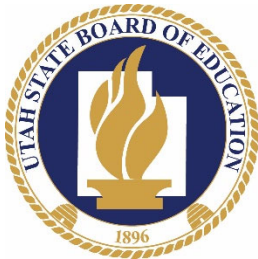# EDUCATION

THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Report to the Education Interim Committee

Educator Engagement and Exit Survey Report

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Educator Engagement and Exit Survey Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Legislature passed House Bill 130, *Public Education Exit Survey*, which established an exit survey for educators so the state could gather more data on why teachers leave the profession. Along with an exit survey, the Board developed an engagement survey to provide comparison data. The 2019-2020 school year marks the first year both surveys were administered. This report provides a summary of both surveys, discusses limitations associated with the results, and provides recommendations for action based on the results. In general, Utah educators seem satisfied with the nature of their collaborative work with other educators, the quality and oversight of school administration, and their access to needed tools, technology, and professional learning. At the same time, many educators fail to see a clear career path, despite having set goals for their career development. Educators who lack this career vision are more likely to anticipate transferring schools or leaving the profession. Among those who leave their positions to transfer to another school, location of the new position seems to be a major influence in that decision. Retirement is a leading influence in educator decisions to leave the profession along with family concerns and emotional exhaustion/stress/burnout. The survey responses help the State Board and legislators better understand the experiences of educators in Utah. Moving forward we plan to further refine the surveys to obtain even more detailed information on educator engagement and the decision to leave teaching.

BACKGROUND

In the 2019 General Session, the Legislature passed House Bill 130, *Public Education Exit Survey*, which enacted provisions related to exit surveys for licensed public education employees to help the state gather more comprehensive data on why teachers leave the profession. The bill required the Utah State Board of Education (hereafter referred to as "the Board" or "USBE") to make rules for the creation and administration of a public education exit survey. Consequently, the Board adopted R277-325, Public Education Exit and Engagement Survey, which details the administration of both an educator engagement survey and educator exit survey and developed a model survey. Local education agencies (LEAs) are

required to administer both surveys through a Board or LEA approved provider.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The educator engagement survey is administered every other year with the 2019-2020 school year marking the first year of administration. In general, all active Utah educators are asked to respond to the engagement survey. At the conclusion of the 2019-2020 administration, USBE received engagement survey data from 17,078 educators in 128 LEAs which is approximately half of licensed Utah educators. The educator exit survey is administered to an educator at the time of their separation from employment. As described in statute, local education agencies must make their best effort to administer the exit survey to the educator before the educator leaves employment at the LEA. At the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year, USBE received exit survey data from 935 educators in 78 LEAs which is approximately 40% of licensed Utah educators exiting their LEA.

This report provides a summary of both surveys, discusses limitations associated with the results, and provides recommendations for action based on the results. Because both surveys address educator intent and reasons for potentially, or actually, leaving their current position and elements related to job satisfaction, the analysis is presented by topic. The results of the engagement survey are presented first followed by the results from the exit survey. In cases where comparing data from the two surveys is possible, a cross-survey summary is also provided. Qualitative data were collected as part of the exit survey. However, in the interest of brevity, this report presents only quantitative data, but the qualitative data are available upon request.

EDUCATOR ATTRITION

Engagement Survey Summary. The initial question on the survey asked educators to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement "I see myself working as an educator in Utah in two years' time." Analysis of educator responses to this question provide a speculative glance into the future attrition of Utah educators. Based on the responses of 16,861 educators, 1,255 either "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with this statement, providing a speculative annual attrition rate near 7%. This result is reasonably consistent with historical data which show educator attrition rates between 7% and 10% as illustrated in the table on the following page.

School Year	Attrition Rate
2015-2016	9.7%
2016-2017	9.7%
2017-2018	8.9%
2018-2019	9.7%
2019-2020	7.4%

Note: These historical data compare the number of licensed educators in CACTUS year-to-year, providing a rough estimate of attrition due to educators no longer showing as having an educator assignment in Utah.

The 1,255 teachers who represent potential losses to Utah's educator workforce were further asked to indicate whether they foresaw themselves as leaving for a different school (herein referred to as **speculative transferers**) or leaving the teaching profession (herein referred to as **speculative leavers**). The data suggest that 17.7% (n = 220) of educators who do not see themselves working as an educator in Utah in two years' time are speculative transferers, while 82.3% (n = 1,022) are speculative leavers.

When considered in total, responses to the engagement survey suggest that approximately 7.4% of Utah educators foresee that it is unlikely they will still be teaching in Utah in two years, with 1.3% forecasting they will leave for a new school, and 6.1% forecasting that they will leave the profession entirely.

Exit Survey Summary. Because the engagement survey is administered to all practicing Utah educators, the data allow us only a speculative glance into the future. In contrast, the exit survey is administered only to educators who have indicated that they are leaving their current school district or charter school and thus provides the perspective of teachers who are actually moving to another school (**actual transferers**) or who are actually leaving the teaching profession (**actual leavers**).

Of the 935 educators who responded to the exit survey, 41.5% were actual transferers and 58.5% were actual leavers. Thus, at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, the estimate is that nearly 60% of those exiting their LEAs were leaving the teaching profession.

Cross-Survey Summary. Upon examining the engagement survey responses of teachers who speculated they would transfer schools or leave the profession we find that 82% of them (nearly 7% of the population of teachers completing the survey) are considering leaving teaching. However, the actual percentage of educators leaving the profession, as represented by exit survey data is much lower at only 58.5%. This difference may be an indication that over time many teachers are able to develop resilience that discourages them from leaving the profession, perhaps in favor of just transferring to another school.

However, caution should be exercised in this comparison because any comparison between these two surveys involves comparing what one group of people anticipates doing with what another is actually doing, rather than following up on whether a group of people did what they said they anticipated doing.

Ultimately, whether these teachers are leaving the profession or moving to a new school or district, Utah has seen a consistent attrition between 7% and 10%. Thus, these data support that a significant portion of Utah teachers are still leaving each year and the results warrant further consideration of how to collect data that provide better forecasting of teacher attrition while tapping into what may prevent teachers from leaving the profession.

REASONS EDUCATORS MOVE TO A DIFFERENT SCHOOL

Engagement Survey Summary. Educators who indicated that they did not see themselves working as an educator in two years' time were instructed to select whether they anticipated moving to a different school or leaving the profession and to indicate how influential certain factors were in this decision. Among speculative transferers "emotional exhaustion/stress/burnout" was identified as either "very influential" or "extremely influential" for 49.5% of respondents. Behind burnout, these same educators indicated "other" reasons (53.7%), "family relocation" (45.6%), and "location of position" (38.7%) as also being among the most influential reasons for transferring schools.

Exit Survey Summary. Among actual transferers, fewer educators (31.3%) indicated "emotional exhaustion/stress/burnout" as "very influential" or "extremely influential" in their decision to transfer schools. Lower percentages were also reported for "other" reasons (45.9%), and "family relocation" (41.1%), but a higher percentage of actual transferers listed "location of position" as being influential (47.6%).

Cross-Survey Summary. A visual summary of transferers' responses regarding how influential particular reasons were in their determination to transfer schools is provided in Figures 1 and 2. As related to the differences among the most influential factors highlighted above, a statistically significant difference exists between the proportion of speculative transferers who cite burnout as influential and actual transferers who do ($p < .001$). This difference suggests that a smaller proportion of educators actually transfer schools due to burnout than engagement survey data would suggest. At the same time, location of position appears to be much more influential among actual transferers than speculative transferers with the difference again being statistically significant ($p = 0.003$). Thus, while a higher percentage of speculative transferers cite burnout as being influential, a higher percentage of actual transferers attribute their transfer to the location of the position.

While no statistically significant differences were manifest between the surveys with regard to the remaining factors, a high percentage of speculative and actual transferers indicated "other" reasons as being influential to their decision. This result suggests a need to further refine the surveys to capture these additional factors that may be contributing to educators' decisions to transfer schools.

Figure 1. Influential Reasons for Moving to a Different School, Speculative Transferers

■ Not influential at all ■ Slightly influential ■ Somewhat influential ■ Very influential ■ Extremely influential
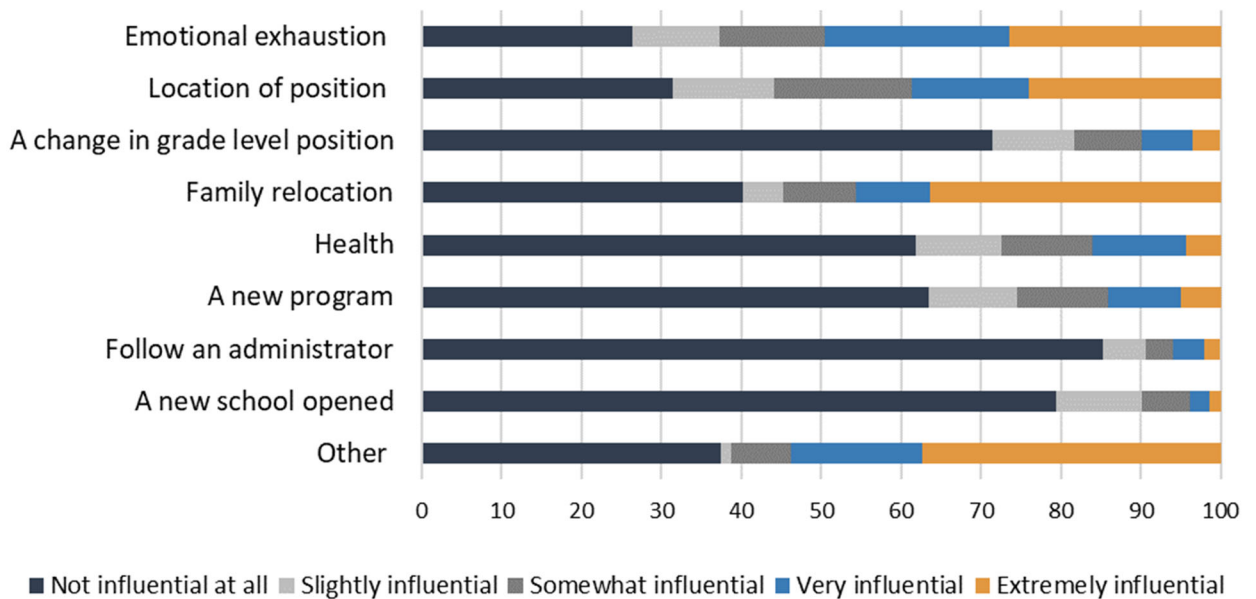
Figure 2. Influential Reasons for Moving to a Different School, Actual Transferers

■ Not influential at all ■ Slightly influential ■ Somewhat influential ■ Very influential ■ Extremely influential
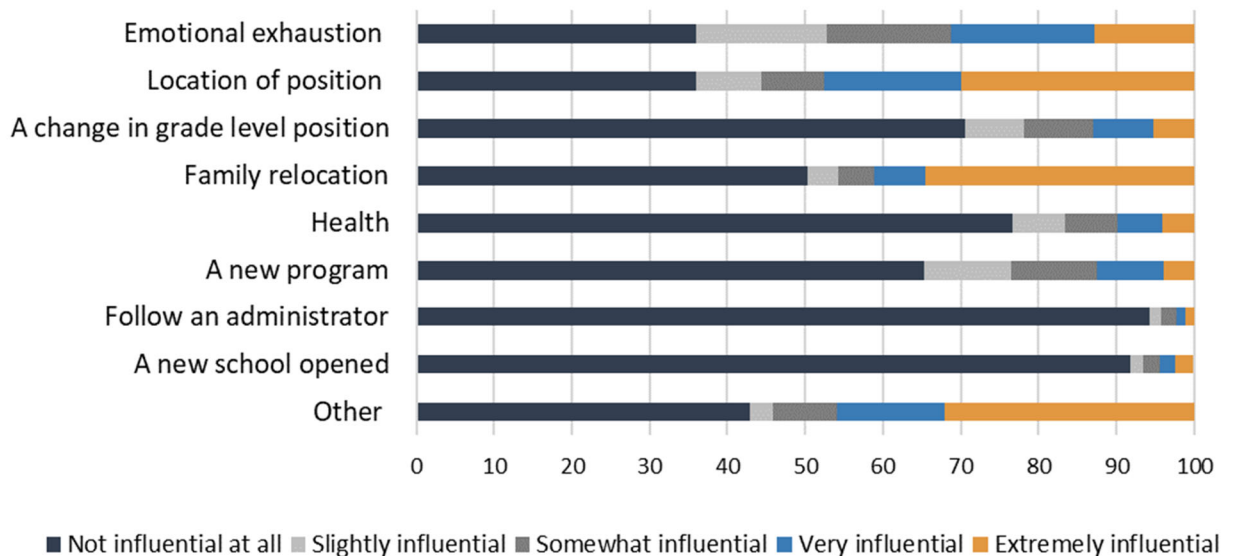
REASONS EDUCATORS LEAVE THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Engagement Survey Summary. When asked to rate how influential certain factors were for leaving the teaching profession, "emotional exhaustion/stress/burnout" was again a leading factor for speculative leavers with 68.1% indicating that this factor was either "very influential" or "extremely influential" in their decision. Behind burnout, speculative leavers also indicated "better opportunities outside of education" (48%) and "retirement" (38.3%) as being influential reasons for leaving.

Exit Survey Summary. "Retirement" was indicated as being "very influential" or "extremely influential" for 50.8% of actual leavers. These respondents also cited "family care" (37.9%), "emotional exhaustion/stress/burnout" (37.4%), and "to raise my children" (32%) as being influential.

Cross-Survey Summary. A visual summary of leavers' responses regarding how influential particular reasons were in their determination to leave the profession is provided in Figures 3 and 4. As with transferers, there seems to be some discrepancy between speculative and actual reasons for leaving the profession. Most notably, only 17.7% of actual transferers indicated "better opportunities outside of education" as being influential, compared to 48% of speculative leavers, a possible indication that a "grass is greener" perception may have less impact on educators' determination to leave the profession than engagement survey data would suggest. Further, in all cases, differences in proportions for the above-cited reasons were found to be statistically significant (p < 0.001), an indication that speculative reasons for leaving teaching do not align particularly well with actual reasons.

Figure 3. Influential Reasons for Leaving the Teaching Profession, Speculative Leavers
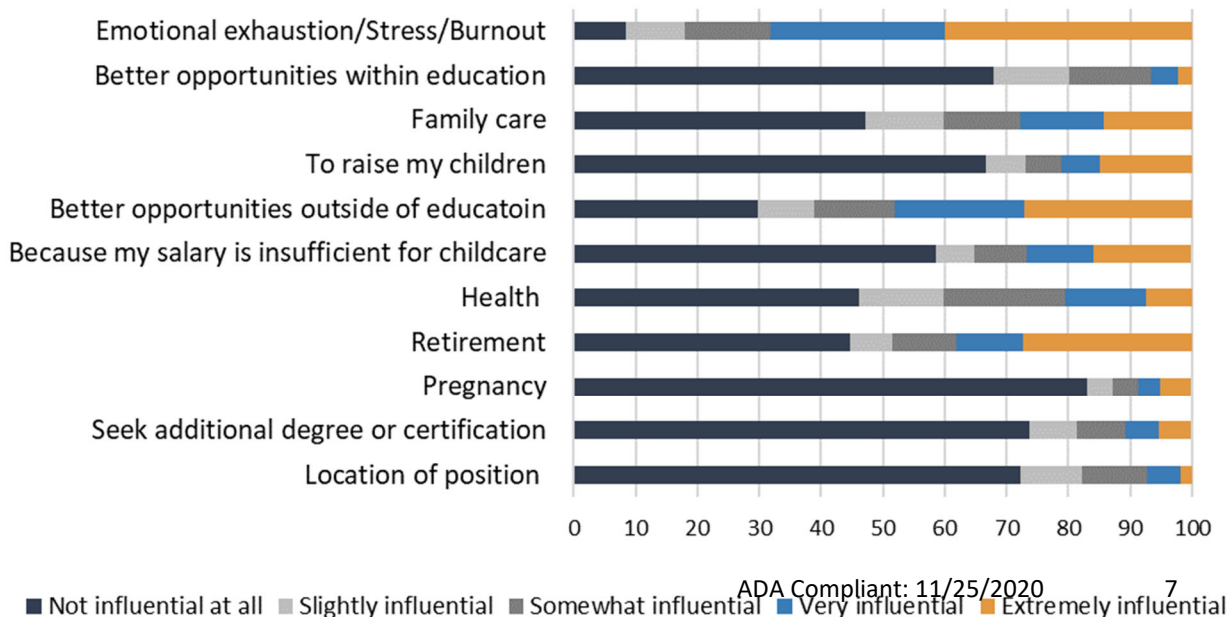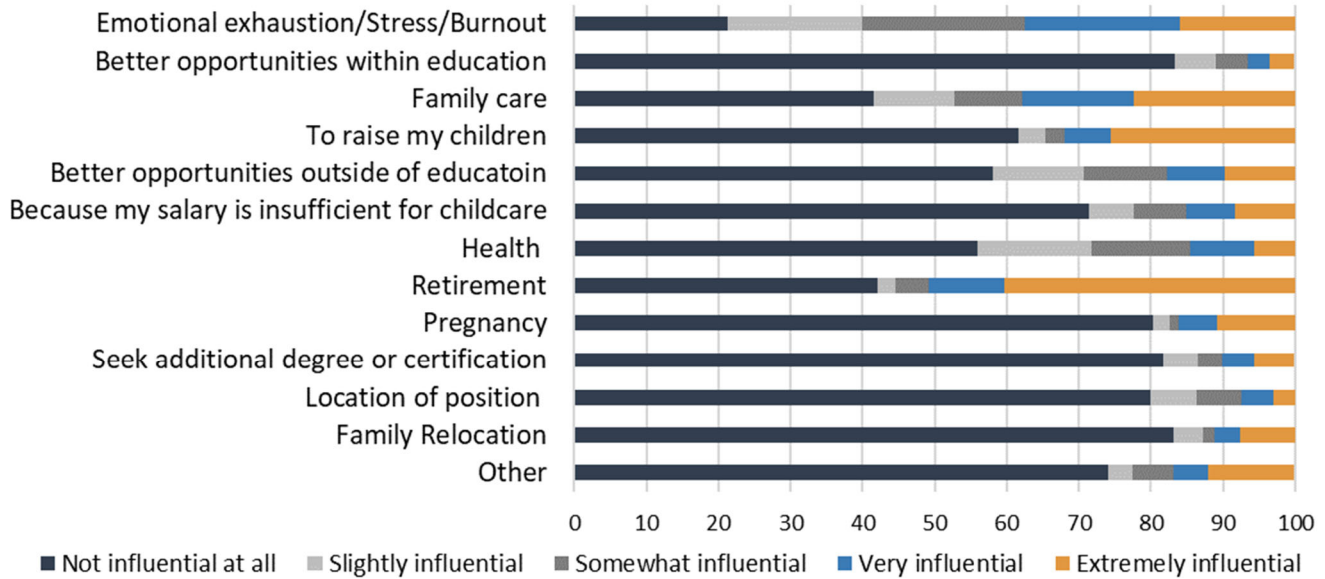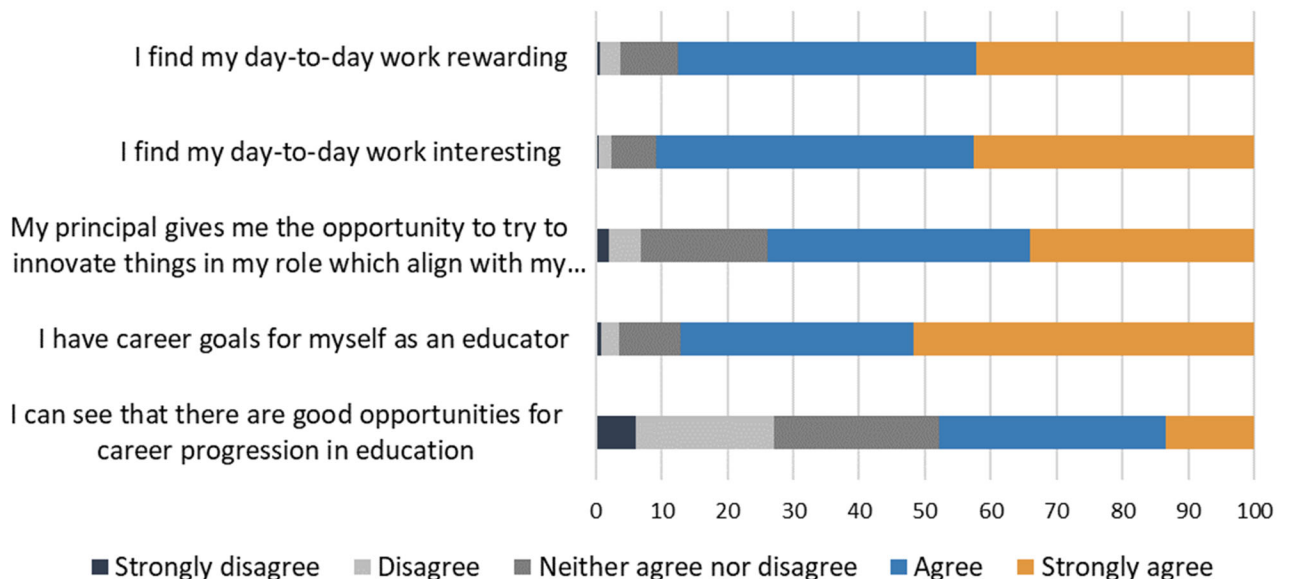
Figure 4. Influential Reasons for Leaving the Teaching Profession, Actual Leavers

Legend: Not influential at all (dark navy), Slightly influential (light gray), Somewhat influential (dark gray), Very influential (blue), Extremely influential (orange)

Categories (top to bottom):
- Emotional exhaustion/Stress/Burnout
- Better opportunities within education
- Family care
- To raise my children
- Better opportunities outside of educatoin
- Because my salary is insufficient for childcare
- Health
- Retirement
- Pregnancy
- Seek additional degree or certification
- Location of position
- Family Relocation
- Other

CAREER PROGRESSION

Inasmuch as seeking to minimize educator attrition is important, it is worthwhile to consider the overall attractiveness of the profession and the day-to-day work it involves. Educators who completed the engagement survey were asked about their perceptions related to career opportunities and their day-to-day work. Figure 5 provides a visual summary of the responses. The exit survey did not include questions related to these ideas and so this section presents a summary of engagement data only.

Figure 5. Career Progression, Engagement Survey Respondents

Categories (top to bottom):
- I find my day-to-day work rewarding
- I find my day-to-day work interesting
- My principal gives me the opportunity to try to innovate things in my role which align with my…
- I have career goals for myself as an educator
- I can see that there are good opportunities for career progression in education

Legend: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree

Engagement Survey Summary. Of particular interest is that 90.6% of those who responded were found to "agree" or "strongly agree" that they found their day-to-day work interesting and 87.5% similarly indicated that they found their day-to-day work rewarding. In both cases there was a moderate, positive correlation between educators who responded with higher levels of satisfaction with their day-to-day work and those who indicated a higher likelihood of remaining in the profession (r = 0.37 in both cases), suggesting, not unsurprisingly, that those who find more satisfaction in the day-to-day responsibilities of teaching are more likely to persist in the profession.

Notably, while 87% of the respondents indicated that they had career goals, only 73.9% felt that their principal allowed them to try innovative things aligned to those goals and less than half of respondents (47.9%) could see opportunities for career growth. Thus, although most Utah educators feel they are in an interesting and rewarding career with goals for growth, many are unable to see a pathway to reaching those goals. A moderate, positive correlation also existed (r = 0.35) between teachers who see good opportunities for career growth and those who see themselves working as an educator in two years' time. While correlational analysis does not allow for attribution of cause, it is important to realize that this finding suggests that those teachers more likely to persist in the profession are also more likely to be those who see opportunities for career growth.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Several questions on both surveys solicited educator perspectives about their work environment and access to needed resources. For purposes of this summary, responses were analyzed related to the following subclassifications: Collaboration, Compensation and Access to Resources, Support from Leadership, and Training and Development. Because the wording, and in some cases the focus, of questions on each survey differed slightly, cross-survey summaries are not provided in this section, but each subsection begins with a brief overview before presenting survey-specific data.
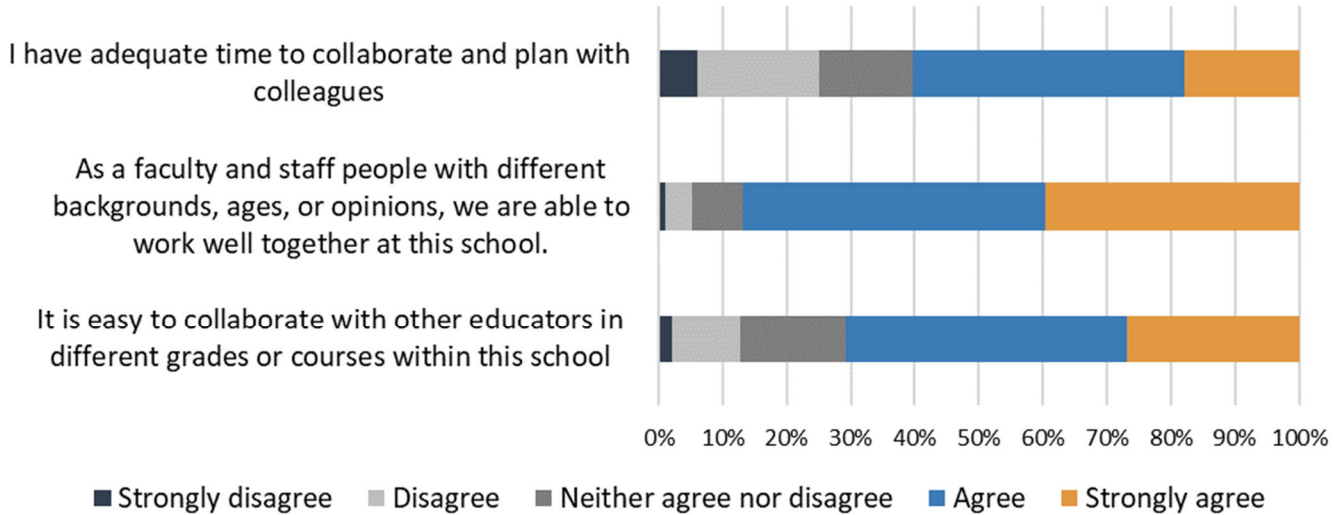
Collaboration
Results from questions focused on colleague and team collaboration generally suggest that educators feel that collaboration with their teams and colleagues is effective and that educators work well together. Weaker aspects of collaboration appear to be related to time made available to collaborate and workload allocation.

Engagement Survey Summary. Educators responded to three questions associated with whether they had adequate time for collaboration, whether staff at the school were able to work well together, and whether educators were able to collaborate well together. The visual summary in Figure 6 shows that only 60.2% of educators "agreed" or "strongly agreed"

that they had adequate time to collaborate and plan with their colleagues. However, 86.8% of respondents indicated that they either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that faculty and staff worked well together, while 70.7% felt that it was easy to collaborate with other educators at the school. Thus, educators generally feel that they work well with other professionals in their buildings, but that they do not have adequate time to do so.

Figure 6. Collaboration: Engagement Survey

Exit Survey Summary. Results from the exit survey related to collaboration support those reported above with 72.3% of respondents indicating that they felt their team worked "very effectively" or "extremely effectively" together. Additionally, 76.8% indicated they collaborated "very well" or "extremely well" with other members of their team. A summary of all responses is shown in Figure 7.

## Figure 7. Collaboration: Exit Survey
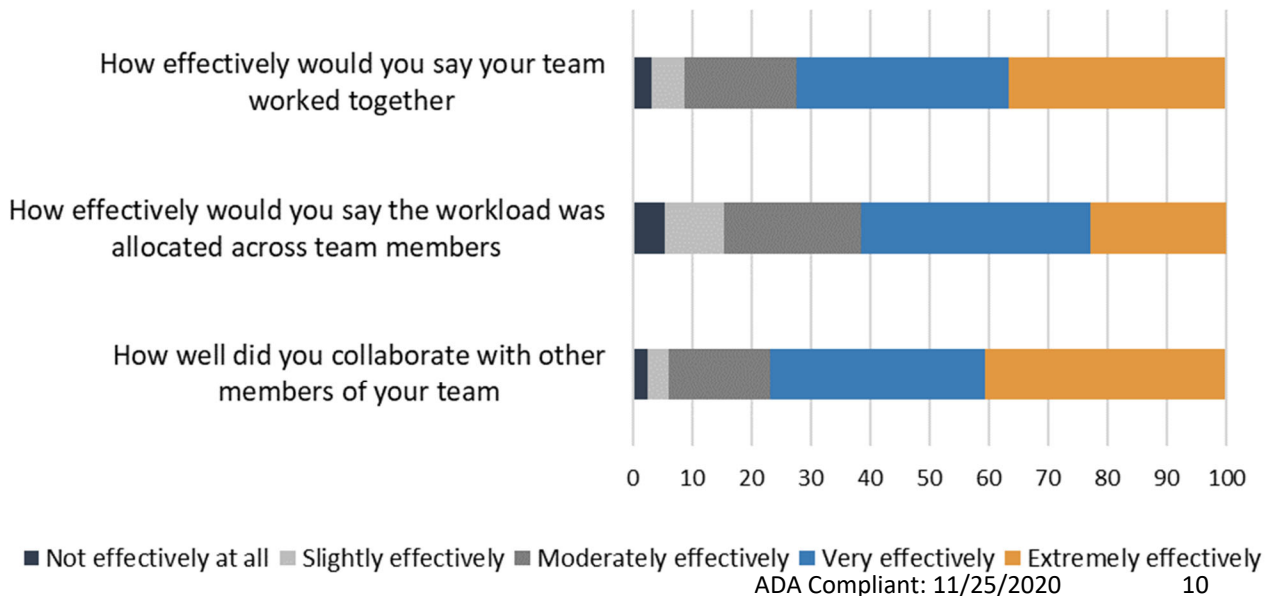
Compensation and Access to Resources

Results from questions focused on compensation (including pay and benefits) and access to resources generally suggest that only about half of educators feel that they are compensated fairly when compared to others, but that they do have adequate access to needed resources.

Engagement Survey Summary. As shown in Figure 8, nearly half (45.9%) of respondents indicated that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that they are compensated fairly for the work that they do while 45.2% indicated similar agreement regarding the fairness of their compensation compared to educators in other locations. Only a weak moderate correlation was found (r = 0.20) between those who agreed that their compensation was fair and those who saw themselves as continuing in the profession. Stated differently, those who felt their compensation was fair were only somewhat more likely to see themselves as an educator in Utah in two years' time.

Most educators (79.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to the supplies, tools, and/or technology they needed to do their jobs. Because educators completed this survey in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, their access to resources and perceptions about fairness of compensation may have been positively or negatively impacted. As a result, caution should be taken when interpreting these results.

Figure 8. Compensation and Access to Resources: Engagement Survey
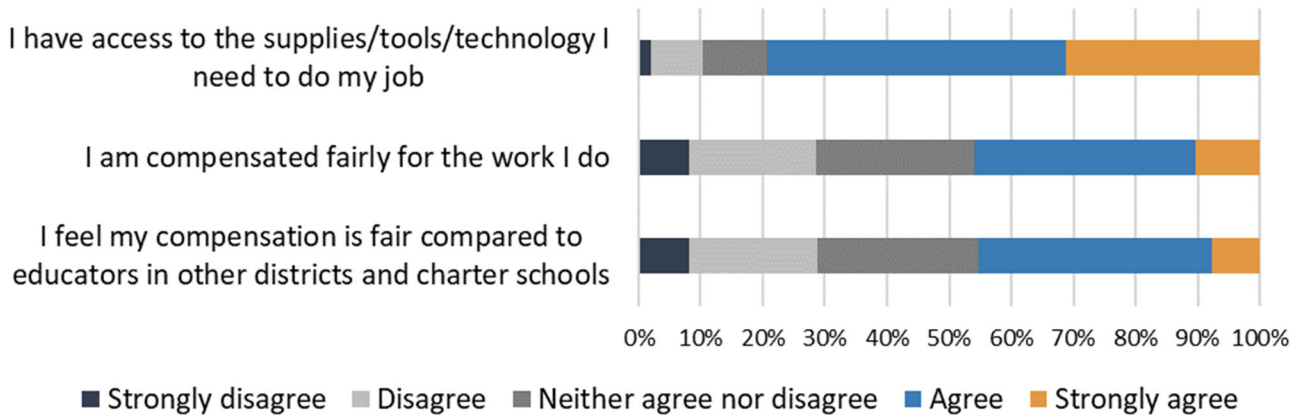
Exit Survey Summary. Educators were nearly evenly split on whether they felt their pay matched their performance with 52.7% saying "yes" and 47.3% saying "no." At the same time, responses indicated a general opinion that benefits packages were "moderately good" or "extremely good" (67%) and that compensation packages were "very fair" or "extremely fair" (56%). Again, a clear majority of educators indicated that they had ready access to needed supplies, tools, and technology. Detailed summaries are provided in Figures 9-11.
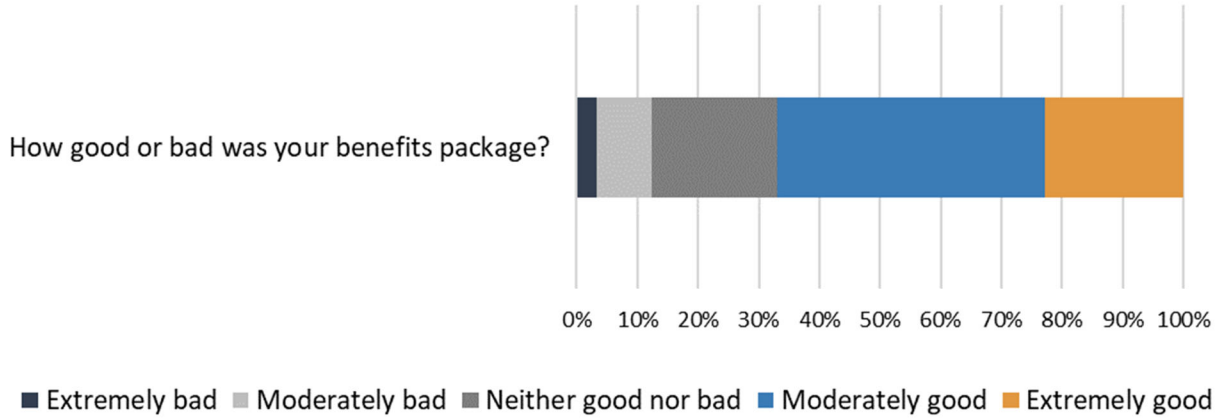
Figure 9. Compensation Quality: Exit Survey

How good or bad was your benefits package?

(horizontal axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%)

■ Extremely bad ■ Moderately bad ■ Neither good nor bad ■ Moderately good ■ Extremely good

Figure 10. Compensation Fairness: Exit Survey

How fair did you feel your total compensation package (pay + benefits) was compared to other Utah districts and charter schools?

(horizontal axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%)

■ Not fair at all ■ Slightly fair ■ Moderately fair ■ Very fair ■ Extremely fair

Figure 11. Resource Availability: Exit Survey

How available were the supplies/tools/technology you needed to be successful in your role?

(horizontal axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%)

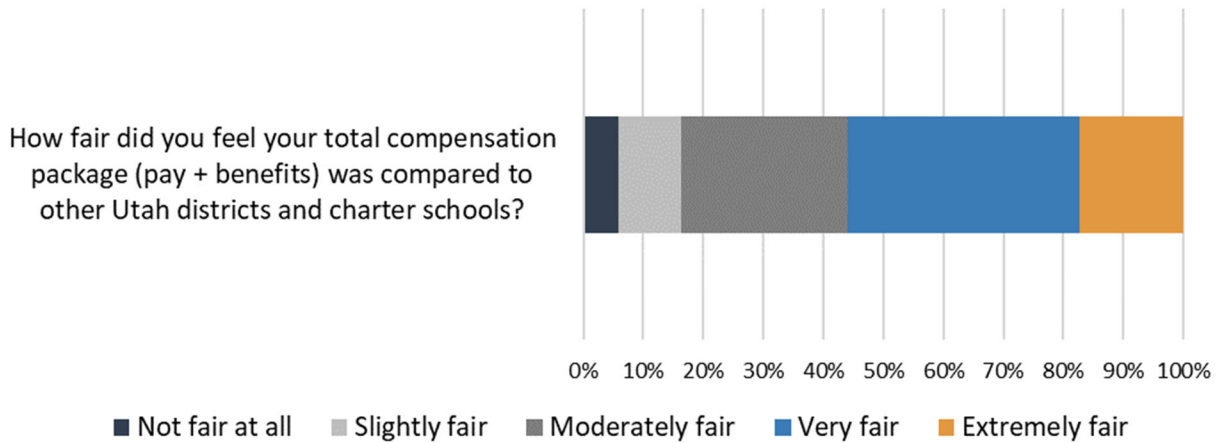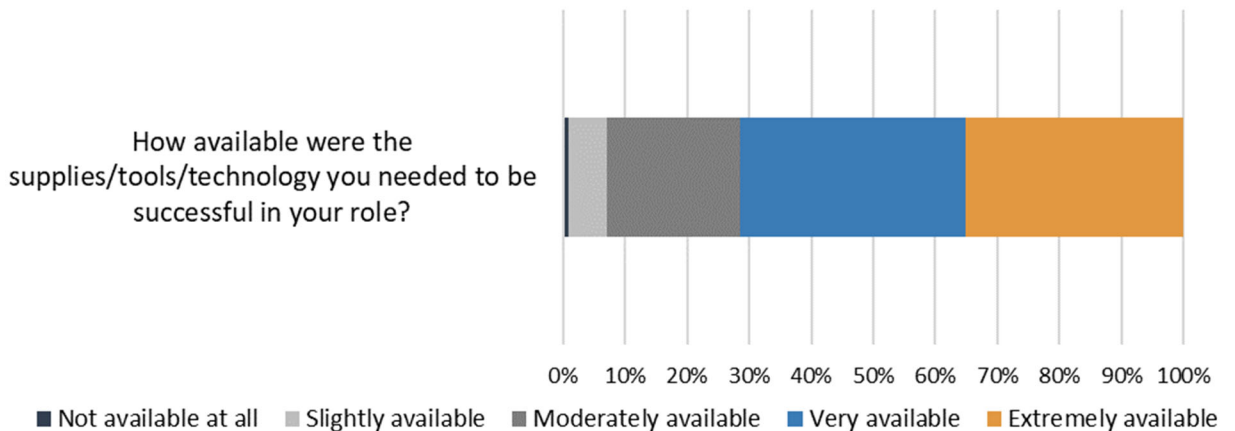■ Not available at all ■ Slightly available ■ Moderately available ■ Very available ■ Extremely available
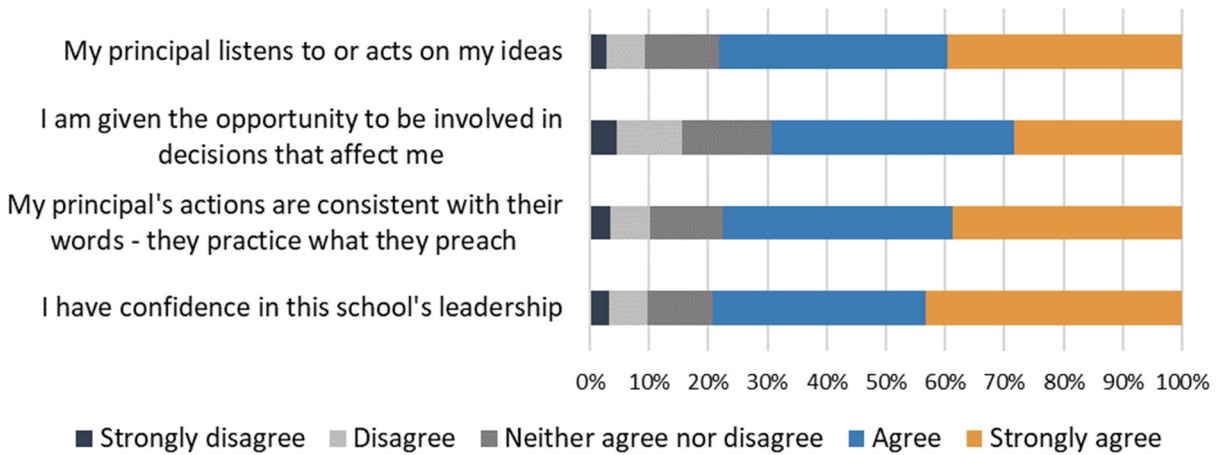
Support from Leadership

Educators' perspectives regarding school leadership on both surveys were overwhelmingly favorable. In both surveys, more than three-fourths of educators indicated that principals' actions matched their words.

Engagement Survey Summary. A majority of educators (78%) who responded to the survey indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that their principal listens to or acts on their ideas and 69.1% feel they are given the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect them. A detailed summary is provided in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Support from Leadership

My principal listens to or acts on my ideas

I am given the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect me

My principal's actions are consistent with their words - they practice what they preach

I have confidence in this school's leadership

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Exit Survey Summary. In evaluating the effectiveness of leadership, 73.7% of educators rated their principal as being "very effective" or "extremely effective" with 65.8% extending the same sentiment to principal effectiveness at evaluating performance. Educators indicated generally positive relationships with leadership with 81.2% indicating they got along "very well" or "extremely well." Additional summaries are available in Figures 13 and 14.

Figure 13. Principal Effectiveness: Exit Survey
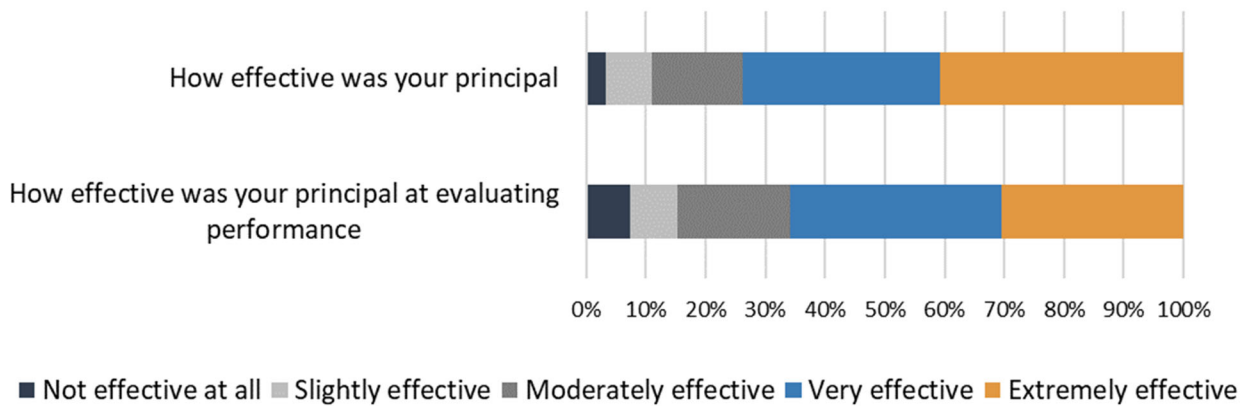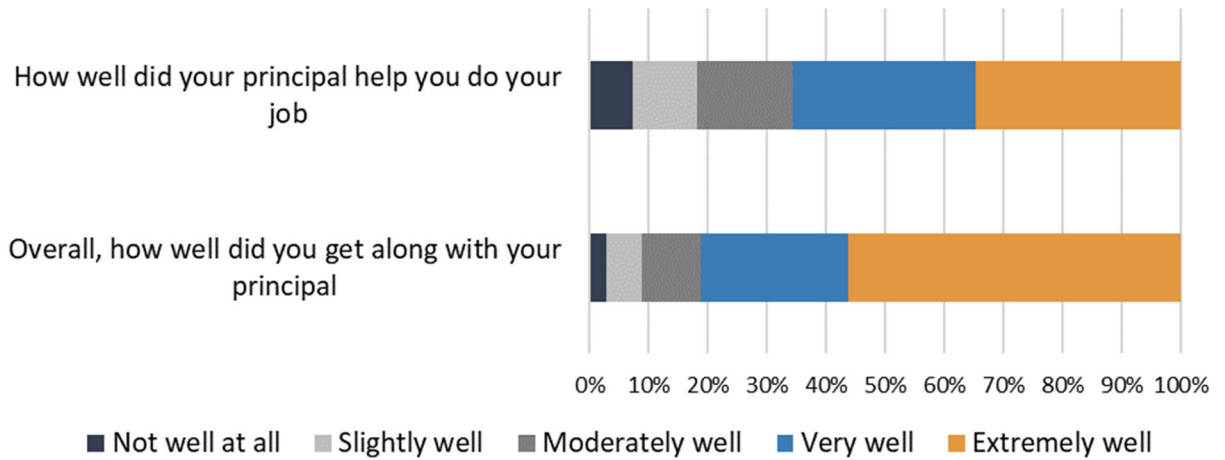
How effective was your principal

How effective was your principal at evaluating performance

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Not effective at all ■ Slightly effective ■ Moderately effective ■ Very effective ■ Extremely effective

Figure 14. Leadership Relations: Exit Survey

How well did your principal help you do your job

Overall, how well did you get along with your principal

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Not well at all ■ Slightly well ■ Moderately well ■ Very well ■ Extremely well
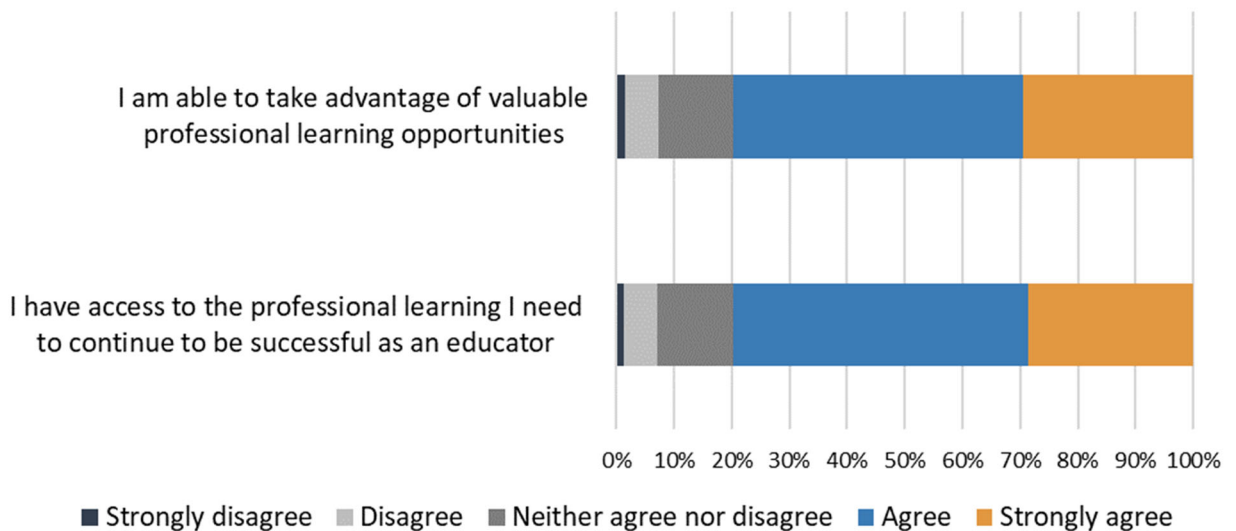
Training and Development

There was some disparity in the focus of questions for the engagement and exit surveys relative to teacher preparation, training, and development. The engagement survey focused more broadly on educator access to professional learning opportunities, while the exit survey posed questions related to teacher preparation for their position.
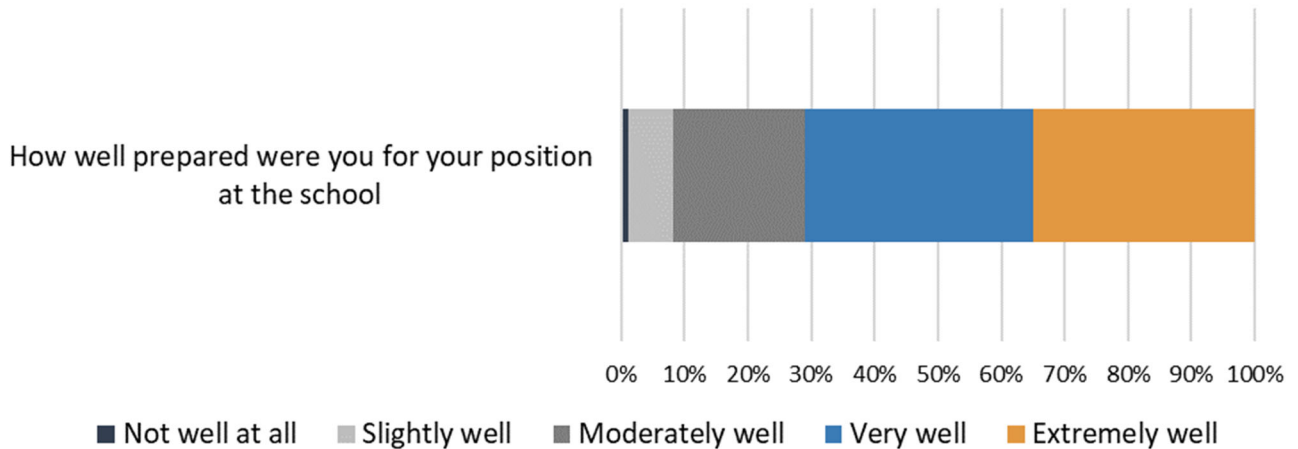
Engagement Survey Summary. Educators in this survey were widely positive about the types of training and support educators in their buildings receive. Nearly 80% of educators agreed or strongly agreed that they can take advantage of valuable professional learning opportunities (79.7%) and have access to the professional learning they need to be successful (79.6%). A full summary of participant responses to these questions appears in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Training and Development

I am able to take advantage of valuable professional learning opportunities

I have access to the professional learning I need to continue to be successful as an educator

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Exit Survey Summary. Educators responding to the exit survey were asked how well prepared they were for their position at the school. As shown in Figure 16, 70.9% indicated that they were either "very well" or "extremely well" prepared.

Figure 16. Preparation: Exit Survey

How well prepared were you for your position at the school

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Not well at all ■ Slightly well ■ Moderately well ■ Very well ■ Extremely well

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In interpreting the results presented in this report it is important to note two limiting factors. First, we must acknowledge that survey administration occurred amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Had the end of the 2019-2020 school year been more typical, resulting data may have looked differently. It may have been more or less favorable. Second, the inaugural versions of both surveys were created in ways that prevented analysis that may be more informative than the descriptive summaries contained in this report. Recognizing this limitation, USBE plans to refine and better align questions from both surveys so that future data from both surveys can enable analysis of disaggregated data as well as more detailed statistical analyses.

As represented by the data from the engagement and exit survey responses, Utah educators seem generally satisfied with the nature of their collaborative work with other educators, the quality and oversight of school administration, and their access to needed tools, technology, and professional learning. At the same time, many educators fail to see a clear career path, despite having set goals for their career development. Educators who lack this career vision are more likely to anticipate transferring schools or leaving the profession. In line with these findings, Board staff are working on better understanding perceptions of teacher leadership throughout the state. These efforts may help guide future action in providing direction for educators to develop leadership capacities. This recommendation for further examination complements

early-stage work currently being done by USBE staff on identifying teacher leader competencies and what a pathway to teacher leadership might look like.

Among those who leave their positions to transfer to another school, location of the new position seems to be a major influence in that decision. In contrast, educators who speculate transferring are more likely to cite emotional exhaustion/stress/burnout as highly influential. Emotional exhaustion/stress/burnout is also a leading influence in educator decisions to leave the profession, although about half of those leaving the profession indicate retirement and family concerns as also being strongly influential. In line with these findings, Board staff will continue ongoing efforts to support the induction and retention of beginning educators, including seeking policy and fiscal support for initiatives such as mentoring and providing high quality professional learning opportunities for new teachers. Currently, Board staff are preparing to release a teacher induction guidebook and developing greater supports for LEAs in the mentoring arena. In addition to the above efforts, Board staff recommend garnering deeper insight from Utah educators regarding the sources of their burnout and therefore what policy changes may help reduce unnecessary burden.

While data compiled from these surveys helps USBE and Utah lawmakers begin to better understand the experiences of the state's educators, it is possible to further refine data collection instruments to obtain more detailed information. Ongoing efforts in this regard may help interested parties better ascertain the "other" reasons educators give for leaving the profession, identify relationships among aspects of educator work that encourage or inhibit educator satisfaction, and provide clearer trajectories for teachers seeking to meet established career goals.