that their schools provide them with more feedback, set higher standards for student work and make finding ways to achieve student learning goals a priority.

Three Key Areas

The Department of Education has chosen three questions from the survey to mark as key areas to track teacher reported satisfaction.ⁱⁱ These three areas are:

- 1. School leaders give me regular and helpful feedback about my teaching.**
- 2. Teachers in this school set high standards for students' work in their classes.**
- 3. This school makes it a priority to help students find the best ways to achieve their learning goals.**

The responses were measured in terms of whether teachers Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

Methodology

The New York City Department of Education Website lists every school's survey results. Each statement is listed along with what percentage of teachers marked Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

For example:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?	Percent %			
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School leaders give me regular and helpful feedback about my teaching.	36	42	16	6

In this example, 78% of teachers Agreed/Strongly Agreed with the statement. In order to compare the satisfaction of co-located charter schools to co-located public schools, every co-located school's surveys were reviewed for the percent of teachers that Agreed/Strongly Agreed with the three key areas (for a breakdown of each school's answers, see Appendix A: 2011 NYC Survey Results). These percents were then averaged and compared.

Charter School Teacher Satisfaction

Of the 125 public charter schools in New York City, 71 share space in a building with a traditional public school. When comparing teachers within the same school, these 71 co-located charter school teachers on average reported higher satisfaction than their co-located public school counter-parts in every key area. Compared to

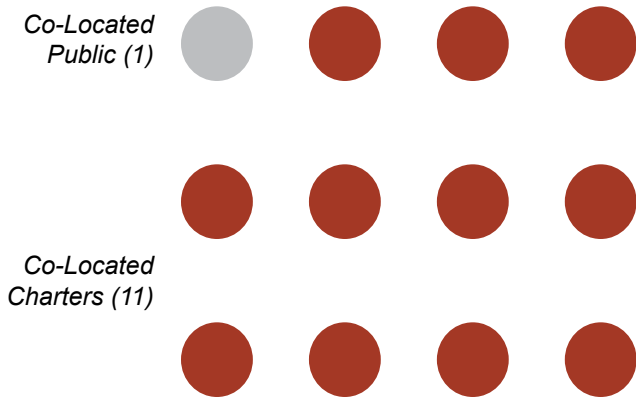
ⁱⁱ New York City Department of Education, New York City Public School Survey 2011

the citywide average responses, co-located charter school teachers were either on par or above average.

Key Area 1: School leaders give me regular and helpful feedback about my teaching

In 2011, an average of 78% of all New York City teachers, both public and charter, responded Agree or Strongly Agree in response to the statement “School leaders give me regular and helpful feedback about my teaching.” This average has gone up 7 percentage points since 2008, though, when disaggregated, the co-located public school teachers were still at the 2009 level of 74% while co-located charters were at 78%. Moreover, 11 charter schools, including Bronx Success Academy, KIPP Infinity, and Voice Charter School reported 100% of teachers Strongly Agreed with this statement, while only one public school had 100% agreement.

“School Leaders Give Me Regular Feedback”
Co-Located Schools Where 100% of Teachers “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”

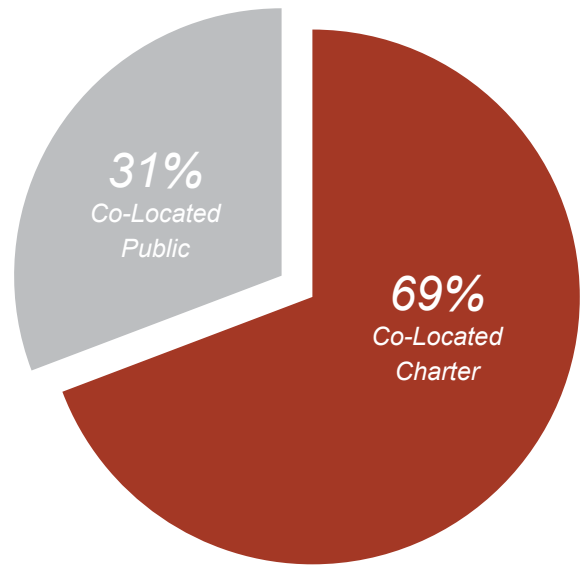


Key Area 2: Teachers in this school set high standards for students’ work in their classes

95% of all New York City teachers on average agreed or strongly agreed that teachers in their schools set

high standards for their work. Interestingly, 69% of co-located charter schools had 100% of teachers either Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement, while only 31% of co-located traditional schools had the same response. Further, there were three schools where 100% of teachers Strongly Agreed that their school sets high standards: all three were charters.

“My School Sets High Standards”
% of Co-Located Schools Where 100% of Teachers “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”

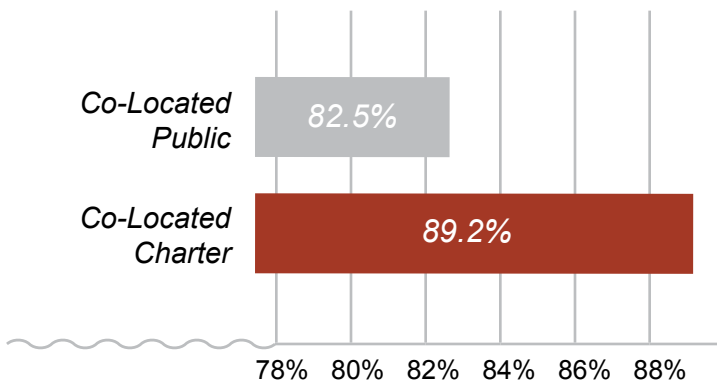


Key Area 3: This school makes it a priority to help students find the best ways to achieve their learning goals

87% of all New York City teachers on average agree or strongly agree with the third key area. More than three times as many charters had 100% of their teachers Strongly Agree that their school made it a priority to achieve student goals than the traditional school teachers with whom they share the building. The average responses of all co-located charters report that nearly 90% of teachers Agree or Strongly Agree with this statement. In comparison, an average of only 82% of co-located public school teachers

agree that their schools make it a priority to find the best ways to achieve student learning goals.

“My School Prioritizes Achieving Student Goals”
Average % of Teachers who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”



“National survey data show that teachers’ plans to remain in teaching are highly sensitive to their perceptions of their working conditions. The proportion of teachers who report that they plan to remain in teaching as long as they are able are strongly associated with how teachers feel about the administrative support, resources, and teacher voice and influence over policy in their schools.”

–“Unraveling the ‘Teacher Shortage’ problem: Teacher Retention is Key”

Teacher Responses Affect Budgets

The fact that charter school teachers report higher levels of satisfaction with their students’ learning environments directly affects school budgets. The more effective a learning environment is, the better a teacher can perform his or her job. If he or she feels effective, the likelihood of retention is higher. That means that the resources used to develop that teacher was a much better investment. Among the reasons that public school teachers across the country gave for leaving their classrooms in a National Center for Education Statistics Survey were: an opportunity for a better teaching assignment (40 percent), dissatisfaction with support from administrators (38 percent), and dissatisfaction with workplace conditions (32 percent).ⁱⁱⁱ This lines up exactly with the results of the NYC Teacher Survey, punctuating the fact that 60% of teachers left because they were unhappy with the support of their administrators and workplace conditions.

The Bottom Line

When comparing co-located teachers in charter and public schools the conclusion is clear: teachers in charter schools are more satisfied. They feel that their school provides more feedback, sets higher standards and makes student learning a priority. These teacher-centric public charter schools should serve as models for struggling zoned public schools to emulate.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, Teacher Attrition and Mobility Results from the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000–01

Appendix A: 2011 NYC Survey Results

Each number represents the average percentage of teachers in that school who agree with the statement

Charter School Name	Co-Located Org (by DBN) in Bldg '10-11	"Regular Feedback"		"Sets High Standards"		"Achieving Learning Goals"	
		Co-located Charter	Co-located Public	Co-located Charter	Co-located Public	Co-located Charter	Co-located Public
Academic Leadership Charter School	X065, 79K755	58	85	100	97	65	84
Achievement First Apollo Elementary School (formerly AF North Crown Heights)	K302	64	69	100	80	86	74
Achievement First Brownsville Elementary School	K493, 79K755	94	77	97	94	87	76
Achievement First Bushwick Charter School	K383	96	72	100	96	96	90
Achievement First Crown Heights Charter School	K587	84	85	100	93	84	93
Achievement First East New York Charter School	K013	82	85	97	94	80	95
Bedford Stuyvesant Collegiate Charter School	K267, K649	87	93	100	100	95	100
Believe Southside Charter High School	K126	82	21	82	73	94	37
Bronx Charter School for Better Learning	X111, X176, 75M02R	79	59	100	90	82	72
Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls	X385, 75M02R	79	66	89	100	89	82
Bronx Success Academy Charter School 1	X030, 84X309	100	87	100	95	94	92
Bronx Success Academy Charter School 2	X146	82	93	100	100	100	100
Brooklyn Charter School	K023, 75K369	84	97	100	100	96	96
Brooklyn City Prep Charter School (formerly Bedford Preparatory Charter School)	K455	100	35	100	91	89	80
Brooklyn Prospect Charter School	K564, K667	93	69	100	91	93	96
Brownsville Collegiate Charter School	K150	100	82	100	100	93	97
Challenge Preparatory Charter School	Q333	100	97	100	100	100	95
Community Partnership Charter School	K270	67	82	96	100	92	95
Community Roots Charter School	K067, 75K369	95	87	100	100	100	100
Democracy Prep Harlem Charter School	M092, M344, 84M388	79	87	97	100	91	82
Dr. Richard Izquierdo Health and Science Charter School	X158, X245, X479	75	77	100	85	100	80
Dream Charter School	M038	85	70	82	86	100	73
Excellence Girls Charter School	K309	89	72	100	94	100	91
Explore Charter School	None (DOE-leased space)	77	NA	96	NA	89	NA
Explore Empower Charter School	K394, K210	62	98	100	100	100	100
Fahari Academy Charter School	K246, K993 - ALC	0	72	100	88	80	77
Future Leaders Institute Charter School	M242	39	80	79	96	58	68

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Girls Preparatory Charter School of New York	M188, 75M094	69	48	100	95	70	69
Girls Preparatory Charter School of the Bronx	X302	76	78	100	97	100	87
Green Dot New York Charter School	75X010, X162, 75M00D, X998	88	50	82	86	80	79
Harlem Children's Zone/ Promise Academy II Charter School	M469, M993 - ALC	75	88	100	94	81	95
Harlem Link Charter School	M185	85	85	100	100	90	90
Harlem Success Academy Charter School 1	M149, 75M811	72	74	100	95	88	70
Harlem Success Academy Charter School 2	M138, M030, M317	83	80	100	96	97	77
Harlem Success Academy Charter School 3	75M811, M375	88	65	100	96	91	87
Harlem Success Academy Charter School 4	M241, 84M279	66	60	100	100	100	70
Harlem Success Academy Charter School 5	M123	83	96	100	93	100	93
Harlem Village Academy Charter School	M194	90	29	100	81	100	48
Harlem Village Academy Leadership Charter School	M409, M045	84	48	100	88	92	60
Hyde Leadership Charter School	X424, 75X352	52	85	82	95	77	92
Hyde Leadership Charter School-Brooklyn	K328	86	60	86	93	100	80
Icahn Charter School 4	X721, X242, X478	96	76	100	93	100	90
Inwood Academy for Leadership Charter School	Main Bldg - M152	66	51	100	90	100	50
Kings Collegiate Charter School	K588	73	41	91	87	83	46
KIPP Academy School	X151, X031	92	88	100	100	96	89
KIPP Amp Charter School	K334, K354	43	33	95	100	67	95
KIPP Infinity School	M195	100	46	93	79	93	56
KIPP Star College Prep Charter School	M125, M362	89	71	62	87	75	83
La Cima Elementary Charter School	K267, K648	NA	93	NA	100	NA	100
Leadership Prep Bedford Stuyvesant Charter School	K336, K983 - ALC	97	28	100	93	97	50
Leadership Prep Brownsville Charter School	K284	94	88	100	98	100	78
Leadership Prep Ocean Hill Charter School	K522, K644, KN23, 84K777	100	77	100	92	100	85
Lefferts Gardens Charter School	K092	58	100	75	100	83	100

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		Co-located Charter	Co-located Public	Co-located Charter	Co-located Public	Co-located Charter	Co-located Public
Manhattan Charter School	M142	58	94	100	97	96	92
Metropolitan Lighthouse Charter School	X093	80	69	100	81	64	79
New York Center for Autism Charter School	M050	100	47	100	96	100	73
Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter School	K522, K644, KN23, 84K775	100	87	100	92	100	85
Opportunity Charter School	M241, 84M386	58	80	70	100	60	70
Pave Academy Charter School	K015	65	94	100	100	90	94
Renaissance Charter High School for Innovation	M224, M635, M377	81	64	87	66	81	86
Renaissance Charter School	75Q255	41	90	89	93	81	82
Ross Global Academy Charter School	M450	63	89	97	98	94	98
South Bronx Charter School for International Cultures and the Arts	X049, 75X723	100	79	100	94	95	91
South Bronx Classical Charter School	X217, X384	88	64	100	95	84	82
St. Hope Leadership Academy	M092, M344, 84M350	59	87	82	100	72	92
Summit Academy Charter School	K027, K676	45	85	100	100	82	85
The Equality School	X160, 75X00D	89	75	100	97	89	70
The Equity Project Charter School	M463, M467, M468, M462	100	97	93	91	93	91
The Ethical Community Charter School (TECCS)	K297	55	86	91	97	100	84
The UFT Charter School	19K292	40	81	80	93	80	84
Voice Charter School of New York	Q111	100	80	100	98	89	93