



2021 Award Recipient

The Charter School of San Diego

"Kids Come First" at The Charter School of San Diego (CSSD), which was authorized by the public San Diego Unified School District. The charter school provides free, personalized education to engage and redirect grade 6–12 students at risk of not graduating from high school through a hybrid in-person/online study program. CSSD currently serves about 3,500 students annually and since its establishment in 1994 has served nearly 48,000 students. CSSD is headquartered in San Diego, Calif., operates 13 instructional and educational resource center classrooms in San Diego County, and employs 130 workforce members.

This is the second Baldrige Award for The Charter School of San Diego; the organization was honored in the same category in 2015.

Student-Learning Processes and Benchmark Results

- CSSD's Pathways Personalized Education Program (PPEP) results in a personalized education plan for every student. PPEP inputs include feedback from students and their parents on student needs, barriers to learning, desired outcomes, and academic and learning style assessments.
- Resource Centers (classrooms) provide individualized attention focused on daily student progress toward successful high school graduation or transition back to traditional high school. Over the past five years, CSSD demonstrated an overall increase in successful transitions from 95.7% to 98.1%, exceeding its goal of 95% each year.
- CSSD's Dashboard Alternative School Status (DASS) graduation rate for all students and student groups reached 77% in the 2019-2020 school year, outperforming competitors and county and state DASS schools. A DASS school is designated by the state and must have at least 70% of its total enrollment comprised of high-risk groups such as high-transiency (multiple schools), credit deficient, homeless, or habitually truant students.
- CSSD student performance for grades 6–8 and 11 in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress is double that of all competitors and county and state DASS schools in English Language Arts and three times higher in math. CSSD has sustained this performance for five years.

Customer Results Close to 100%

- CSSD listens to, and seeks feedback from, students and their parents to obtain actionable information on its services through surveys, home visits, and social media platforms. CSSD maintained overall student and parent satisfaction levels of close to 100% from 2016 to 2021, compared to around 80% for brand-name, out-of-industry benchmarks.



Highlights

- CSSD demonstrates an overall increase in successful transitions (high school graduation or transition back to traditional high school) from 95.7% to 98.1%.
- CSSD student performance for grades 6–8 and 11 in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress is double that of all competitors and county and state DASS schools in English Language Arts and three times higher in math.
- For the past six years, 95% of enrolled students would recommend CSSD to others, and 97% of students' parents would recommend the school to a friend or family member.
- CSSD established a leading market position as the largest independent charter school in its operating area and has had the largest market share in San Diego.
- The graduation rate for high-risk students and student groups reached 77% in the 2019-2020 school year, outperforming competitors and county and state high-risk designated schools.



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People Processes Yield Highest-Overall Results

- Over the past three years, CSSD has had the highest overall workforce engagement in a national engagement and satisfaction survey among all Baldrige Award recipient peers, and it averaged 13 points higher than the K-12 industry benchmark.
- At CSSD, 100% of courses are taught by multi-certificated, specially trained teachers, which is a differentiator among CSSD and its competitors. Teachers with Leading Edge Certification—which ensures that they have the skills to effectively facilitate students' learning in online courses—increased from about 47% in the 2016-2017 academic year to 85% in 2020-2021.
- 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. The school's onboarding process includes training on best practices for new staff members and a shadowing program that pairs them with high-performing peers.
- CSSD has retained more than 90% of its instructional staff for the past six years. In 2019-2020, CSSD retained 91% of its staff, compared to the national average of 84%.

Leadership Results in Societal Benefit

CSSD senior leaders effectively communicate with and engage their staff and school community members through more than 20 different regular activities. These include the use of welcome cards, email, videos, social media, and open houses. Senior leaders communicate the vision and values through the sharing of student success stories and relaying thank yous from students and families. In a 2021 survey, 97% of CSSD workforce members indicated that they were satisfied with their managers' communication, compared to the K-12 industry benchmark of about 70%.

Financial Results Reveal Leading Market Position

- From FY2017-2018 to FY2020-2021, CSSD revenues have increased from \$21 million to more than \$23 million, net operating results have increased from \$1.45 million to \$1.69 million, and the end-of-year fund balance has increased from \$32.98 million to \$35.87 million. The current fund balance represents 156% of the annual operational budget, which would allow the school to remain afloat for more than one fiscal year without receiving any additional revenue.
- CSSD has established a leading market position as the largest independent charter school in its operating area, and it has had the largest market share in San Diego for the past five years.

Work Processes and Operational Effectiveness Support Innovation, Sustainability

- CSSD did not miss one single day of instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior leaders deployed a sustainable plan to all workforce members within hours. In addition, CSSD's strong fiscal position allowed it to implement major process innovations such as e-signature capability, a cloud-based phone system, expansion of online meeting software, and the Wave (CSSD's intranet).
- CSSD manages and supports innovation through its Process Design Introduction, Improvement, and Innovation System and Plan-Do-Learn-Act process. If a need to innovate is identified, a champion is assigned, and a timeline and goals are established. Data are collected, and research is done to identify technology and resources needed.

Information and Knowledge Management for Real-Time Student Achievement

- CSSD's Collaboration and Knowledge Management System (CKMS) aligns and integrates data collected and tracked electronically from students, the workforce, assessments, and operations and enables the transfer of knowledge to and from stakeholders. CSSD's Best Practices portal facilitates the sharing of best practices among workforce members.
- Teachers use instructional and assessment software and access the School Pathways Student Information System to view real-time student achievement data. Data are analyzed by teachers, Learning Leads, and the Administrator of Instructional Services to ensure that the instructional strategies used are truly successful for each student.

For more information:

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Baldrige Performance Excellence Program

The Baldrige Program educates organizations of all sizes and from all sectors in organizational performance management and improvement. We also administer the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Our key services are to identify and recognize role-model organizations, share best management practices, and help organizations achieve best-in-class performance levels. We are the only public-private partnership and Presidential award program dedicated to improving U.S. organizations.

For more information on the Baldrige Program:
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