



**2022-2023 Educator  
Exit Survey**  
Summary Report

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# **2024**

# **Educator Exit Survey**

## Summary Report

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction . . . . .</b>	<b>.7</b>
Definition of Terms	7
Participants	8
Limitations	10
<b>Reasons for Leaving . . . . .</b>	<b>11</b>
Reasons for Departure by Years of Experience	11
Reasons for Departure by Grade Level Assignment	13
Reasons for Departure by School Environment	14
<b>Factors Influencing Educators' Decisions to Leave . . . . .</b>	<b>15</b>
Factors Influencing Decision to Leave Among All Departing Educators	15
Understanding Perspectives of Emotional Exhaustion, Burnout and Job Stress	15
Understanding Perspectives of Ineffective Leadership	16
Teacher Pay	17
<b>Conclusion . . . . .</b>	<b>19</b>

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# INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Utah State Code [53G-11-304](#) and as authorized by Board Rule [R277-325](#), the Utah State Board of Education distributes an exit survey to educators who leave their current employment within a charter school or school district. This survey is available throughout the year and personnel in charter schools and school districts are instructed to administer the survey whenever an educator terminates employment. Educators who transfer positions within a school or district (e.g., promotion, switching schools within the same district) do not complete this survey.

Information in this report highlights responses from 1,091 educators who left their positions between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. Based on historical data, Utah's educator attrition rate has remained around 10%. These responses can be estimated to capture the sentiments of approximately 25% of the teachers who left Utah schools during the 2022-23 school year.

This report provides a synthesis of the data obtained related only to the reasons educators were leaving their current positions. Additional questions on this survey are identical to those on the Educator Engagement Survey administered in the spring of even-number years. While these additional questions are useful in identifying patterns in responses of all Utah educators compared to those who are leaving their positions, this report remains focused on highlighting why educators are leaving their positions and the factors that influence their decisions to leave. Readers interested in educator sentiments obtained from the 2022 Educator Engagement Survey are referred to <https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/reports> where a summary of both the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from active educators can be found. A copy of all questions contained on the exit survey can be found at <https://www.schools.utah.gov/administrativerules> under Administrative Rule R277-325.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

While the term **educator** in this context refers to all general education classroom teachers, preschool teachers, special education teachers, counselors, school and district-based specialists, and administrators, more than 93% of the responses obtained capture the sentiments of classroom teachers, school specialists, and specialized service providers. The term **specialized service provider** refers to school nurses, audiologists, psychologists, speech therapists, etc.

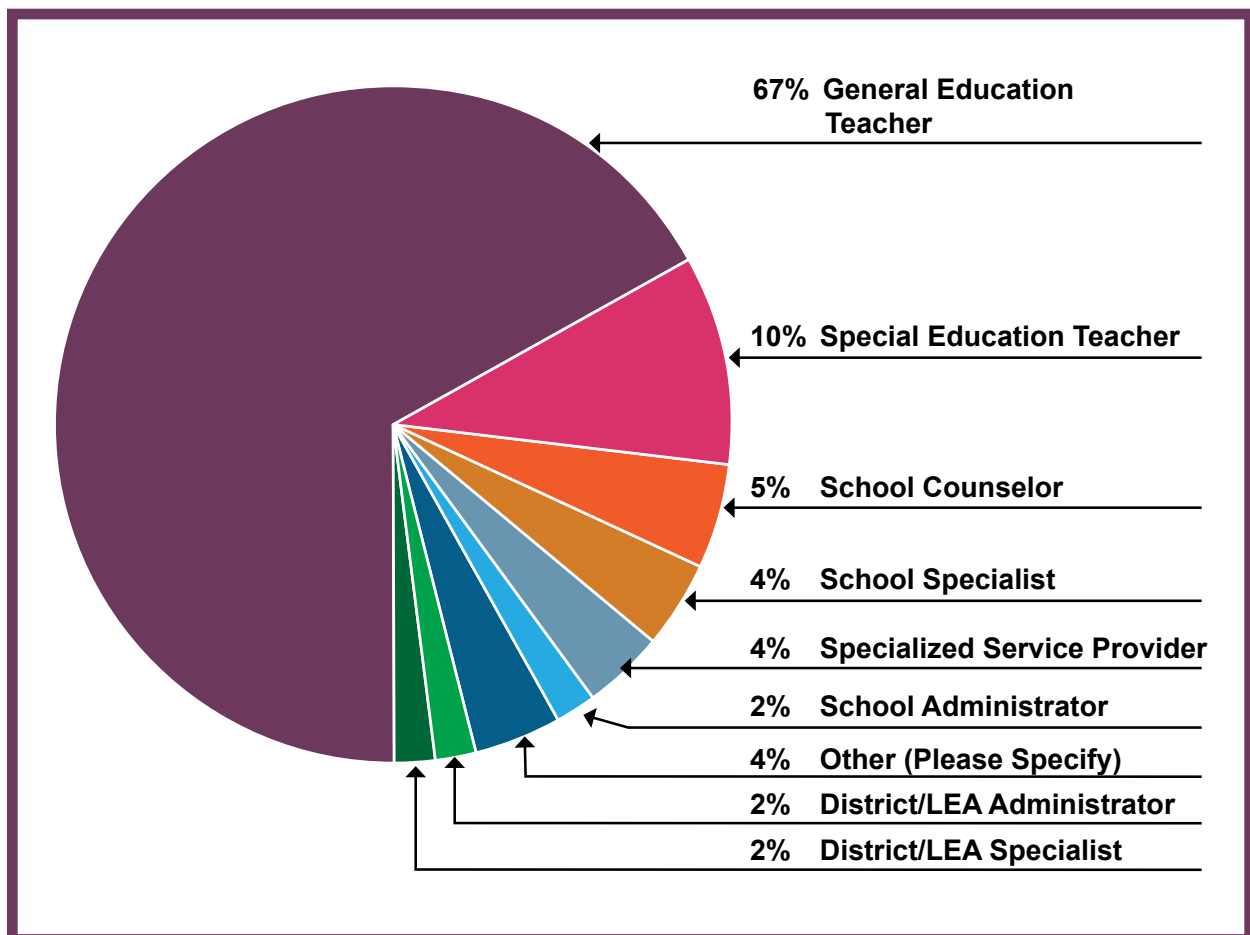
Throughout this report, the terms **early career educator**, **mid-career educator** and **late-career educator** are used to describe educators with three or fewer years of experience, those with four to ten years of experience, and those with ten

or more years of experience, respectively. To differentiate between educators who are accepting alternative employment in education and those who are leaving the profession, the term transferrer is used to refer to educators who leave a position in one charter school or school district to accept a position in another charter school or school district, and the term leaver is used to refer to educators who leave a position in education without securing another position. Within this report, the term departing educators is sometimes used to generally refer to all educators who completed the exit survey.

## PARTICIPANTS

A total of 1,091 valid survey responses were received between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. Of these responses, 67% were from general education teachers and 10% were from special education teachers. Figure 1 shows the distribution of other educator roles included in this summary.

Figure 1:  
**Percent of Respondents by Primary Role**

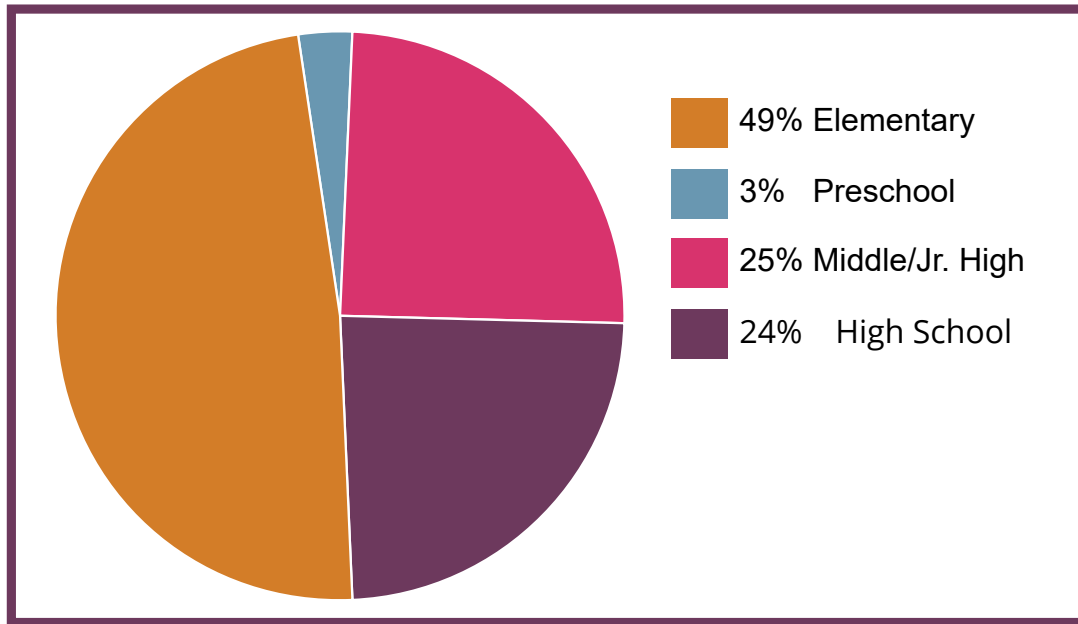


Note: This figure shows responses to the questions “Which of the following best describes your primary role?”



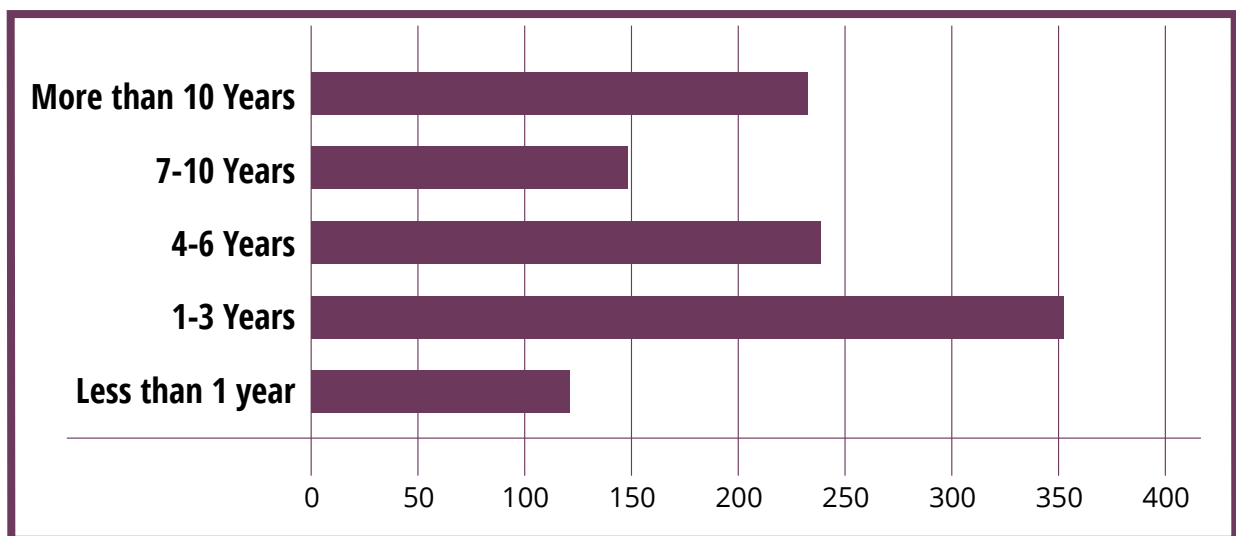
Departing educators left positions in preschool, elementary, middle school/ junior high, and high school and represented educators across all years of experience subgroups. These data are summarized in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2  
**Respondents' Primary Work Environment**



Note: This figure shows responses to the question “Which of the following best describes the environment in which you function in your primary role?”

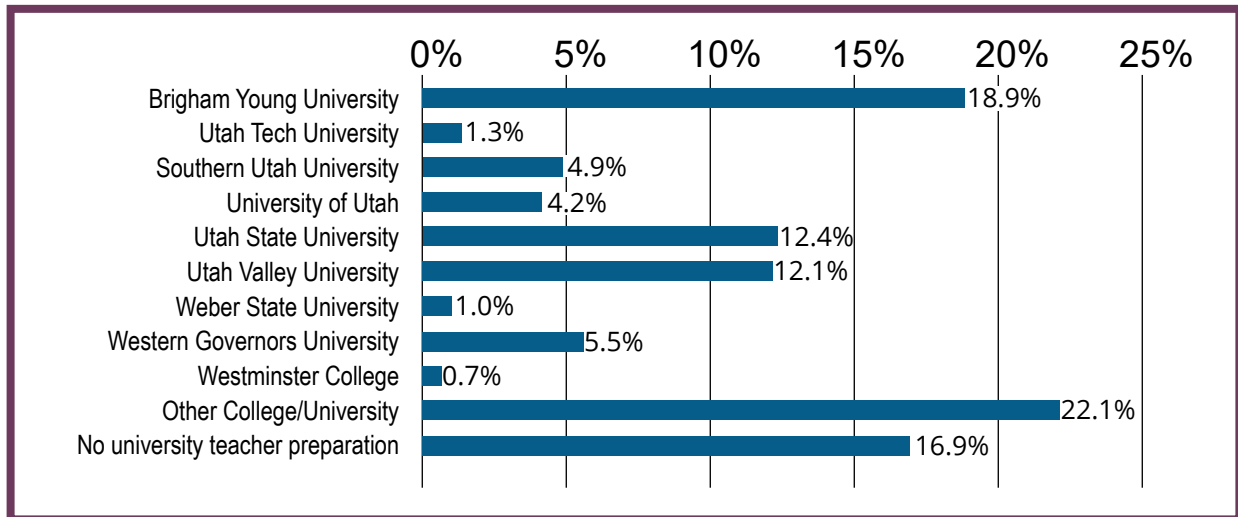
Figure 3  
**Respondents by Years of Experience**



Note: This figure shows responses to the question “As of today, how long have you worked as an educator in any capacity in the state of Utah?”

Of the 1,091 responses received, 308 educators (28.2%) indicate being in their position in Utah for less than three years. These educators were asked to identify the university teacher preparation program in which they received their training. Almost 17% of these educators indicated not having finished a university education program while 22.1% reported completing a program in an out of state (“other”) college or university. The breakdown for state university programs is summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4  
**Preparation Programs for Early-Career Departing Educators**



Note: The figure shows the responses to the question “In which university teacher preparation program did you receive your training?” Only those educators with three or fewer years of experience answer this question.

## LIMITATIONS

The analysis presented here does not account for every question asked on the survey. It also does not represent the perspectives of all educators who left their positions during 2022-23, neither does it capture all possible analyses from available data. Presented here is one set of analyses that provide insight into reasons educators are leaving their positions in Utah. Additionally, the length and time required to complete the survey may discourage some educators from completing it. Completion of the full survey was not required to accept an educator’s response as valid. However, all responses included in this summary represent cases where educators completed at least half of the survey. USBE revised the instrument used to capture the data in SY 2021-22. This means that while the nature of some questions from the prior and current instruments are similar, the formatting and wording of the questions is different, preventing direct comparison of data across multiple years. The USBE believes that revisions to the instrument provide the opportunity for a far more robust analysis and understanding of what is influencing educators’ decisions to leave their positions in 2022 and beyond.

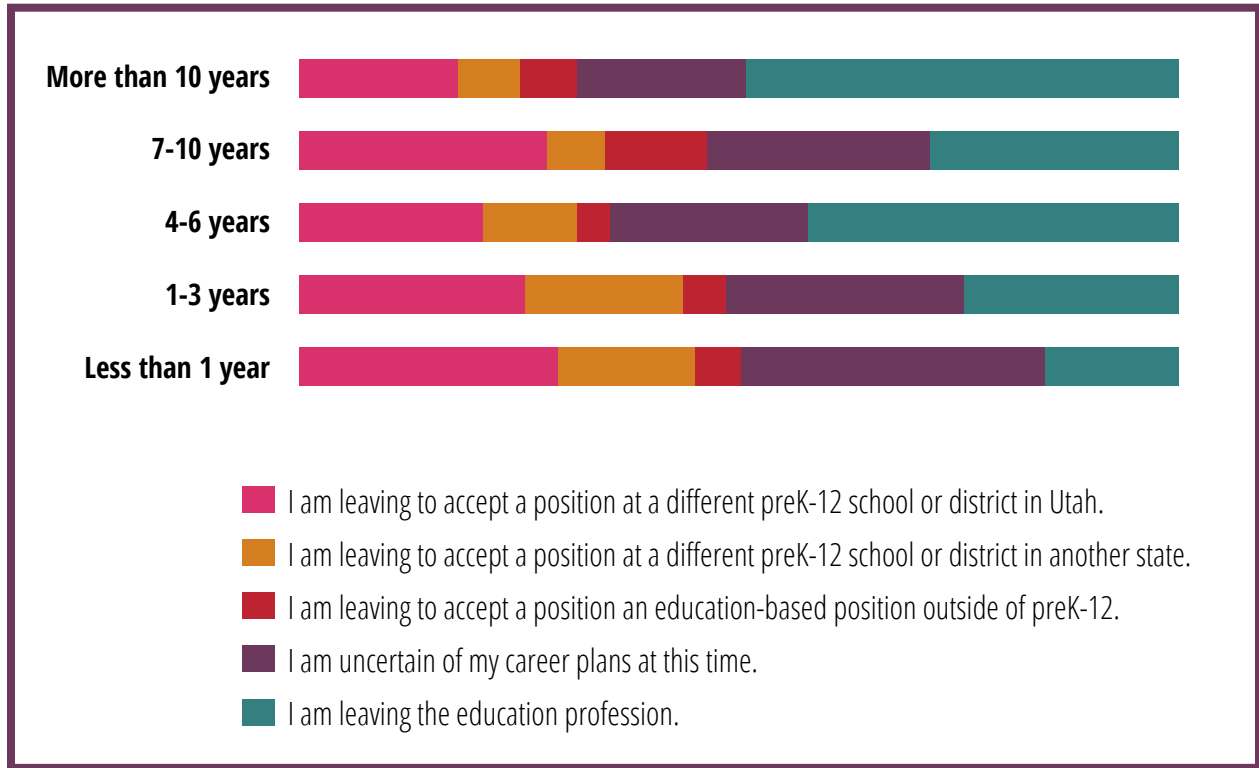
# REASONS FOR LEAVING

When discussing teacher attrition, it is important to acknowledge that some educators leave their current position to accept other education related positions. Thus, while a departing educator represents a position needing replacement from the perspective of a school or district, the change may be a positive one from the perspective of the educator. To help ascertain the future employment plans of departing educators, respondents were asked to identify if they were accepting another position within education (these educators are herein referred to as transferrers), leaving the profession, or uncertain of their career plans (educators in both groups are herein referred to as leavers). Overall, 22.7% of departing educators indicated that they were accepting a different PreK-12 position in Utah while 10.5% were accepting a similar position in another state. Some educators (6.3%) were accepting education-based positions out-side of PreK-12. Thus, over one-third of departing teachers can be considered transferrers. The highest percentage of departing teachers (36.9%) indicated they were leaving the profession entirely. This is a 6% drop since the 2021-22 exit survey. 23.6 percent indicated uncertainty related to their future career plans, meaning approximately 60% of departing educators are leavers who have no immediate plans to return to classrooms. The subsections below provide further disaggregation of these data.

## REASONS FOR DEPARTURE BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

As shown in Figure 5 (page 12), of the 643 educators who indicated they were leaving the profession entirely, 23.3% were early-career educators, 41.9% were mid-career educators and 35% were late career educators. Thus, based on responses to this survey, the primary source of attrition (teachers lost without intent to return) is among educators with 3-10 years of experience in Utah. However, among the 223 teachers with more than 10 years of experience who were leaving the profession, 223 (71.0%) indicated that retirement had a major influence on their decision to leave. Thus, while a major source of attrition appears to be among late career teachers, retirement is a primary driver associated with the loss of these educators. In fact, of the 643 departing educators who indicated they were leaving the profession, about a third listed retirement as having a major influence in that decision, suggesting that just less than half of Utah's attrition may be a result of educator decisions to retire.

Figure 5  
**Educators Reasons for Leaving  
 Early, Mid- and Late Career**

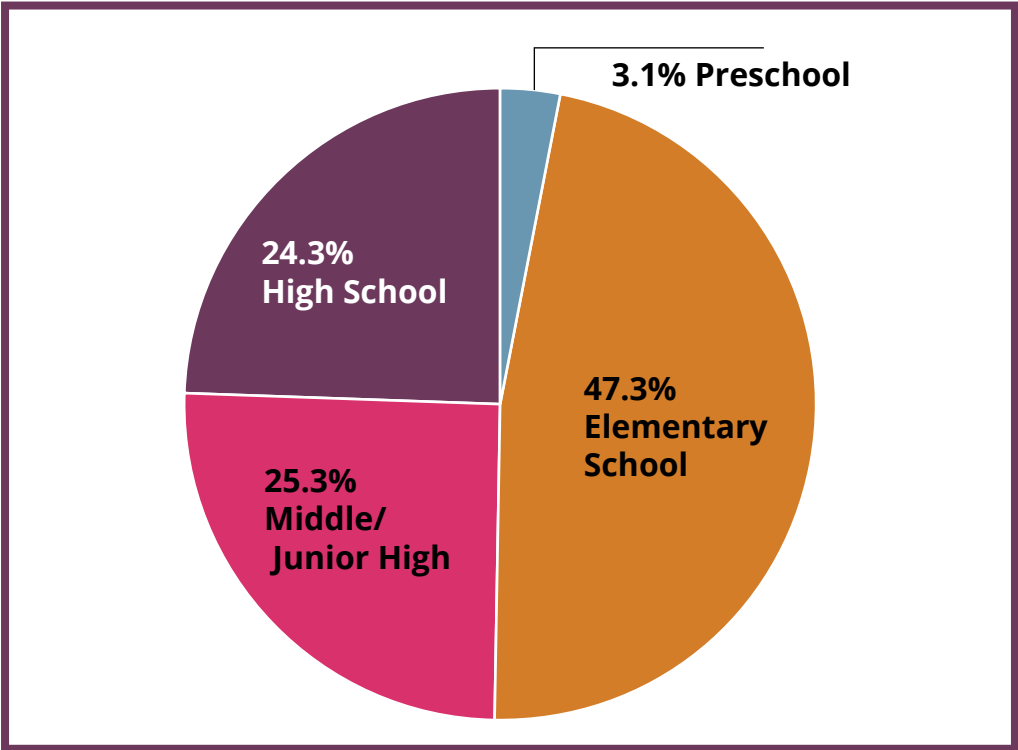


Note: This figure shows the distribution of reasons for leaving among early, mid-, and late career educators. Early career educators are those with three or fewer years of experience, mid-career educators have between four and 10 years of experience, and late career educators have more than 10 years of experience.

**REASONS FOR DEPARTURE BY GRADE-LEVEL ASSIGNMENT**

As shown in Figure 6, of the 391 educators who indicated they were leaving the profession entirely, 3.1% were preschool educators, 47.3% were elementary educators, 25.3% were middle school educators, and 24.3% were high school educators. Thus, the primary source of grade-level attrition, based on responses to this survey, is among elementary educators.

Figure 6  
**Educators leaving the Profession  
by Grade Level Assignment**

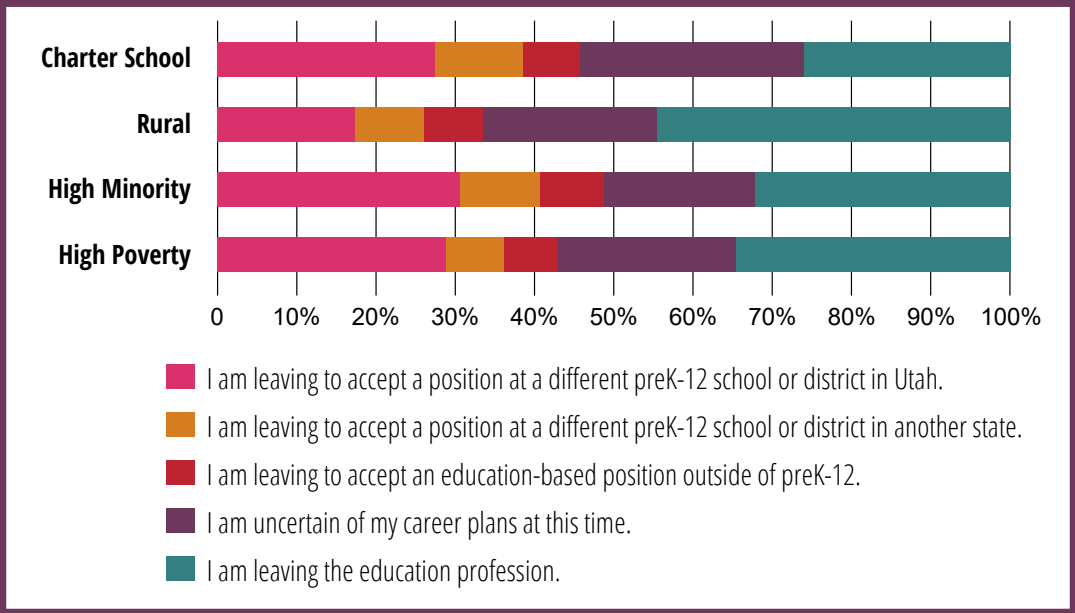


Further examination of responding educators based on grade level assignment reveals that 38% of the preschool educators departing their positions were leaving the profession while another 22% were uncertain about their future career plans. Among responding elementary educators, 35% were leaving the profession and 25% were uncertain of their future career plans. For responding middle school educators, 37% were leaving the profession and 20% were uncertain about their plans, while among departing high school educators, 37% were leaving the profession and 22% were uncertain about their plans. Thus, among all grade-level subgroups, 36% or more of educators are leaving the profession.

**REASONS FOR DEPARTURE BY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

A series of optional questions at the end of the survey asked educators to provide additional demographic data related to the nature of the school environment in which they were employed. As shown in Figure 7, of the 238 educators who indicated they were employed in a high poverty school environment, 34.4% are leaving the profession entirely. This is a 10% drop since 2021-22 when 43% of educators at high poverty schools said they were leaving the profession. This percentage for educators in schools marked high minority was similar (34.4%) and showed a 10% drop since 2021-22. Among educators who marked the school as rural educators, 44.0% were leaving the profession. This is a 5% decrease since 2021-22. It is important to note that respondents were allowed to self-report whether they were working in a rural school and responses may represent broad definitions of what is a rural school. In charter schools, 25.1% of departing educators were leaving the profession entirely, while 41.8% of district educators indicated they were leaving the profession. It is important to note that because these questions were optional, they do not capture responses from all educators who completed the survey.

Figure 7  
**Reasons for Leaving by School Environment**



To help ascertain what factors contribute to educator attrition, departing educators were asked to rate a series of factors as to whether the factor had a major, moderate, minor, or no influence on the educator’s decision to leave their position. Ten factors were presented to all responding educators and an additional five were presented to educators who indicated they were leaving the profession. This section provides a summary of teacher perspectives related to the influence of each of these factors. The 10 factors presented to all educators are summarized first, followed by the factors presented only to those leaving the profession.

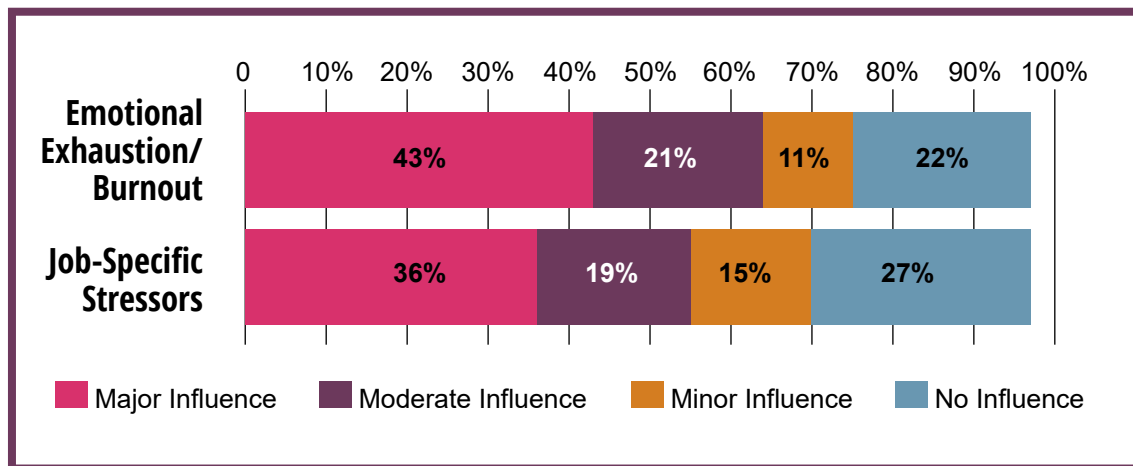
# FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATOR'S DECISIONS TO LEAVE

## FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISION TO LEAVE AMONG ALL DEPARTING EDUCATORS

Among the most influential factors in educators' decisions to leave their current position were emotional exhaustion/burnout and job-specific stressors. A total of 43% of educators indicated emotional exhaustion/burnout as having a major influence on their decision while 36% indicated job-specific stressors had a major influence. Additional summary of responses for these two influences appears in Figure 8.

Figure 8

### Distribution of Factors Identified As Most Influential in Educators' Decision to Leave



Note: This figure shows educators' ratings associated with whether the indicated factors had a major, moderate, minor, or no influence on their decision to leave their current position

## UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES OF EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION, BURNOUT AND JOB STRESS

Because it can be difficult to tease out the nuances of how different educators interpret terms like "emotional exhaustion," "burnout," and "job-specific stressors," any educator who indicated that these were major influences in their decision to leave were provided the opportunity to expand upon their thinking. Specifically,

these respondents were asked, "You indicated that emotional exhaustion, burnout, and/or job-specific stressors had a major influence in your decision to leave your position. We would appreciate having more detailed information regarding contributing causes to these feelings. Please provide additional details you feel may help us better understand the nature of your sentiments around the emotional exhaustion, burnout, or job-specific stressors that are contributing to your decision to leave your current position."

"I took over for another teacher two months into the school year. I received no training, no orientation, and no mentor. I often felt confused and unsure of what I was supposed to do. School policies and procedures were not clear, and often did not exist for the circumstances I was dealing with. I often felt like I was being judged negatively by the administration and other faculty for circumstances beyond my control."

## **UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES OF INEFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

Another common sentiment was feeling a lack of recognition, respect or general accountability from within and beyond the school. In total, 25% of the sampled responses expressed this sentiment with statements such as

"It doesn't feel like my principal cares about my department, listens to anyone in it, or consults us before making decisions about us."

"I am not a person that needs to hear "good job" every time I do something, but the overwhelming feeling I get from the community and large number of parents is that I am not doing enough. I can handle criticism, but when all I hear (out loud anyway) is that I am not qualified for my job, I don't know what's best for my students, and I am not doing enough to help them, I feel defeated."

"We got a new principal this past year who said he was going to make our lives easier and then has constantly changed things with little communication and I feel like administration doesn't care that much about their staff. I don't really want to keep working at my school with that kind of leadership."

Sixteen percent of educator responses also expressed lack of training, support and/or resources as contributing to feelings of exhaustion and stress. Survey respondents mentioned specific incidents of lack of professionalism among school leaders or staff as well as extremes in student behavior as leading to exhaustion. A sample statement from these themes include:

"Student behaviors are on the rise. Extreme behaviors. There is no support for these behaviors for teachers. No accountability is given to the students or the parents of the students. It is all put on the teachers' shoulders. Even at the elementary school level we are seeing behaviors that are dangerous and put other students and teachers at risk, yet we are expected to handle these situations and continue to allow these students into our rooms to disrupt the learning of 25 other students. There is no line they have to tow. There is no consequence for breaking school rules. There is no help for teachers."



“The increase in explosive and dangerous behaviors by students with little to no training or support when asked for, and little or no administrative support when asked for.”

## **TEACHER PAY**

When asked about what could be done to improve educators’ satisfaction with their jobs, more than half of the respondents said “pay” (53%). This has doubled since 2021-22 where only 26% of educators noted this as significant reason for leaving. Twenty percent of early and mid-career leavers also said that a pay increase would have affected their decision to stay in education.

Of those educators who mentioned pay as a factor in their decision to leave or overall job satisfaction, three main reasons were given:

1. Cost of living
2. Respect for the profession
3. Workload

Though recent pay increases are acknowledged and appreciated, for some teachers, the pay simply has not kept up with the steeply rising cost of living in many areas.

“With inflation, I am making less now than I did five years ago when I started as a teacher.”

“It is so demoralizing to me that beginning teachers’ pay is lower than teenagers flipping burgers or construction crews requiring no post-high education. It makes all of the work and effort that goes into becoming a teacher seem like a waste of money and time.”

Many teachers stated that they were leaving to take care of family full-time citing costs, with one educator stating that “73% of my check went to childcare.”

“I am mainly leaving to stay at home to take care of my daughter, however, if I could support my family with my salary, then I would have stayed and my husband would have stayed at home with our children... It is really frustrating that I can’t support my family doing a job that I love.”

A heavy workload was one of the top stressors that leaving educators said was a factor in their decision. Many educators also felt that the pay simply did not reflect what was expected of them. A major source of frustration was the lack of prep time that forced them to perform lesson planning and grading on their own time, work that amounted to unpaid overtime.

“I feel like we have one of the most important jobs, but people just see us as babysitters and pay us that way.”

“Asked to do more and more work and state required training (LETRS, HD Word, etc.) on our own time and dime. Teaching is already a more than full-time job, it’s a way of life. We teach all day and spend the evening grading, communi-

cating with parents, planning, preparing...buying lesson supplies with our own money, worrying about how to reach certain students, making copies, understanding and meeting state requirements, and more."

# CONCLUSION

- From 2021-22 to 2022-23 more respondents were choosing to remain in education but were transferring to another LEA or out of state.
- Early and mid-career educators who are leaving education continue to identify emotional burnout and job specific stressors as the top reasons.
- Emotional burnout and job-specific stressors were ranked second and third highest factors, seventy percent of mid-career respondents rated it as a major or moderate factor for leaving education.
- For educators with more than 10 years' experience, retirement was the largest influence on their decision to leave education. More than half of Early Career respondents said that they were leaving education or were unsure of their plans.
- Educators who had completed an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) were more likely to be transferring to new LEAs than leaving education altogether. In general, they felt slightly better prepared than their peers and were more likely to report having a formal mentor.
- This correlates with the retention rates among first year teachers. Historically first year teachers with a professional license have around a 10% attrition rate; while those lacking a preparation program, have historically around a 25% attrition rate.



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