



**2023-2024 Educator
Exit Survey**
Summary Report

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2024 Educator Exit Survey Summary Report



Utah State Board of Education

250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Todd Call, MBA
Interim Director of Teaching and Learning

Julie Lundell, M.Ed.
Teacher Retention and Evaluation Specialist
Teaching and Learning

Kristin Campbell
Research Analyst II
Teaching, Learning and Licensing

Jonathan Collins
Research Consultant II
Teaching and Learning

November 2024

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For further information, please contact:

Kristin Campbell

Research Analyst III,
Teaching, Learning and Licensing
Utah State Board of Education

Phone: 801.538.7892

Email: Kristin.campbell@schools.utah.gov

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 967 educators who left their positions between July 1, 2023, and July 31, 2024. Based on historical data, Utah's educator attrition rate has remained around 10%. These responses can be estimated to capture the sentiments of approximately 20% of the teachers who left Utah schools during the 2023-24 school year. This report provides a synthesis of the data obtained related only to the reasons educators were leaving their current positions.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

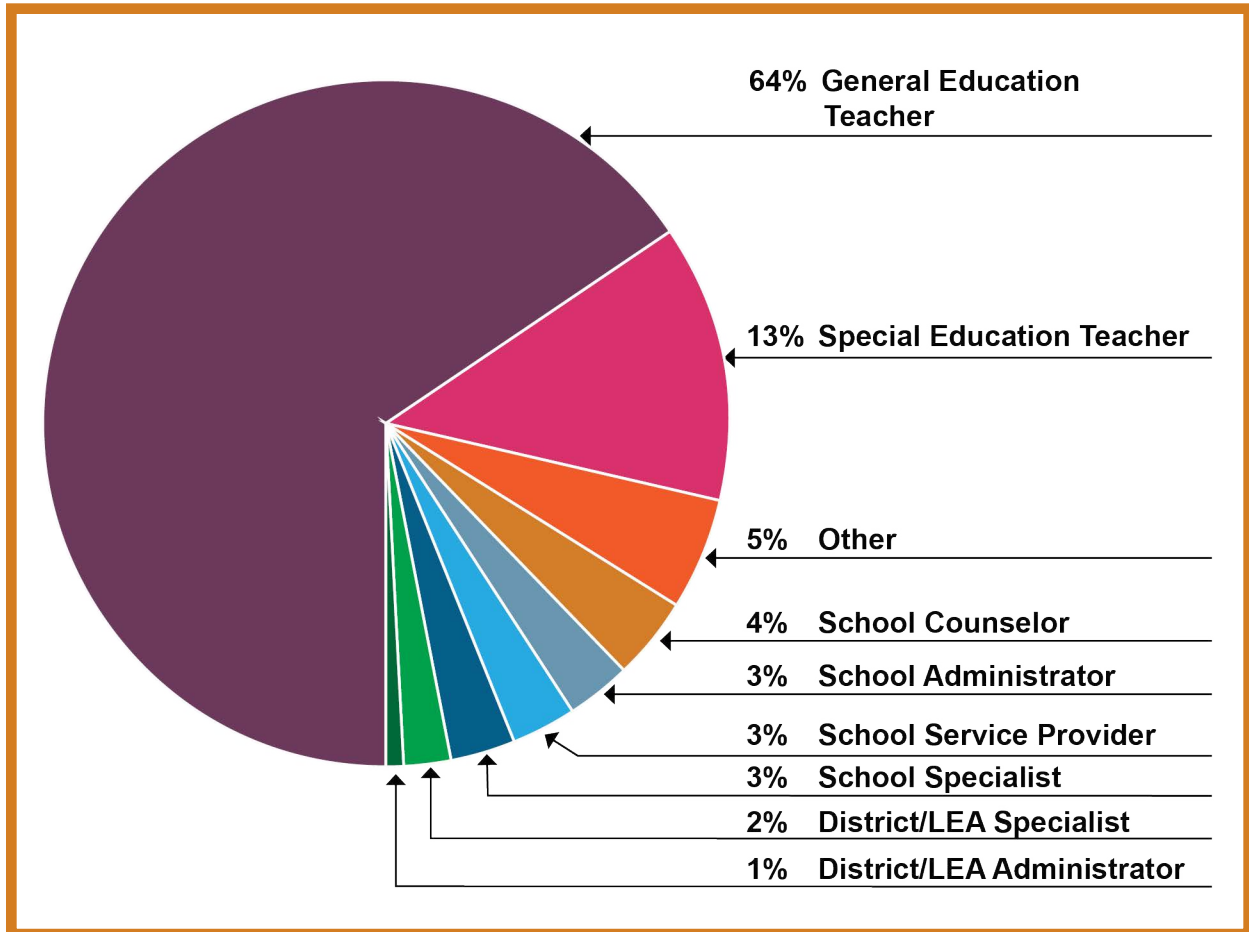
While the term **educator** in this context refers to all general education classroom teachers, preschool teachers, special education teachers, counselors, school and district-based specialists, and administrators, more than 80% of the responses obtained capture the sentiments of classroom teachers, 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 967 valid survey responses were received between July 1, 2023, and July 31, 2024. Of these responses, 64% were from general education teachers and 13% were from special education teachers. Figure 1 shows the distribution of other educator roles included in this summary.

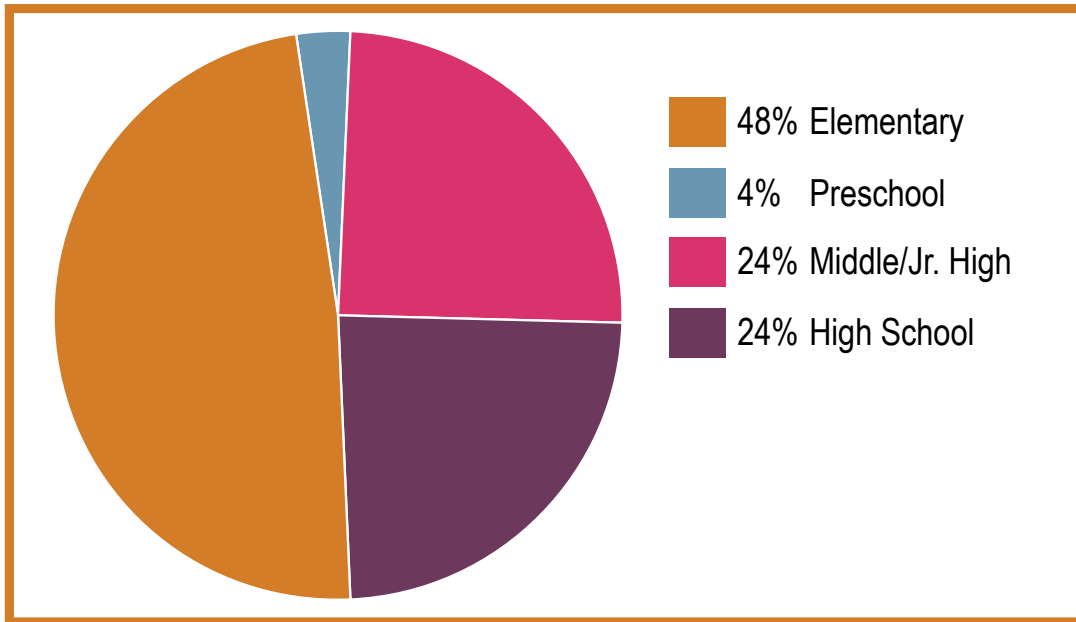
Figure 1
Percent of Respondents by Primary Role



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

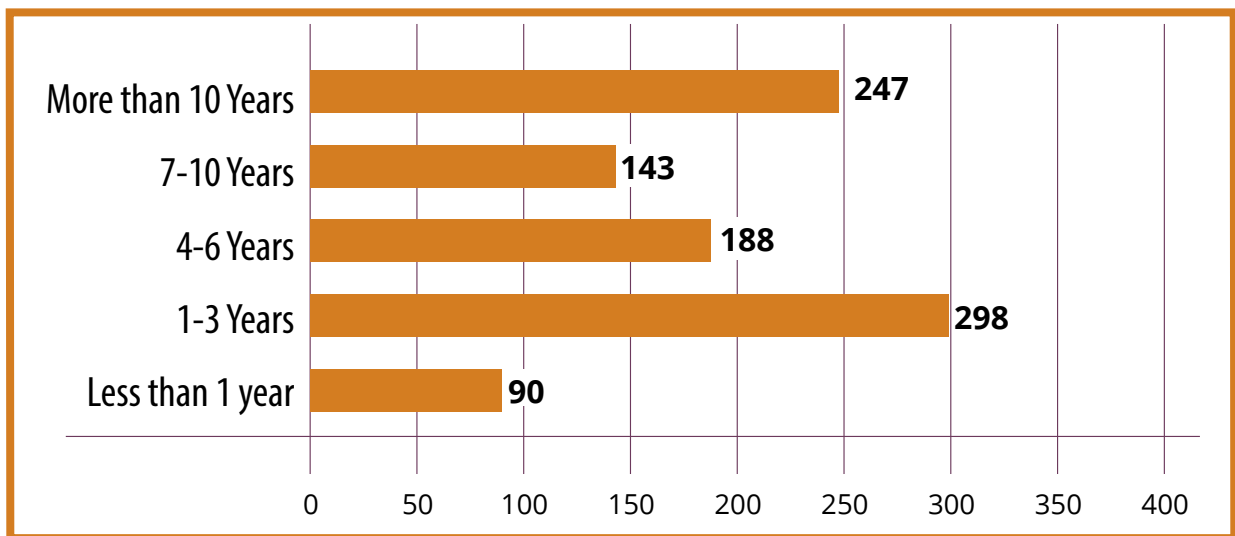
Departing educators left positions in preschool, elementary, middle school/junior high, and high school and represented educators across all years of experience sub-groups. These data are summarized in Figures 2 and 3 on page 9.

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?”

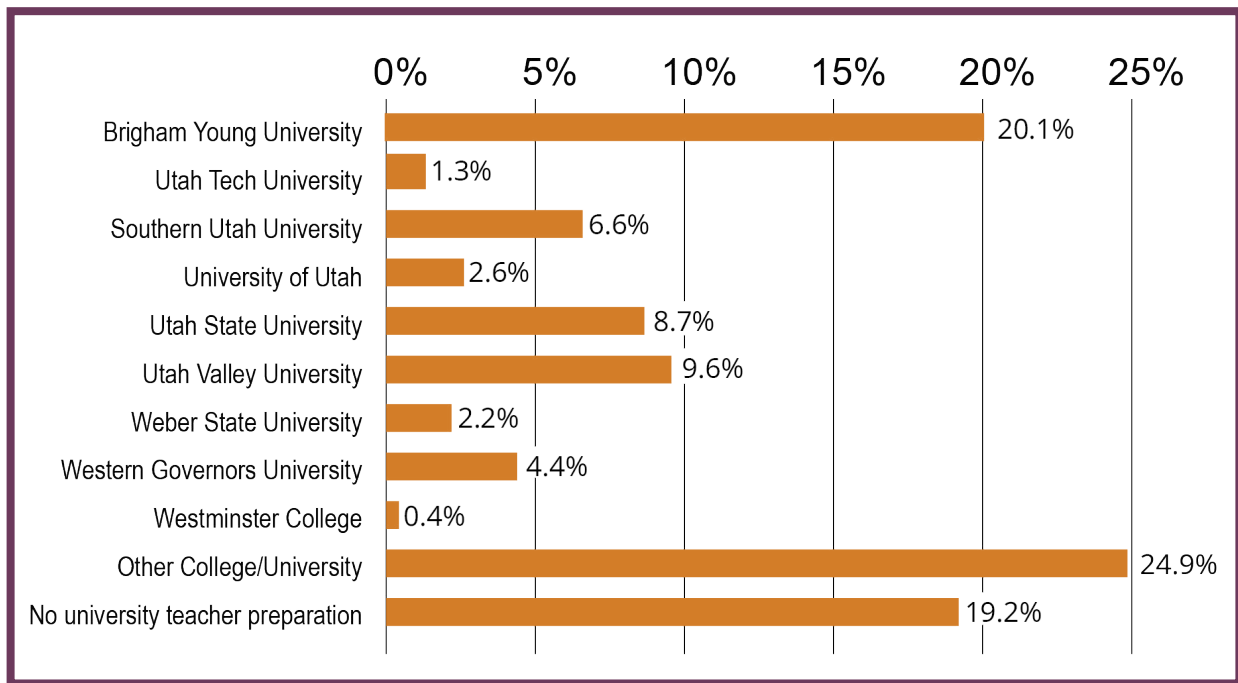
Figure 3
Respondents by Years of Experience



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 967 responses received, 229 educators in their first three years of teaching identified the university teacher preparation program in which they received their training. Around 19% of these educators indicated not having finished a university education program while 24% 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.

REASONS FOR LEAVING

LIMITATIONS

The analysis presented here does not account for every question asked in the survey. It also does not represent the perspectives of all educators who left their positions during 2023-24, 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.

REASONS FOR DEPARTURE

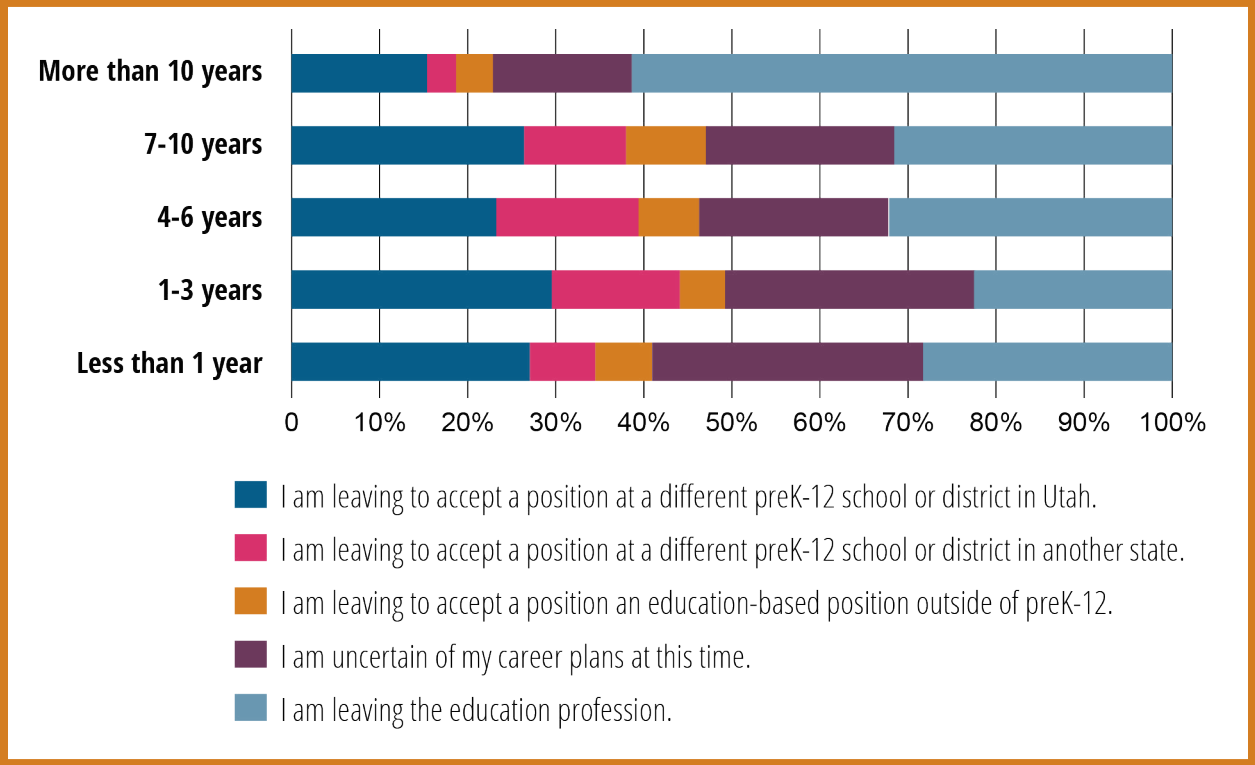
When discussing teacher attrition, it is important to acknowledge that some educators leave their current position to accept other education related positions. Thus, while a departing educator represents a position needing replacement from the perspective of a school or district, the change may be a 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, 24% of departing educators indicated that they were accepting a different PreK-12 position in Utah while 11% were accepting a similar position in another state. Some educators (6.3%) were accepting education-based positions out-side of PreK-12. Thus, around 40% of departing teachers can be considered transferrers. The highest percentage of departing teachers (36%) indicated they were leaving the profession entirely. Twenty three 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.

REASON FOR DEPARTURE BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

As shown in Figure 5, of the 317 educators who indicated they were leaving the profession entirely, 26% were early-career educators, 31% were mid-career educators and 44% 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 ten or more years of experience in Utah. However, when asked to explain why they were leaving the profession, many late career educators indicated that retirement had a major influence on their decision to leave.

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

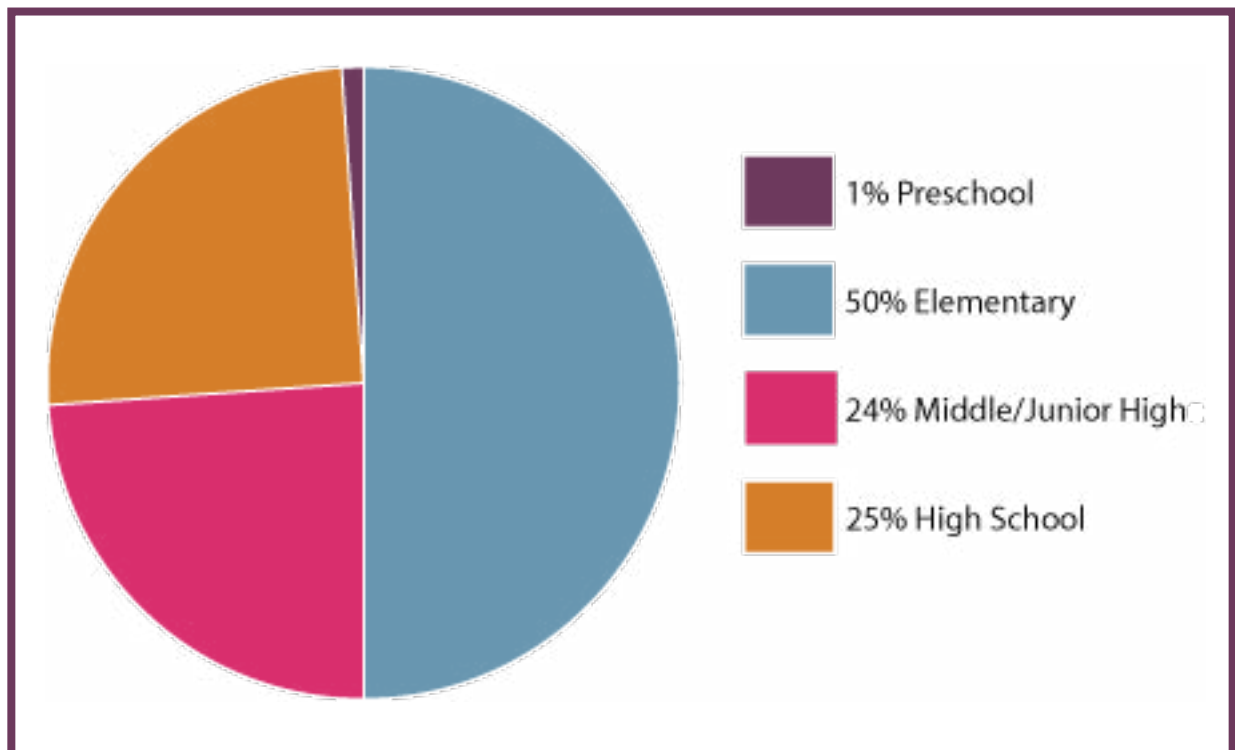


Note: This figure shows the distribution of reasons for leaving among early, mid-, and late career educators. Early career educators are those with three or fewer years of experience, mid-career educators have between four and 10 years of experience, and late career educators have more than 10 years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

REASONS FOR DEPARTURE BY GRADE-LEVEL ASSIGNMENT

As shown in Figure 6, of the 317 educators who indicated they were leaving the profession entirely, 1.3% were preschool educators, 50% were elementary educators, 24% were middle school educators, and 25% 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**

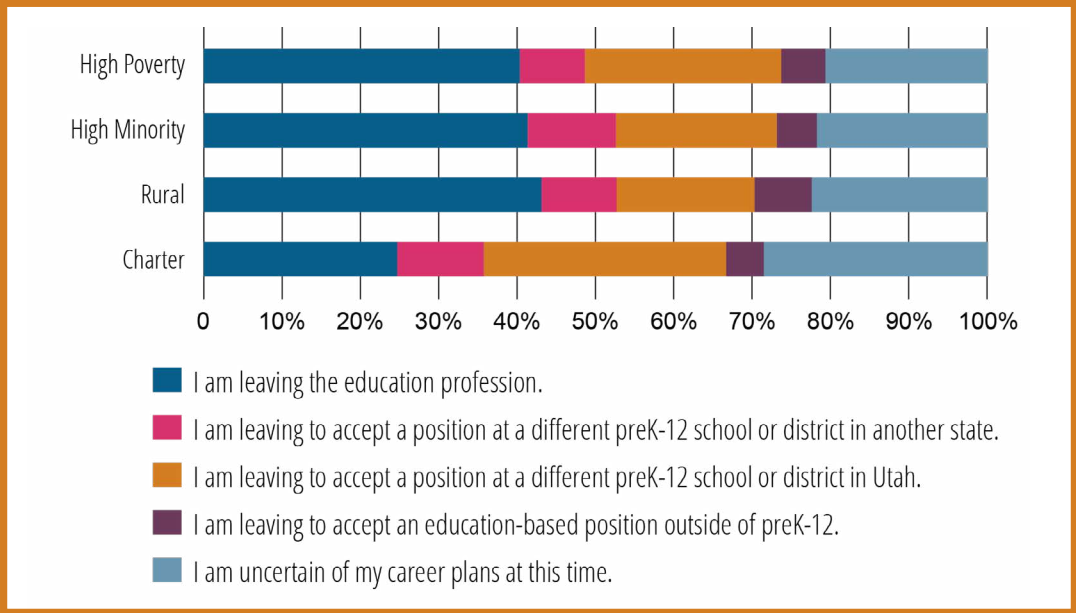


Further examination of responding educators based on grade level assignment reveals that 18% of the preschool educators departing their positions were leaving the profession while another 36% were uncertain about their future career plans. Among responding elementary educators, 36% were leaving the profession and 24% were uncertain of their future career plans. For responding middle school educators, 36% were leaving the profession and 23% were uncertain about their plans, while among departing high school educators, 38% were leaving the profession and 20% were uncertain about their plans. Thus, among all grade-level subgroups, 36% 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 160 educators who indicated they were employed in a high poverty school environment, 41% are leaving the profession entirely. This is a 7% increase since 2022-23 when 34% of educators at high poverty schools said they were leaving the profession. This percentage for educators in schools marked high minority was similar (41%) and showed similar increase since 2022-23. Among educators who marked the school as rural educators, 43% were leaving the profession. This is a 1% decrease since 2022-23. It is important to note that respondents were allowed to self-report whether they were working in a rural, high poverty, or high minority school and responses may represent broad definitions of school types. In charter schools, 25% of departing educators were leaving the profession entirely and 40% were transferring within education. 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



FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATOR'S DECISIONS TO LEAVE

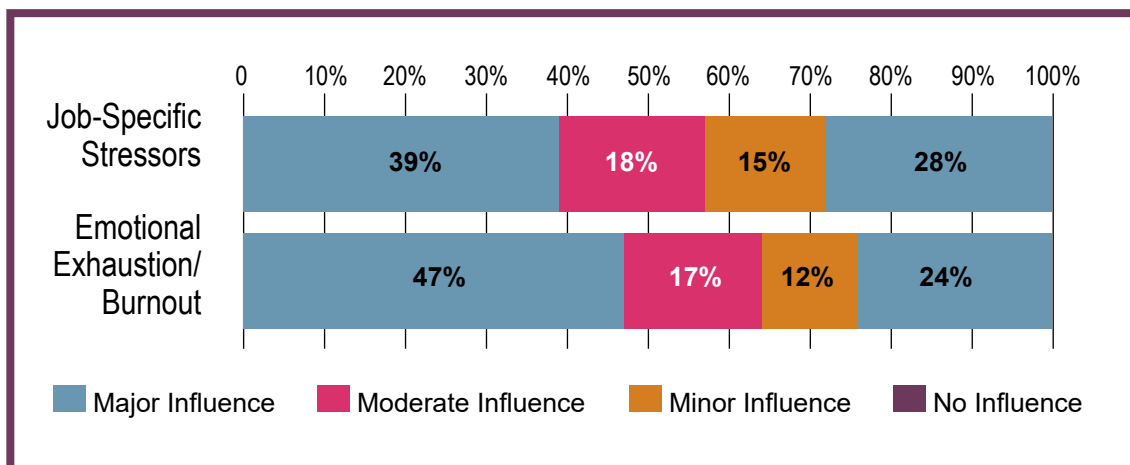
To help ascertain what factors contribute to educator attrition, departing educators were asked to rate a series of factors as to whether the factor had a major, moderate, minor, or no influence on the educator's decision to leave their position. Ten factors were presented to all responding educators 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 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 47% of educators indicated emotional exhaustion/burnout as having a major influence on their decision while 39% indicated job-specific stressors had a major influence. An additional summary of responses for these two influences appears in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Distribution of Factors Identified As Most Influential in Educators' Decisions 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, BURN-OUT 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.”

“Lack of administrative support and feeling unsafe in my work environment has been difficult. I expressed this to admin and they did nothing to help me feel more supported or increase my safety.”

Another common sentiment was feeling a lack of recognition, respect or general accountability from within and beyond the school.

“The principal allows responsibilities to pile on us increasingly. His inconsistent communication makes it difficult to know which responsibilities he expects us to uphold, as he asks way too much. But he is also willing to publicly call out individuals for aspects of his performance.”

“Administration had favorites. I felt I had to prove myself to get recognition and even then I was not valued for my efforts as a teacher.”

“Administration, school boards, and parents are not supportive. This is not a job that a teacher can do alone.”

Educator responses also expressed lack of training, support and/or resources 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:

“Behavior issues have become harder. Class sizes are so large it makes classroom management so difficult. I had nothing more to give.”

“I had a lot of behavioral needs with my students this year. There was not a lot of support because every other classroom was the same.”

TEACHER PAY

Respondents were asked what factors would have influenced their decision to leave. The two highest factors were stressful job responsibilities (a major factor for 29% of respondents) and pay (32%).

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.

“More money to actually be able to afford being a teacher and a human.”

“Different and less apathetic leadership. A fair pay increase that keeps up with the rising cost of living.”

Many teachers felt that the profession in general did not receive compensation commensurate with their responsibilities.

“The pay when taken into account of what we’re expected to do just doesn’t work. I was in a profession development last year where I was learning to apply a bandage to a sucking bullet wound and how to apply tourniquets. I need to know what to do when my students pass out and start seizing in class. I need to know the different health needs a dozen or so students spread through 6 classes, with the understanding that if I do something wrong it could result in serious problems or even death in the most extreme cases.”

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.

“As an elementary school teacher, I work many, many more hours than I am paid for.”

“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, communicating 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

In 2023-24, of the 967 respondents, 41% indicated that they planned to remain in education in some capacity. For late-career educators, this number dips to 23% of respondents planning to remain in education.

- Generally, elementary school teachers and teachers who identify themselves as working in high-poverty or high-minority environments are planning to leave the profession in higher numbers.
- Educators who did not complete a teacher preparation program leave their positions in the highest numbers.
- Early and mid-career educators who are leaving education continue to identify emotional burnout and job specific stressors as the top reasons.
- For educators with more than 10 years' experience, retirement was the largest influence on their decision to leave education.

While respondents leave for a wide variety of personal and professional reasons, lack of pay and support were frequently recurring themes.

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250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

Sydnee Dickson, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of
Public Instruction