



Elevate 215 | Philadelphia | Toplines | May 2026

135 Interviews Philadelphia district and charter school leaders from May 1-26, 2026.

Margin of Error = +/- 6.6%.

Q1. Are you currently the principal (or equivalent) at a:

- 58% School District of Philadelphia School
- 42 Philadelphia Charter School
- 0 Neither [Terminated]

Q2a. Do you possess a PA Principal Certificate?

- 24% Yes, I hold a PA Principal Certificate - Level 1
- 74 Yes, I hold a PA Principal Certificate - Level 2
- 1 Yes, I hold a PA Emergency Administrative Permit
- 0 I hold an Administrative Certificate or Emergency Permit, but not in PA
- 1 No

Q2b. [If holds a PA Administrative Certificate] At what institution did you attain administrative certification?

- 3% Arcadia University
- 13 Cabrini University
- 12 Cheyney University
- 3 Drexel University School of Education
- 7 Eastern University
- 9 Gwynedd Mercy University
- 4 Holy Family University
- 0 La Salle University School of Education
- 4 PhillyPLUS
- 3 Relay Graduate School of Education
- 7 Saint Joseph's University
- 5 Temple University College of Education
- 4 University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education
- 25 Another institution (please specify)

Q3. How many total years of teaching experience did you have before becoming a principal/equivalent?

- 4% Less than 3 years
- 16 3-5 years
- 40 6-10 years
- 15 11-15 years
- 26 Over 15 years

Polling was conducted online from May 1-26, 2026. Using Dynamic Online Sampling to attain a representative sample, Embold Research polled 135 Philadelphia district and charter school leaders. You can see a full methodology statement [here](#), which complies with the requirements of AAPOR's Transparency Initiative. Members of the Transparency Initiative disclose all relevant details about our research, with the principle that the public should be able to evaluate and understand research-based findings, in order to instill and restore public confidence in survey results.

Q4. How many total years of experience do you have as a principal or principal-equivalent leader (not including any years as an assistant principal or principal intern)?

4% This is my first year
 1 1 year
 25 2-5 years
 36 6-10 years
 34 11 or more years

Q5. In total, how many years have you worked in education in Philadelphia, across all roles?

1% Less than 1
 0 1-2 years
 1 3-5 years
 7 6-10 years
 17 11-15 years
 75 16 or more years

Q6. What grade levels does your school serve? Select all that apply.

73% Kindergarten
 73 1st grade
 73 2nd grade
 73 3rd grade
 73 4th grade
 74 5th grade
 61 6th grade
 59 7th grade
 59 8th grade
 32 9th grade
 32 10th grade
 32 11th grade
 31 12th grade

Q7. Approximately what percentage of your students fall into each of the following categories?

	Less than 10%	10-24%	25-49%	50-74%	75% or more
Are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (If your school provides free meals to all students, select "75% or more")	0	1	2	2	95
Have an Individualized Education Program (IEP)	1	48	49	1	0
Are English Language Learners (ELL)	49	28	19	3	1

Q8. Which of the following best describes the proportion of teachers of color in your school? For this question, think of classroom teachers or teachers of record.

10% More than 70% teachers of color
 44 30-70% teachers of color
 46 Less than 30% teachers of color
 0 Not sure

Q9. In general, would you say district and charter schools in Philadelphia are going in the right direction or the wrong direction?

64% Right direction
36 Wrong direction

Q10. In general, how satisfied are you in your current school leadership role?

38% Very satisfied
46 Somewhat satisfied
13 Somewhat unsatisfied
4 Very unsatisfied

84% Total Satisfied
16 Total Unsatisfied

Q11. How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your current school leadership position?

	<u>Satisfied</u>		<u>Unsatisfied</u>		Not sure	Total Satisfied	Total Unsatisfied
	Very	Smwt	Smwt	Very			
Your relationship with the students	75	21	2	2	1	95	4
Your relationship with teachers and non-administration staff	49	41	6	3	1	90	9
Your relationship with families and the larger community	47	44	6	3	1	90	9
Health and retirement benefits	44	42	10	4	0	86	14
Salary	29	55	13	3	1	83	16
Your level of autonomy in decision-making	27	47	16	10	1	74	26
Vision and priorities established at your organization/district	30	44	19	7	1	73	26
Access to professional development	21	47	20	12	1	68	31
School safety	29	39	21	9	2	68	30
The prestige of the principal profession	20	47	19	8	6	67	27
Teachers/non-teaching staff to student ratio	17	50	22	11	1	66	33
Your relationship with school system leaders and other decision-makers	31	33	27	8	2	64	35
Diversity of the teaching staff	18	44	27	11	1	62	38
Diversity of organizational/district leadership	17	45	25	10	3	62	35
Opportunities for career advancement	17	43	20	14	6	60	34
Access to adequate facilities	22	32	22	22	2	54	44
Access to adequate resources (e.g., funding, supplies, and support staff)	20	28	26	25	2	47	51
Workload	7	34	36	21	2	41	57

**Q12. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:
“In my current school leadership position...”**

	Agree			Disagree		Total	Total
	Strongly	Smwt	Neither	Smwt	Strongly	Agree	Disagree
I am treated with respect by my coworkers and other school staff.	57	38	2	2	2	95	4
I am treated with respect by parents.	45	43	6	6	0	88	6
I feel physically safe in my work environment.	48	39	9	4	1	87	4
My opinion matters when it comes to school-wide decision-making.	52	35	7	5	1	87	6
I am not afraid to speak up or challenge organizational decision-makers.	40	36	11	7	7	75	13
I feel emotionally safe in my work environment.	37	37	11	13	2	74	15
I have the tools and resources I need to be an effective and successful leader.	19	49	14	14	3	68	17
I feel supported by organizational leaders or central office administration in my role.	33	34	12	16	5	66	22
I have autonomy to make decisions affecting school policies and practices.	21	43	14	20	2	63	22
I feel connected to the broader mission and vision for public education in Philadelphia.	19	40	22	16	4	59	19
I receive recognition and appreciation for my work.	22	37	15	22	4	58	27
My opinion matters when it comes to organization/district-wide decision-making.	25	25	17	22	11	50	33

Q13. What are one or two of the biggest challenges you face as a school leader? Please tell us as much detail as you can. [See individual responses.](#)

Q14. Which of the following would you consider the most significant challenges in your current role? Select up to THREE.

- 42% Shortage of staff to address student needs
- 37 Workload
- 36 Inadequately prepared teachers
- 36 Available funding for the school
- 27 Management of student behavior
- 27 Expectations around student achievement
- 25 Politicization of education
- 16 Implementing new curriculum and pedagogy
- 14 Lack of autonomy when making important decisions
- 9 Lack of support from organizational leaders
- 9 Lack of professional growth opportunities
- 8 School safety
- 8 Inadequate salary or benefits
- 4 Negative interactions with parents
- 4 Tension or poor relationships between teachers and administrators
- 11 Something else (please specify)
- 1 There are no challenges in my current role

Q15. How supported do you feel in recruiting an effective and diverse teaching staff?

- 16% Extremely supported
- 22 Very supported
- 31 Somewhat supported
- 21 Not that supported
- 11 Not at all supported

38% Total Supported

32 Total Not supported

Q16. How supported do you feel retaining an effective and diverse teaching staff?

- 14% Extremely supported
- 30 Very supported
- 35 Somewhat supported
- 18 Not that supported
- 3 Not at all supported

44% Total Supported

21 Total Not supported

Q16b. [If less than “very supported” in Q15 or Q16] What do you consider the biggest barriers to recruiting or retaining an effective and diverse teaching staff at your school? Select up to TWO.

- 67% Insufficient applicant pool
- 53 Inadequate preparation before entering the classroom
- 31 Uncompetitive salary and benefits
- 15 Inadequate mentorship or support structures
- 13 Limited autonomy over hiring decisions
- 9 Lack of organizational commitment to diversity in hiring
- 7 Limited career advancement opportunities while remaining in the classroom
- 11 Something else (please specify)

Q17. On a scale from 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend teaching in Philadelphia to a friend, family member, or acquaintance? 0 means that you would be “not at all likely” to recommend teaching to a friend, family member, or acquaintance, and 10 means that you would be “extremely likely” to recommend teaching.

3%	0-not at all likely
0	1
1	2
5	3
7	4
14	5
8	6
17	7
20	8
8	9
16	10-extremely likely

4 Total 0-2
44 Total 8-10

Q18. Which of the following best describes your pathway to becoming a school leader?

30%	I was recruited or encouraged by a mentor or supervisor to pursue leadership
25	I sought out leadership independently through a formal preparation program
34	I was promoted from within my school or organization
2	I transitioned from a leadership role outside of a public school environment
7	I entered through an alternative or non-traditional pathway (e.g., emergency certification, fellowship program)
2	Other (please specify)

Q19. Which of the following factors were most influential in your decision to become a school leader? Please select up to THREE.

65%	Wanting to make a positive social impact on the community
35	Wanting to work in a school environment/context beyond a teaching role
34	Inspired by a peer or mentor to pursue school leadership
34	Wanting to improve social, racial, or economic justice
33	Personal connection to the Philadelphia community (e.g., grew up here, attended Philly schools)
32	Wanting a leadership role in the education space
32	Wanting more influence in school policies and practices
21	Pursuing career advancement and professional development opportunities
15	Inspired by a friend or family member who was or is a school leader
13	Increased salary
0	Access to health and retirement benefits

Q20. Thinking back to your journey to becoming a school leader, which of the following were significant barriers you faced along the way? Please select up to THREE.

28%	Cost of principal certification or graduate programs
21	Balancing preparation requirements with existing teaching responsibilities
20	Family or personal obligations
18	Racial, gender, or other identity-based barriers
17	Lack of mentorship or support from existing leaders
17	Limited access to leadership development opportunities
12	Lack of exposure to the principal role
12	Not seeing yourself represented in school leadership
11	Unclear or inconsistent pathway to advancement
8	Navigating credentialing or bureaucratic requirements
5	Lack of encouragement or recognition of leadership potential
5	School or organizational culture that discourages aspiring leaders
1	Geographic limitations on program availability
2	Other (please specify)
24	None — I did not face significant barriers

Q21. How long do you plan to stay in a school leadership role?

2%	Less than a year
9	1-2 more years
18	3-5 more years
18	5-10 years
5	More than 10 years
26	Until retirement
23	Not sure

Q22. Please select and rank the top FIVE incentives, activities, or conditions that would make you consider extending your service as a Philadelphia school leader.

	1 - top choice	2	3	4	5
Increased funding for your school	38	23	17	14	8
Salary increases	35	15	10	13	27
Reduced workload (e.g., administrative tasks assigned to school-based work staff)	27	16	24	16	17
Increased teaching positions allocated to your school	21	26	12	30	12
Coaching and mentoring support	20	15	18	28	20
Retention bonuses	18	26	20	18	18
Robust mental health resources and supports	17	31	14	17	22
Revised workday schedule (e.g., more self-directed teacher work time or opportunities for team-based collaboration)	16	22	25	25	13
Identity-based affinity groups or Professional Learning Communities	14	14	14	14	43
Housing-related interventions (e.g., subsidies, low-interest mortgages)	14	29	14	21	21
Policies to increase teacher hiring and retention	12	24	21	15	27
Increased support staff positions allocated to your school	11	14	20	36	18
Professional development opportunities	10	19	32	13	26
Greater authority to hire and organize staff	5	11	42	26	16
Policies to increase non-teaching staff hiring and retention	0	19	42	12	27

Q23a. Have you ever considered leaving your current leadership position?

- 34% No, I have never considered leaving
- 42 I have considered leaving, but have not taken any action to pursue other opportunities
- 20 I have considered leaving and have taken steps to pursue other opportunities
- 4 I have considered leaving and I'm already planning to leave

Q23b. [If considering leaving] Which of the following would you consider pursuing if you decide to leave your current leadership in Philadelphia? Select all that apply.

- 56% A job related to K-12 education, but not within a school or school system
- 52 A school leadership role outside of Philadelphia
- 26 Retirement
- 19 A job unrelated to K-12 education
- 17 Something else (please specify)

Q24. How familiar are you with the following resources or programs?

	Familiar				Total Familiar	Total Not Familiar
	Very	Smwt	Not That	At All		
Philadelphia Academy of School Leaders (PASL)	58	21	10	10	80	20
TeachPHL	25	43	23	10	68	32
Philadelphia Affinity Group Network (PAGN)	23	28	26	23	51	49
Philadelphia Charters for Excellence Principal Power Network	14	21	24	40	36	64
The Teacher Retention Toolbox	10	22	23	44	33	67
Philadelphia Citywide Talent Coalition	11	21	33	35	32	68

Q25. What is one piece of advice you have for policymakers who want to attract, support, and retain high-quality school leaders in Philadelphia? [See individual responses.](#)

D1. Are you:

32%	Male
67	Female
1	Non-binary
0	Other

D2. Age

1%	18 to 34
56	35 to 49
39	50 to 64
3	65+

D3. Race/ethnicity

49%	Black or African American
39	White / Caucasian
7	Hispanic or Latino/a
4	Asian / Pacific Islander
0	American Indian or Alaska Native
1	Other