

Bridgeport Education Association Climate Survey Results October 2024

Executive Summary

"I am disheartened at the direction of the school system. I am absolutely fearful of retaliation and do not have any confidence in the superintendent's ability to lead this district going forward. Too much damage has been done, and I have lost all faith in her ability to lead." —Longtime Bridgeport educator

"I don't see any hope staying in Bridgeport. This is my hometown; however, it has become a very hostile work environment. Many teachers feel threatened by the superintendent and her comments and actions. If she remains in the position as Bridgeport's superintendent there will be a mass exodus and many teacher vacancies by May 2025." —Longtime Bridgeport educator

The Bridgeport Education Association is the union representing teachers, librarians, psychologists, counselors, and speech-language pathologists working in the Bridgeport Public Schools. In October 2024, a survey was sent to all members' personal email addresses. Almost 600 members responded to the survey.

The results show an alarming climate and leadership crisis in the school system. The comments illustrate the deep commitment and loyalty the educators have to each other and the children and families they work with each day. Unfortunately, the current leadership of the school district is creating confusion, extra stress, and pressure—making teaching and learning even more difficult in Bridgeport.

Some of the most salient findings:

- **97% of educators** lack confidence in the superintendent's leadership.
- **93% of educators** fear retaliation if they voice concerns about current conditions.
- **93% of educators** indicate that the superintendent is not open to contrary or differing points of view.
- **93% of educators** say the superintendent is unprofessional in dealing with teachers and other staff.
- **92% of educators** say the superintendent lacks consistency in carrying out policies and procedures.
- **88% of educators** find that policy decisions are rarely based on carefully conducted research.
- **80% of educators** are considering leaving Bridgeport for a position in another district.

Comments from educators:

"The new curriculum, assessments, and pacing were not planned by grade level, for primary kids, or for the time needed for different units. There is no time for younger students to learn how to actually use the interactive programs/assessments in the pacing guide. I waste time teaching my kids how to do the assessments, rather than teaching them how to read."

"I do 100% believe Bridgeport needs change, but the way the superintendent is going about it is not how you introduce change. I am constantly riddled with anxiety every day and worry that because I am not on the 'correct' lesson I can be fired as I am not tenured. Every other Wednesday people from downtown come and observe us—heightening teachers' stress. Since I was five-years-old I have wanted to be a teacher, but the way this year is going, it does not make teaching a sustainable career. The amount of stress I have experienced these past weeks has led me to one of my worst mental health crises in years!"

1. The superintendent is sensitive to the needs and problems of the school system.

Strongly disagree: 70%

Disagree: 25%

Total disagree: 95%

Strongly agree: 4%

Agree: 1%

Total agree: 5%

2. The superintendent offers positive reinforcement to teachers and other staff.

Strongly disagree: 70%

Disagree: 26%

Total disagree 96%

Strongly agree: 3%

Agree: 1%

Total agree: 4%

3. The superintendent is supportive of individual teacher needs and/or concerns.

Strongly disagree: 72%

Disagree: 23%

Total disagree: 95%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 4%

Total agree: 5%

"Initiatives are designed and implemented with seemingly very little thought and planning and provide little flexibility for educators to correct the inadequacies that arise because of the poor design and implementation. The superintendent also seems disinterested in responding to feedback from teachers and families and addressing their concerns, often either acknowledging concerns without taking meaningful action, ignoring concerns, or responding to concerns with contempt for those raising them. This has led me and many other educators and families to believe that the superintendent lacks both the competence and the temperament to run this district."

"The expectations put in place by the superintendent's office were made without any research on our student population and the more pressing issues that need to be dealt with. Students are going without the necessary services (sped, ESL) because there aren't enough specialists and the specialists we do have are being pulled. Class sizes are out of control due to closing of classrooms without warning."

"I'm sure at some point the superintendent will move on, leaving our district in shambles, with those of us who stay left, once again, to pick up the pieces and try to rebuild an educational system that works for the children of Bridgeport who deserve so, so much better."

"The demands on teachers are too high, with no resources or support. District initiatives are not carefully thought out and change weekly, leaving me with no time to prepare what they expect of me. There is no time to complete what is expected of me during contractual hours."

4. The superintendent is available and visible.

Strongly disagree: 57%
Disagree: 34%
Total disagree: 91%

Strongly agree: 1%
Agree: 8%
Total agree: 9%

5. The superintendent is respected by the teachers.

Strongly disagree: 79%
Disagree: 18%
Total disagree: 97%

Strongly agree: 1%
Agree: 2%
Total agree: 3%

6. The superintendent presents a positive tone in the building.

Strongly disagree: 67%
Disagree: 27%
Total disagree: 94%

Strongly agree: 1%
Agree: 5%
Total agree: 6%

"The superintendent only makes herself visible when it benefits her or makes her appear in a positive light. She takes credit for the work of those on the front line but treats those same individuals as second-class citizens with no ability to offer input about the issues they themselves face on a day-to-day basis."

"The superintendent seems to only be concerned with getting good press and having as many photo ops as possible. She does not seem concerned about actually getting our opinions on any matters and clearly doesn't understand what she should be doing. She has been a major disappointment in every way possible, and I was very hopeful that an outside voice would be good for the district. I could not have been more wrong. I have zero confidence in her, her abilities, or her staff."

"I am in my third year of teaching and have never felt so discouraged about my job until this school year. I have cried several times at school and at home about how I've been feeling. I feel like all the hard work and time I spent on my education have gone to waste. I can't make decisions for my own students in my own classroom based on their individual needs. The people downtown making decisions are so out of touch with how to run a classroom. They are not aware of or connected to our Bridgeport community and don't understand what our students need to succeed. We are wasting our time giving online assessments that our students have no idea how to do."

7. The superintendent is professional in dealing with teachers and other staff.

Strongly disagree: 67%

Disagree: 26%

Total disagree: 93%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 6%

Total agree: 7%

8. The superintendent helps create and maintain high morale.

Strongly disagree: 83%

Disagree: 15%

Total disagree: 98%

Strongly agree: 0.5%

Agree: 1.5%

Total agree: 2%

9. The superintendent is consistent in carrying out system-wide policies/procedures.

Strongly disagree: 68%

Disagree: 24%

Total: 92%

Strongly agree: 1.5%

Agree: 6.5%

Total agree: 8%

"I have been teaching in Bridgeport for 25 years, and this is by far the worst school year of my career, all because of the current superintendent. Morale is beyond 'low' in many schools. As a result of the superintendent's actions and beliefs about staff, I am now seeing a therapist due to the stress she has caused and the comments she made regarding Bridgeport teachers."

"The superintendent has little to no emotional intelligence as a leader. She cannot see past her own feelings and thoughts to consider the impact that her actions have on the population that she is meant to serve."

"I cannot think of anything that has been implemented by the superintendent or the central office in the past year—this school year especially—that has been done with fidelity, integrity, or demonstrates best practices in educational administration."

10. The superintendent has a sense of humor and the ability to make teachers feel at ease.

Strongly disagree: 67%

Disagree: 27%

Total disagree: 94%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 5%

Total agree: 6%

11. The superintendent presents a positive image of our school to parents, city leaders, and the community as a whole.

Strongly disagree: 64%

Disagree: 27%

Total disagree: 91%

Strongly agree: 2%

Agree: 7%

Total agree: 9%

12. The superintendent provides for teacher involvement in the decision-making process for the school system.

Strongly disagree: 83%

Disagree: 14%

Total disagree: 97%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 2%

Total agree: 3%

"I think transparency is of the utmost importance. When we are hit with changes or expectations that need to be implemented just days before the start of school, it is not only frustrating but sends a message to teachers that we are just pawns and will just get it done and do whatever is asked. And for the most part we do, because of the kids."

"We have experienced frequent disorder from the start of the year with a lack of communication regarding school closings, school threats, new teacher requirements—including being told what to wear in order to look professional—restrictions on when special education teachers can provide pull-out instruction, and constant announcements about changes without consideration for teacher and parent feedback."

"I have been in Bridgeport for decades and this is the worst I've seen it. Stress levels are off the charts. No one should cry before coming to work. This last regime change has finally done it—sucked all the joy out of teaching. It's not fulfilling anymore. No one cares about my particular expertise or what I bring to my classroom, I'm just a little cog in a poorly run machine."

"It is essential that teachers are included in the decision-making process when it comes to anything regarding curriculum, schedules, and the safety and wellbeing of our students. Teachers have firsthand insight into what would be most beneficial to the students. The teachers should not be surprised or caught off guard when a major decision is made, or a significant change occurs."

13. The superintendent is open to contrary and/or different points of view.

Strongly disagree: 72%

Disagree: 21%

Total disagree: 93%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 6%

Total agree: 7%

14. The superintendent makes the faculty aware of Board of Education activities.

Strongly disagree: 73.5%

Disagree: 20.5%

Total disagree: 94%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 5%

Total agree: 6%

15. The superintendent deals with individual teacher issues strictly with the individual teacher involved.

Strongly disagree: 57%

Disagree: 34%

Total disagree: 91%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 8%

Total agree: 9%

"The only times the superintendent has made a shift in the implementation of her directives, or asked for teacher input, has been when she has found herself publicly shamed in the media for her actions. It has never been for the sake of our students and teachers, it has only been to protect herself. It was already more challenging to be a teacher in Bridgeport than in other districts. Rather than address our existing problems, she has created so many more. All this money thrown at her friends, or for silly events, when it could have been used to hire critical missing staff in our schools. Her presence is making it that much more difficult to fill those gaps because who wants to come to Bridgeport now and be under her thumb? Meanwhile our students are—illegally—not having their needs met."

"The superintendent tried forcing way too many changes this year on the district. The overall mood has been stress, anxiety, and chaos. Everything feels rushed and poorly planned. The principals at my school seem way more stressed than they were at the start of last year. There was no input requested from the teachers. The leadership at the highest levels in this district feel like they're in over their heads and have no idea what the next steps are supposed to be. The frustration has trickled down and led to a very awkward start to the school year, which the students are feeling now too. It has been a sad and disjointed start to the school year."

"I feel that if teachers raise their concerns the superintendent does not want to hear them and does not respect the opinions of teachers on curriculum and other changes being made so suddenly."

16. Effective communication exists between the teachers and the superintendent.

Strongly disagree: 85%

Disagree: 13%

Total disagree: 98%

Strongly agree: 0.5%

Agree: 1.5%

Total agree: 2%

17. The superintendent provides teachers with the opportunity to develop professionally.

Strongly disagree: 63%

Disagree: 27%

Total disagree: 90%

Strongly agree: 1%

Agree: 9%

Total agree: 10%

18. The superintendent helps teachers with training and obtaining resources for the implementation of new programs and/or curriculum.

Strongly disagree: 70%

Disagree: 24.5%

Total disagree: 94.5%

Strongly agree: 0.5%

Agree: 5%

Total agree: 5.5%

"The superintendent's demands are too overwhelming with minimal support. Our caseloads are bigger than ever this year, but we have fewer resources even compared to last year (when our caseloads were smaller). Furthermore, we are asked to do so many new things, but the leadership isn't prepared. There are not enough computers or they are not working. This is a basic need for our schools."

"Overall there is a lack of communication and guidance within the district. The new administration came in without considering the environment that we are in. With the expectation to turn around a district 'overnight' they implemented all these new expectations, resources, and programs without adequate guidance. The pacing calendar is currently not reflective of the calendar; therefore, we will always be behind. It is constantly unclear what the district wants and therefore we feel uneasy and unsure about what we should be doing. That should not be the case as we are educators and know what is best for our students."

"I do not feel the superintendent and her office have the best interest of students and staff at the heart of their decisions. Most decisions seem to be made in secret without time to research and hear from those whom the decisions would affect most. We are giving it our all as teachers but do not feel supported or safe as anything could change minute by minute."

19. The superintendent seeks teacher input in the development and purchase of curriculum materials.

Strongly disagree: 83%
Disagree: 15%
Total disagree: 98%

Strongly agree: 1%
Agree: 1%
Total agree: 2%

20. The superintendent drives most curriculum decisions with little or no teacher input.

Strongly disagree: 7%
Disagree: 3%
Total disagree: 10%

Strongly agree: 78%
Agree: 12%
Total agree: 90%

21. The superintendent views professional evaluation as a positive aspect of professional development.

Strongly disagree: 34%
Disagree: 35.5%
Total disagree: 69.5%

Strongly agree: 3%
Agree: 27.5%
Total agree: 30.5%

"Teachers no longer have any crucial input into anything that goes on in their classrooms, whether that be the specific curriculum they teach, how exactly they structure a lesson, the language they use to instruct, or even the arrangement of their desks. These sweeping and micromanaging decisions are swiftly introduced with no teacher insight, and now are being very chaotically and unclearly rescinded. This leaves teachers even more confused and ultimately impacts their ability to do their most important job, instructing their students on a daily basis. Adults and students can never be successful under such constant chaotic change. It shows a lack of leadership and the skills/knowledge needed to lead any school system."

"I would have liked for more teachers and principals to be involved in decision making processes. We could have predicted what would and wouldn't have worked regarding curriculum changes and time changes and saved a lot of time and frustration. Morale is so low right now it is disheartening. The teachers want to do their jobs and feel completely unseen, untrusted, and disrespected. I am ever so grateful that at my school, my administration trusts teachers. That's not something we feel from the higher-ups."

"Teachers are not part of curriculum-based changes. We are told something and then the superintendent changes her mind a week later. She talks horribly about teachers and doesn't show respect for us. I don't feel supported by her at all."

22. I feel the security of my job depends on my remaining silent about important issues.

Strongly disagree: 6.5%
Disagree: 10.5%
Total disagree: 17%

Strongly agree: 51%
Agree: 32%
Total agree: 83%

23. The superintendent seems, to me, to be unconcerned about educational goals.

Strongly disagree: 6.5%
Disagree: 19%
Total disagree: 25.5%

Strongly agree: 47%
Agree: 27.5%
Total agree: 74.5%

24. Policy decisions at the school system level are rarely based on carefully conducted research.

Strongly disagree: 6%
Disagree: 6%
Total disagree: 12%

Strongly agree: 58.5%
Agree: 29.5%
Total agree: 88%

"I feel that every decision made by the superintendent and the large number of people she has brought in during the last few months has been made without any real research or true concern for the students of Bridgeport. They have backtracked on almost every initiative that has been rolled out so far. If I could afford to live off my pension, I would definitely retire tomorrow. I have worked in this district for 27 years and it hurts me so much to see how one person can ruin what teachers have worked to achieve for their students. What she and her 'cabinet' have done to destroy BPS in just a few short months is an absolute travesty."

"The superintendent has not taken the time to truly understand the root causes and systemic challenges in Bridgeport. Instead, she has tried to focus on low-level compliance measures (like teachers posting learning targets, objectives, etc.) that have little to no evidence of improving student outcomes. Decisions and changes have been made hastily, with poor planning, and that has only led to confusion which in turn hurts our students even more. While I agree there are many things that we can be doing to better help our students, I have yet to see ideas and professional development that will lead to a real improvement in student outcomes."

"The superintendent has made it very clear, especially to the principals, that if our vision and her vision do not align, then one can leave the district. We all work here because we care about our children. Not all of our visions will align, but it's important to hear one another out. It doesn't seem like she's very open to listening to others. It feels like she makes grandiose decisions without collecting any input, then carries out those decisions, and then rescinds those decisions. Then the teachers are left with the fallout. I fear that she only cares about optics and not the true challenges that face Bridgeport. I feel as though she came in with a savior complex and that she's looking at our district from a deficit. She's blaming us for shortcomings that have been there systemically before her tenure. Constant supervision and micromanaging of us makes us feel like they think we cannot effectively do our jobs. I have my master's degree and continually work on my practice; I know what I'm doing!!! I fear speaking up to her, higher level admin downtown, and the Board of Education members in fear of retaliation. They've created a culture of fear."

25. Teachers are encouraged to make constructive suggestions regarding system-wide policies.

Strongly disagree: 68%
Disagree: 26.5%
Total disagree: 94.5%

Strongly agree: 1%
Agree: 4.5%
Total agree: 5.5%

26. The superintendent works actively for better teacher salaries.

Strongly disagree: 67%
Disagree: 25%
Total disagree: 92%

Strongly agree: 1%
Agree: 7%
Total agree: 8%

27. I am confident that I will not be discriminated against by the arbitrary actions of the superintendent.

Strongly disagree: 57%
Disagree: 33%
Total disagree: 90%

Strongly agree: 2%
Agree: 8%
Total agree: 10%

"I've been in this district for more than 20 years. Yes, I do believe changes need to be made in the district. This is the first year that, when changes were made, they were unorganized and not properly executed. After seeing so many district leaders leave last year the climate of the downtown offices as well as in the school buildings became frightful. People did not feel safe and felt that their jobs were on the line if they disagreed with anything."

"I feel that this year we were ambushed. I feel we were all treated disrespectfully. I feel that the teachers are under more pressure to please the superintendent than to help the students. I feel that we are being made to do things that are not conducive to teaching to our best ability."

"There are limited resources for ELL students and our ELL population continues to grow. Limited resources are the major reason why our ELL's are chronically absent. Classrooms are overcrowded and we don't have room in classes for many kids, yet we continue to accept control transfers. Students have had long-term subs for multiple years in a row, and this is partially the reason why there's little to no academic growth for some of our students."

28. The superintendent constantly micromanages our school.

Strongly disagree: 6%
Disagree: 10%
Total disagree: 16%

Strongly agree: 56%
Agree: 28%
Total agree: 84%

29. Teachers are fearful of retaliation by the superintendent if they express disagreement with her.

Strongly disagree: 3%
Disagree: 4%
Total disagree: 7%

Strongly agree: 70%
Agree: 23%
Total agree: 93%

30. I have confidence in the superintendent's ability to run the school system.

Strongly disagree: 85%
Disagree: 12%
Total disagree: 97%

Strongly agree: 1%
Agree: 2%
Total agree: 3%

"As an educator, it is my utmost priority to be provided with the tools and resources needed to offer Tier 1 education to the students of Bridgeport. Our underfunded district and current leadership have created a system of failure for the students, educators, and administrators alike. However, the superintendent and the chairwoman of the Board have presented the teachers as ineffective, as the creators of a pipeline to special education and prison, as wasting multimillion-dollar curriculums, and not as the highly-educated professionals we are required to be."

"After many years teaching in Bridgeport, I've experienced many different changes in curriculum and administration. However, until this school year I've never felt like I was treated as if I was not a professional. The start of this school year has made me feel like I am being controlled on every level. I feel like I'm being treated as a robot. We were always told to put children first, and to use professional judgment in our classrooms. However, this year we are given directives as to how to do all aspects of our job, regardless of other issues in our classroom or school. I was recently told that this year we are 'teaching to the test' because the superintendent needs to see our scores going up. It seems that we are moving backward in our district instead of forward. It feels like a very unhealthy and stressful environment."

31. Have you recently considered leaving Bridgeport Public Schools for a position in a different district?

Yes: 80%

No: 20%

"The salary compared to other districts is abysmal and quite frankly makes it hard to afford to live anywhere, even with roommates. The climate of the district and the inconsiderate actions of the superintendent in particular have made me feel that my educational and professional experience does not matter and is insufficient to contribute to any changes to the district policies."

"I have never considered leaving Bridgeport before. I chose Bridgeport at the start of my career because I wanted to serve a community that needed teachers to commit to it. I've never wanted to work anywhere else—until now. And frankly, it's because of the fear. I see them making every attempt to discredit us and make us look inefficient and incompetent to justify taking over our classrooms. The fear of knowing they can and will retaliate against those of us who speak or act against them. The fear that none of what I've accomplished with my students over the last 20 years matters to them, and they would show me the door and force me out to replace me with a controllable, inexperienced person. The fear of not knowing when this ends or how much of it I can take. I hope the answer to that question is a lot, so at the end of the day I'm still here for my kids, and the superintendent is finally gone."

"I have about four years left. I would rather go work at Home Depot! I am an excellent teacher whose scores compare with my teacher friends in neighboring Fairfield and Westport. I love what I do and am very good at it. I am disgusted by the way these administrators have come in and just assumed no one is doing their job and tried to make us feel as if we don't try. The fun and life are being sucked out of my classroom. I will not let it happen; my kids love school and are learning. My SPED coworkers are being literally and figuratively kicked, overworked, and spit upon. It is a disgrace."

"I was called to the education profession. I love teaching my students. As a veteran teacher, I want to remain in the school that I love and continue to work with my wonderful students and families until I reach retirement. However, I have been terribly disrespected and verbally abused by the superintendent's new hires. I now suffer from severe stress headaches which require medical treatment. I don't know how much more I can take."

"The instability that the superintendent has created has pushed me and many others, for the first time ever, to contemplate leaving the district that I've been with my entire career. Bridgeport is my hometown and the place I want to teach and make a difference. The superintendent is making me rethink my future with this city."

"We are in a constant pressure cooker and under an immense amount of stress on a daily basis. We are not allowed to voice our opinions or frustrations without fear of putting a target on our backs. The leadership has been demanding, condescending, and nothing short of chaotic. The superintendent has single-handedly destroyed morale and the relationships between a once familial staff. We do not get paid enough to be treated this way."

Methodology:

The survey was sent to 1,356 members via personal email and nearly 600 responded. It has a +/- 3% margin of error and 95% confidence level.