

First Lock

About the 2019 State of Customer Experience Report

Mission

The State of K-12 Customer Experience Report is the first-ever national benchmark study created to assess, inform, and improve the quality of customer service and community engagement in the nation's K-12 public schools.

Goal

To help K-12 school leaders apply a level of rigor and analysis traditionally used to evaluate teaching and learning to the assessment and improvement of community engagement and the school customer experience.

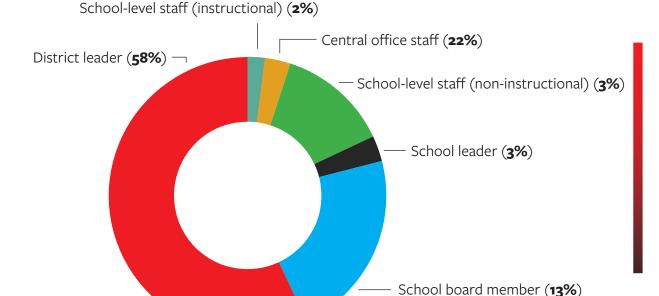
A national survey of school leaders

Who participated?

More than 500 school district leaders—including superintendents, department heads, school communications professionals, building principals, and school board members—participated in the 2019 survey.

What types of school leaders responded?

Most 2019 survey participants were district leaders (58 percent) or central office staff (22 percent). Of the 376 participants who reported working at the district level, most are in communications (62 percent).

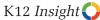


What We Learned

Most school districts prioritize customer service as a means to engage stakeholders. But participating school leaders said they lack the confidence, support, and strategies needed to confidently do this work.

Source: 2019 State of K-12 Customer Experience Survey

For a deeper look at our survey and methodology, visit www.k12cxreport.org.







Building trust and engaging stakeholders is a primary strategic priority for K-12 schools of all sizes.

Strategic Initiative	Relative Weighted Score		
	All Participants	Large districts (serving more than 75,000 students)	
Building community trust	100	100	
Engaging external stakeholders (i.e. parents and community members)	87	96	
Communication with internal stakeholders (i.e. staff)	84	99	
Providing high quality customer service for all stakeholders	76	84	
Improving public perception of the school district	67	75	
Effective crisis communication	54	58	
Preventing public relations crises	45	58	

Trust for the win.

School crises routinely dominate headlines. But preventing public relations crises were among the lowest ranking strategic priorities for most participants working in districts serving 75,000 or fewer students. Participants from districts of all sizes ranked building community trust as their top priority in terms of weighted score. Improving public perception of the school district ranked higher for large districts. In open-ended responses, participating school leaders linked qualities like customer service and trust to future school success.

Source: 2019 State of K-12 Customer Experience Survey

"Customer service in your school can make or break success rates and future growth. If someone has a bad experience at your school, you can bet they will be relaying that to their friends and family. And personal recommendations carry a ton of weight." -school board member

Building trust is very important, but school leaders lack confidence in their ability to deliver on this need.

Strategic Initiative	% Very Important	% Very Confident	
Building community trust	90%	52%	
Engaging external stakeholders (i.e. parents and community members)	81%	51%	
Communication with internal stakeholders (i.e. staff)	80%	56%	
Providing high-quality customer service for all stakeholders	76%	45%	
Improving public perception of the school district	75%	46%	
Effective crisis communication	80%	55%	
Preventing public relations crises	63%	39%	

Source: 2019 State of K-12 Customer Experience Survey

Confidence gap.

While 90 percent of participating school leaders said building trust was very important to their mission, only 52 percent were very confident in their ability to deliver on that goal. In addition, only 51 percent of participating school leaders were confident in their district's ability to engage parents and community members. The numbers don't look much better when it comes to communication with internal stakeholders, such as teachers and staff. While 80 percent of participants said communication with internal stakeholders was very important, only 56 percent felt very confident in the district's ability to do so effectively. Interestingly, 10 percent of respondents said they were not at all confident in their district's ability to deliver high-quality customer service.

Note: This comes at a time when teacher attrition is at 8%* nationwide, and districts continue to contend with the fallout from a series of organized walkouts.

*Source: Learning Policy Institute, 2017

"I believe that school systems are beginning to see and understand the need for providing customer service. Without systematic training on excellent customer service, it can never be standardized. This is the work our system is currently undertaking, but before training can begin, we had to build the case for why it should be done in an effort to seek buy-in." -school communications leader



Annual school climate and culture surveys are the primary means of improving customer service. But few districts have metrics to track progress in real-time.

Which of the following strategies or resources is your school district using to improve customer service in schools? (Select all that apply)

Responses	Count	%
Training	298	61%
Surveying stakeholders on school climate/culture	351	71%
Surveying families who have left the district	87	18%
Surveying employees who have left the district	178	36%
Improving outbound communication	302	61%
Improving internal communication (i.e. among staff)	345	70%
Improving two-way dialogue with external stakeholders	263	53%
Tracking specific customer service metrics	90	18%
Technology	272	55%
Secret shopping	26	5%
We're not currently trying to improve customer service in schools	36	7%
Other (Please specify)	22	4%
Total Unique Responses	492	

Total Responses 2,270

Note: The sum of percentages may exceed 100 since participants could select more than one answer.

Source: 2019 State of K-12 Customer Experience Survey

"As consumer service organizations continue to tailor their products, services, and logistics to better anticipate and meet customer needs, expectations of all institutions grow exponentially. Today's parent is a shopper, not a builder. They'll flee to the next district in a heartbeat if the service to their children does not meet expectations."

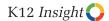
-School communications leader

Missed opportunities?

A majority of participating school district leaders said the primary means of measuring customer service comes through the administration of annual school climate and culture surveys. Tactics such as technology, family exit interviews, and secret shopping were used to a lesser degree. Seven percent of respondents said they were not currently trying to improve customer service in schools. In openended comments, respondents said shifting community expectations necessitate new ways of thinking about school customer service.

For not-so-good measure.

Fifteen percent of participating school district leaders said no one in their district is responsible for improving customer service while 19 percent said no one is monitoring the quality of customer service the district provides.



Preview Recommendations

This exclusive first-look shares three of six key recommendations. For the full list, visit www.k12cxreport.org and sign up to receive the final report—due out in September.





Implement a system for addressing customer responses

Ad-hoc is not the answer. Participating school leaders agreed that the school experience suffers without a replicable system to address stakeholder questions, concerns, and other issues. Such systems don't have to be complicated. In fact, simpler is often better.

As Nora Carr, chief of staff for Guilford County Schools in North Carolina, explained in an interview: "Districts should start simply and begin with the central office. Then, bring the improvements to each school."

Survey findings support this recommendation and emphasize that when districts are ready to address customer service challenges, they should start small and focus on creating a system that they can scale districtwide when the time is right.

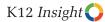


Determine an objective method for measuring district effectiveness

Metrics matter. School districts need some way to determine if their efforts to improve customer service are working, and that effort requires more than an annual survey.

Survey respondents indicated that surveys (which are only one type of method for measuring effectiveness) were rarely sent to families and typically sent only when a family exited the school district. An effective customer service system incorporates means of measuring effectiveness at multiple levels and touch points throughout the school year—giving districts a timely and accurate picture of the entire customer experience.





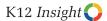
Cultivate a culture of customer service excellence

Success runs deep. Survey respondents ranked building community trust and engaging internal and external stakeholders among their top priorities. But they also acknowledged that improvements are only possible when a commitment to customer service becomes part of the broader school district culture. A culture of excellent customer service starts at the top (i.e. the superintendent and district office), but it extends to individual schools and even into classrooms.

As Dr. A. Katrise Perera, superintendent of Oregon's Gresham-Barlow School District, noted in a recent interview: "Ninety percent of parents only ever see the front office of our schools. Parents will make assumptions about the school based on those interactions."

Dr. Perera said a good customer experience often amounts to a defining moment for families. "Since parents now have many options for their children's education, we need to set ourselves apart. Everyone offers core content, but not everyone provides good customer service."





Cultivate A Culture Of Customer Service Excellence

Survey methodology

Sample

- 22,504 school district leaders, central office staff, school board members, and school-level staff received invitations to participate in the 2019 State of K-12 Customer Experience Survey cohort
- 538 people responded—2.4% response rate

Administration

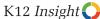
- The survey was open May 16 through June 21
- Survey invitations and reminders to non-participants were sent via email

About participating districts

- 2019 survey participants represent districts of all sizes
- The highest number of responses were from districts serving 5,000 to 9,000 students (111 responses)
- The lowest number of responses were from districts serving more than 75,000 students (36 responses)







Want even more school Cx data?

Visit www.k12cxreport.org and sign up to receive the full 2019 State of K-12 Customer Experience Report

Coming September 2019

