



2015 Award Recipient

Charter School of San Diego

The Charter School of San Diego (CSSD), authorized by the public San Diego Unified School District, states that it “is committed to the development of a personalized instructional program with intensive parental involvement that demonstrates positive outcomes for each student.” Opened in 1994, CSSD is specifically aimed at students whose futures are at risk because they were not successful at conventional schooling. Students who enroll at CSSD are seeking an alternative educational environment or fall into several at-risk categories. On average, 14 percent of the student population is designated as gifted and 13 percent require special education. CSSD provides free, individualized education in Grades 7-12 to engage, graduate, or redirect these students. CSSD is headquartered in San Diego, Calif., operates 21 instructional and educational resources centers in San Diego County, and employs 187 workforce members.

Student-Focused Processes Get High Marks

- To fulfill its ultimate goal of transforming the lives of students who enter the school behind academically and at risk of never receiving a high school diploma, CSSD focuses on providing an individualized education program that will build student confidence and engagement in learning so that they can graduate at CSSD or transition back to a traditional high school for graduation. Over the past five years, CSSD demonstrated an overall increase in successful transitions and exceeded its goal of 95 percent.
- CSSD systematically builds relationships with students and their families or other guardians, beginning with targeted marketing messages that aim to attract new students. As a result, CSSD's student body has grown from 1,704 students in the 2009-2010 academic year to 2,187 students in 2014-2015.
- CSSD maintained overall student and parent satisfaction levels of close to 100 percent from 2010 to 2015. Furthermore, 95 percent of enrolled students for the past six years would recommend CSSD to others, and 97 percent of students' parents would recommend the school to a friend or family member.
- For the California High School Exit Exam, a state-required graduation assessment of students' achievement in English/language arts and math, CSSD students have maintained a schoolwide passing rate of about 80 percent for five years, better than three competitor schools.
- CSSD has sustained a student retention rate above 80 percent for the past five academic years. The school reduced the time from student enrollment through intake from an average of nearly 12 days in 2010-2011 to about five days in 2014-2015.
- CSSD determines what educational programs and support to provide for students and their families by systematically drawing on



Highlights

- CSSD maintained overall student and parent satisfaction levels of close to 100 percent from 2010 to 2015. Furthermore, 95 percent of enrolled students for the past six years would recommend CSSD to others, and 97 percent of students' parents would recommend the school to a friend or family member.
- CSSD's overall dropout rate of 2.4 percent in 2013-2014 outperformed the county rate of 2.7 percent and the statewide rate of 3.1 percent, even though CSSD students are on average two to three grade levels behind peers in language arts and three to four grade levels behind peers in math achievement when they enroll.
- CSSD has retained between 80–90 percent of its instructional staff for the past six years.
- Despite a combined decrease of 43.14 percent in state funding in recent years, CSSD's positive end-of-year fund balances have increased for the last six years.



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data and information from many sources, including local school districts, customer surveys, and community demographics. The school's student intake process determines individual student needs.

- On the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)—a nationally normed test for students in grades 7 through 11 on math, reading, and language usage—CSSD results show an overall favorable trend over the past four years for the number of students who have met growth targets set by the school.

The Best Teachers Follow the Best Practices

- CSSD has retained between 80–90 percent of its instructional staff for the past six years. For four years, CSSD has maintained a greater percentage of teachers with advanced degrees than two of its charter school competitors and most recently outperformed its county school system on this measure in the 2013-2014 academic year.
- Results from CSSD's Work Styles Behavior Survey of job candidates enable the school to identify individuals who are likely to be a good fit based on behavioral alignment with the organization's mission, vision, and values.
- CSSD teachers with Leading Edge Certification—which ensures that they have the skills to effectively facilitate students' learning in online courses—increased from about 20 percent in the 2012-2013 academic year to more than 80 percent in 2014-2015.
- CSSD instructional staff members attending at least one professional development activity in each quarter of the academic year increased from about 50 percent in the 2011-2012 academic year to about 95 percent in 2014-2015.

Leadership and Vision Build a Rich Learning Environment

- CSSD senior leaders effectively communicate with and engage their staff and school community members. For example, monthly meetings provide regular forums to discuss current instructional outcomes with the workforce, students, and parents.
- CSSD leaders have embraced "kids come first" as an organizational value and defined the school's core competency as "transforming lives." CSSD resource centers (where teachers work one-on-one with students) sponsor families for meals and school supplies during winter holidays, support work experiences for students, and provide career and health support for students and their families. Teachers also make a regular practice of visiting students' homes, traveling in pairs.
- CSSD's school's overall dropout rate of 2.4 percent in 2013-2014 outperformed the county rate of 2.7 percent and the statewide rate of 3.1 percent, even though CSSD students are on average two to three grade levels behind peers in language arts and three to four grade levels behind peers in math achievement when they enroll.

Sound Business Principles Ensure Solvency

- Despite a combined decrease of 43.14 percent in state funding in recent years, CSSD's positive end-of-year fund balances have increased for the last six years. Additionally, CSSD's innovative approach in evaluating the financial performance of each resource center demonstrates that the number of resource centers with deficits fell over the past three years from seven of 20 in FY 2012-2013, to six in FY 2013-2014, and most recently, to three in FY 2014-2015.
- Audits of the school's finances for the past five fiscal years have had zero adverse findings. Additionally, CSSD has demonstrated full compliance with state regulations to spend no less than 40 percent of public revenue expenditures on salaries and benefits for certified employees and 80 percent of all revenues on instruction and related services, while not exceeding a state-specified pupil-to-teacher ratio.

Making the Grade with Planning

- CSSD manages and supports innovation through its Process Design and Improvement System and Plan-Do-Learn-Act (PDLA) process.
- CSSD's Student Information System (SIS)—the organization's database of student and classroom management information—serves as a portal for two-way communications, as parents and students can log in and review student data in real time.
- Among staff members, CSSD's PDLA process enables knowledge to be shared and learning to be embedded throughout the organization. Performance data, which are tracked daily, enable staff members to evaluate areas for improvement.

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