



Teacher Exit Surveys: A Brief Overview

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Background

Exit surveys are one approach to understanding why a teacher chooses to leave her current assignment for another opportunity. These surveys tend to ask a series of questions organized generally into three categories: (1) teacher characteristics and assignment, (2) teacher reason for leaving, and (3) teacher future employment plans. Each is described in the sections below.

Teacher Characteristics

Mostly this includes teacher demographics, and the details of their position and assignment prior to leaving. For example, some surveys ask for details such as years of experience while in the position and a full listing of subject/content assignments (see Utah). Others only request a minimal amount of information (see Florida).

Depending on how the survey respondents are identified, and who administers the survey, it may be possible to gather these staff data through other collected sources. However, when taking this approach, to preserve anonymity, a third party, independent organization may need to administer and prepare the survey data for review by stakeholders. For example, if a school district intends to keep responses anonymous to district staff, these same staff could not match information on teachers from other data sources to individual responses. By doing this they would be able to connect survey responses to specific individuals, making the responses no longer anonymous.

Reason for Leaving

With respect to reason for leaving, there are sometimes two broad categories surveys seek to distinguish: push and pull.

- **Push:** a reason for leaving that is internal to the assignment, such as challenging working conditions or a lack of support.
- **Pull:** a reason for leaving that is external such as a more attractive assignment or family circumstances.

In addition to these broad categories, surveys also commonly establish more detailed options for teachers to select. For example, the exit survey in Ohio includes 26 separate categories of reasons for leaving, and in some cases asks probing questions specific to particular categories. Their survey asks that teachers identify not just if a reason for leaving category applies but the extent of its impact as a factor (i.e., major or minor).

In contrast, Florida's survey lists 15 categories of reasons for leaving and divides them into voluntary and involuntary. It does not ask for an indication of how much a particular reason has impacted the decision to leave; it does allow respondents to select multiple reasons.

Another example is Alaska’s survey which includes 46 categories of reasons for leaving, separated into three overarching categories, including: (1) leaving the profession, (2) retiring, or (3) moving to another district.

Surveys also commonly offer an “Other” category that may be completed through an open-ended, text-based response.

Future Employment Plans

Survey questions related to future employment plans follow a similar approach in that various categories are given as options. In addition to what a teacher plans to be doing in the coming year, where she is planning to re-locate is also often asked.

In Ohio’s survey substantial detail is requested such as the urbanicity of the new work location, and specific subject assignment(s). On the other hand, Florida only asks about general location by the general field the teacher will be working within (e.g., teaching, education generally, etc.).

Survey Methodology

Aside from the specific topics covered in teacher exit surveys, best practices with respect to surveys in general are also important to consider. For example, the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest supported Ohio’s development of their current survey (see [here](#) for more detail). A key resource for best practices in survey development, administration, and analysis is a series of documents prepared by the REL Northeast & the Islands. These materials can be accessed [here](#) online.

Examples of State Surveys

The table below provides links to the exit surveys referenced in this brief.

| State | Web Link | Status |
|-----------|---|---------------|
| Alaska | Alaska Teacher Exit Survey | Former (2001) |
| Florida | 2006 Florida Teacher Exit Survey Memo | Former (2006) |
| Louisiana | 2018-2019 Louisiana Teacher Exit Survey Report | Current |
| Ohio | Ohio Teacher Exit Survey | Current |
| Utah | Utah Approves Statewide Teacher Exit Survey Article | Planned |