

TEACHING AND LEARNING



# 2022 Educator Exit Survey Summary Report

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# 2022 Educator Exit Survey

## Summary Report



**Utah State Board of Education**

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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 1,064 educators who left their positions between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022. Based on historical data suggesting that Utah schools hire approximately 3,500 teachers each year, these responses can be estimated to capture the sentiments of approximately 30% of the teachers who left Utah schools during the 2021-22 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://schools.utah.gov/administrativerules/documentsincorporated> 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.

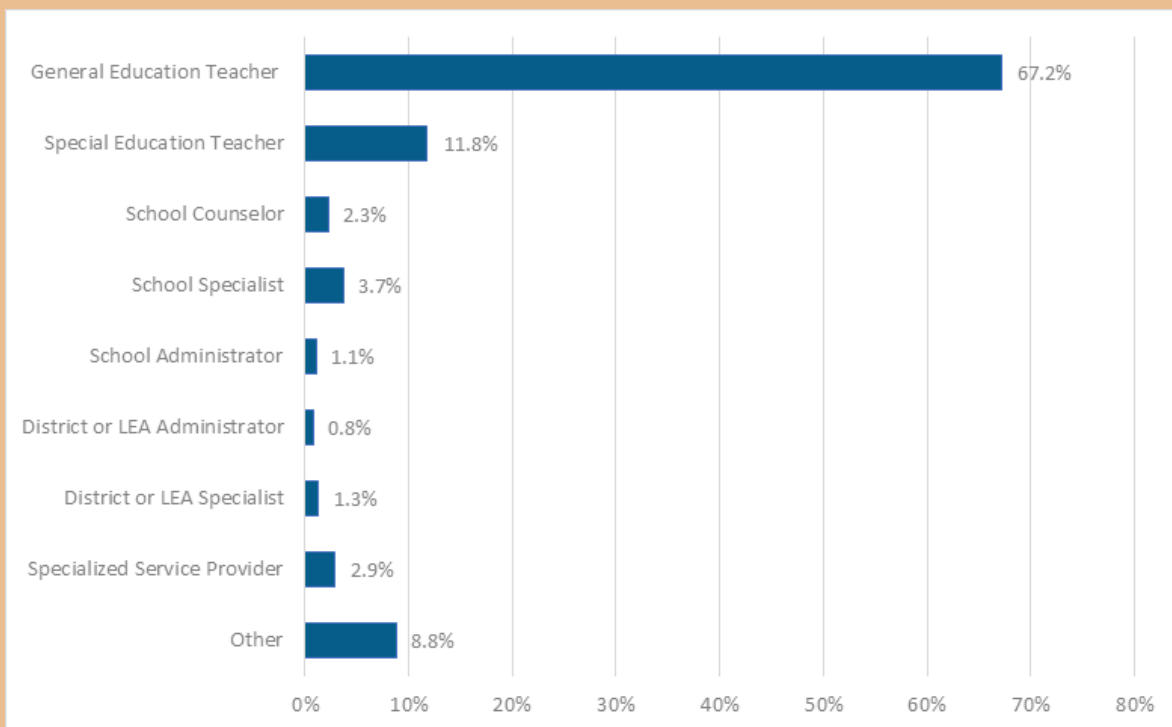
Throughout this report, the terms **early career educator**, **mid-career educator** and **late career educator** are used to describe educators with three or fewer years of experience, those with four to ten years of experience, and those with ten or more years of experience, respectively. To differentiate 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 1,064 valid survey responses were received between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022. Of these responses, 67.2% were from general education teachers and 11.8% were from special education teachers. Figure 1 shows the distribution of other educator roles included in this summary.

Figure 1  
**Distribution of Roles  
of Departing Educators**

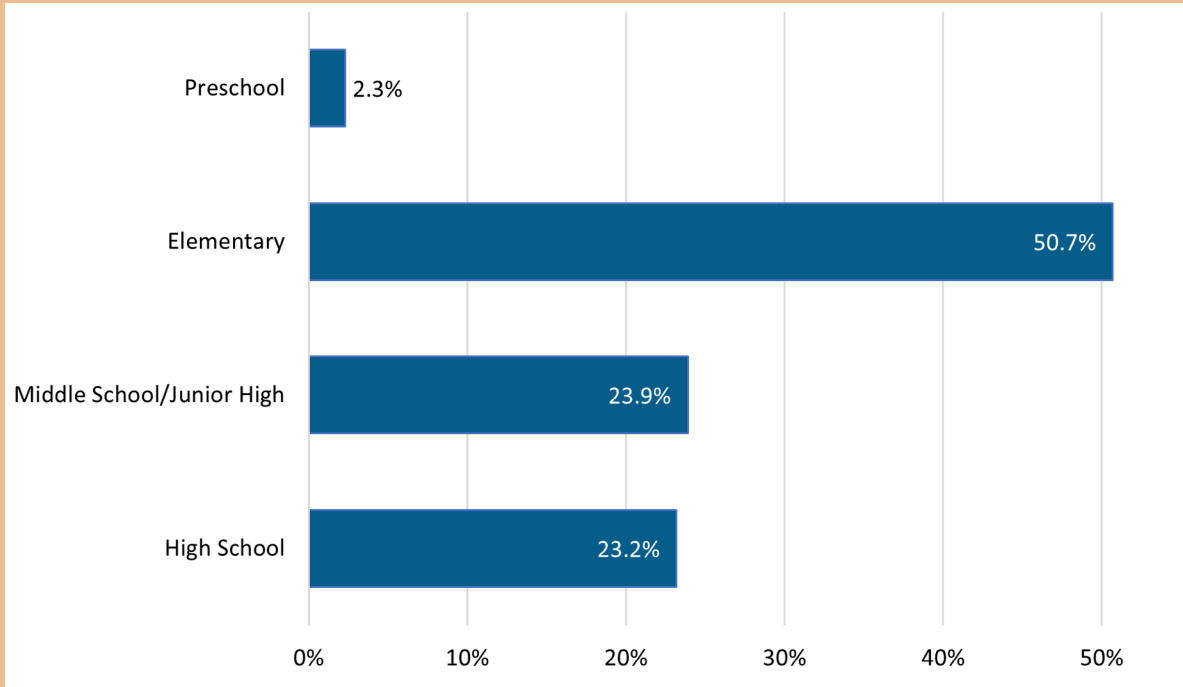


**Note:** This figure shows responses to the question “Which of the following best describes your primary role?” *N* = 1,064.



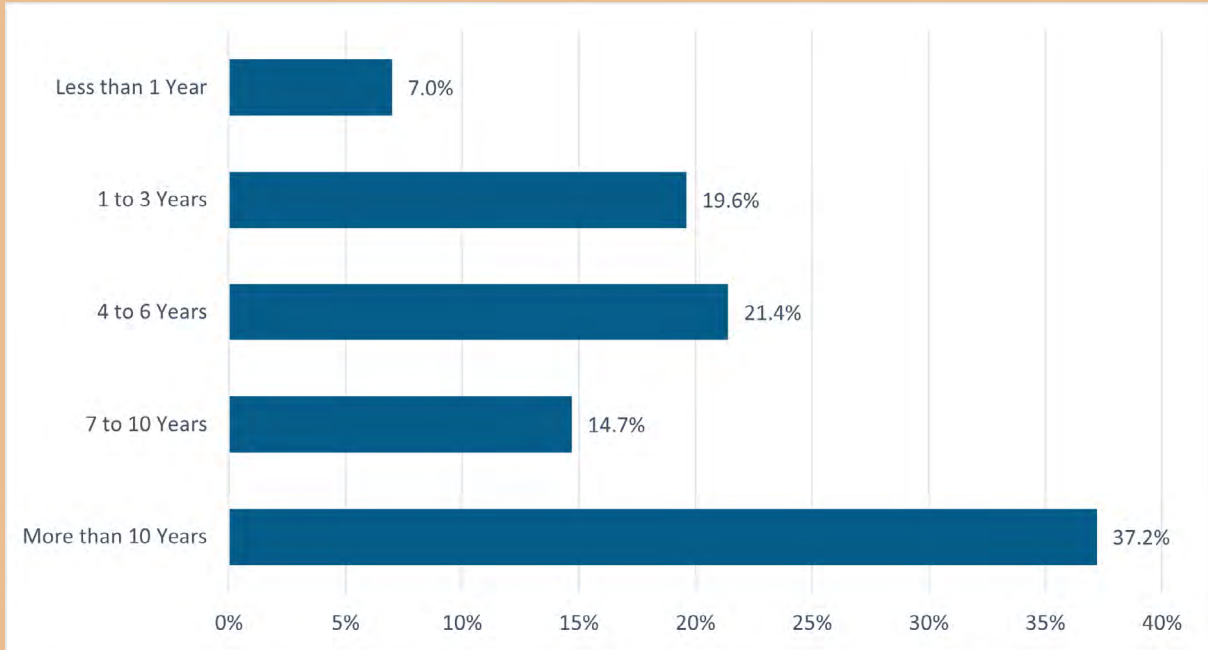
Departing educators left positions in preschool, elementary, middle school/ junior high, and high school and represented educators across all years of experience subgroups. These data are summarized in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2  
**Departing Educators’  
 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?”  
 N = 1,064.

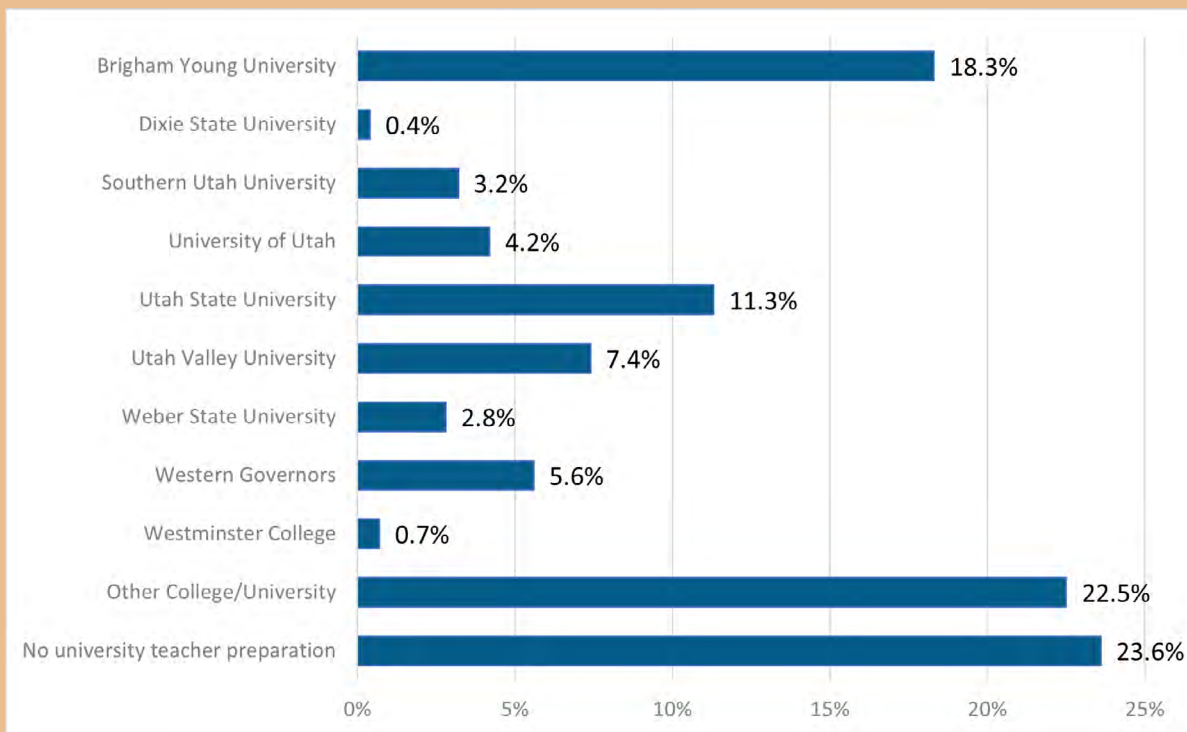
Figure 3  
**Departing Educators’  
Years of Experience in Utah**



**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?”  
N = 1,064.

Of the 1,064 responses received, 284 educators (26.7%) 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. Just less than one-fourth (23.6%) of the early-career educators leaving their position indicated not having completed an education program, while 22.5% 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:** This figure shows responses to the question “In which university teacher preparation program did you receive your training?”. Only those indicating three or fewer years of experience answer this question. *N* = 284.

## 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 2021-22, 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 re-quired 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. With one exception that will be noted later, questions included in this analysis appear early in the survey and are thus more likely to have been completed by all respondents.

The instrument used for the 2022 exit survey administration differs from the instrument used in 2020 and 2021. Attempting to capture a more complete understanding of teacher attrition, revisions were made to the survey instrument in 2021. 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 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

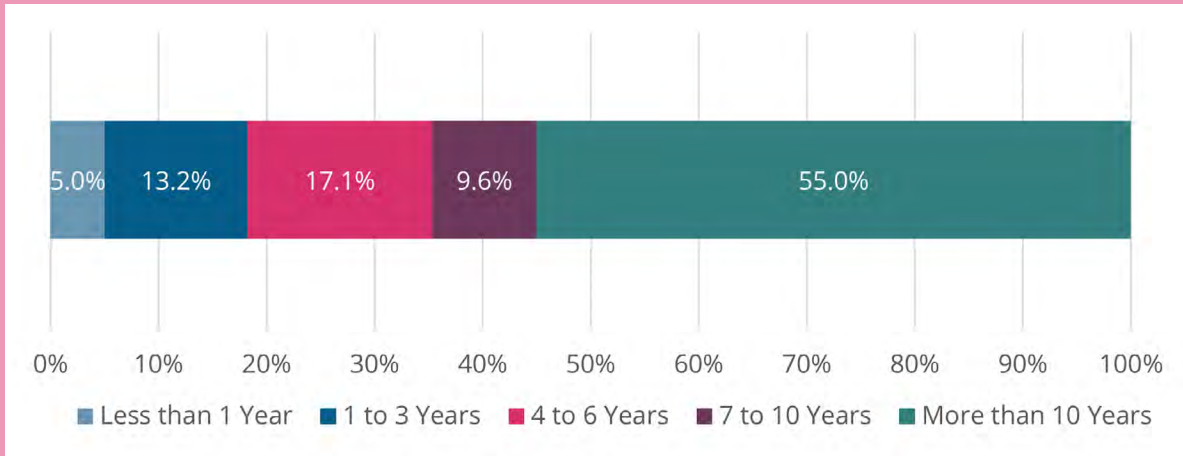
When discussing teacher attrition, it is important to acknowledge that some educators leave their current position to accept other education related positions. Thus, while a departing educator represents a position needing replacement from the perspective of a school or district, the change may be a 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, 21.2% of departing educators indicated that they were accepting a different PreK-12 position in Utah while 9.3% were accepting a similar position in another state. Some educators (5.6%) were accepting education-based positions out-side of PreK-12. Thus, just over one-third of departing teachers can be considered transferrers. The highest percentage of departing teachers (42.9%) indicated they were leaving the profession entirely and 21.0% indicated uncertainty related to their future career plans, meaning approximately 64% 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 456 educators who indicated they were leaving the profession entirely, 18.2% were early-career educators, 26.7% were mid-career educators and 55.0% 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 more than 10 years of experience in Utah. However, among the 251 teachers with more than 10 years of experience who were leaving the profession, 181 (72.0%) 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 456 departing educators who indicated they were leaving the profession, 42.7% 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.

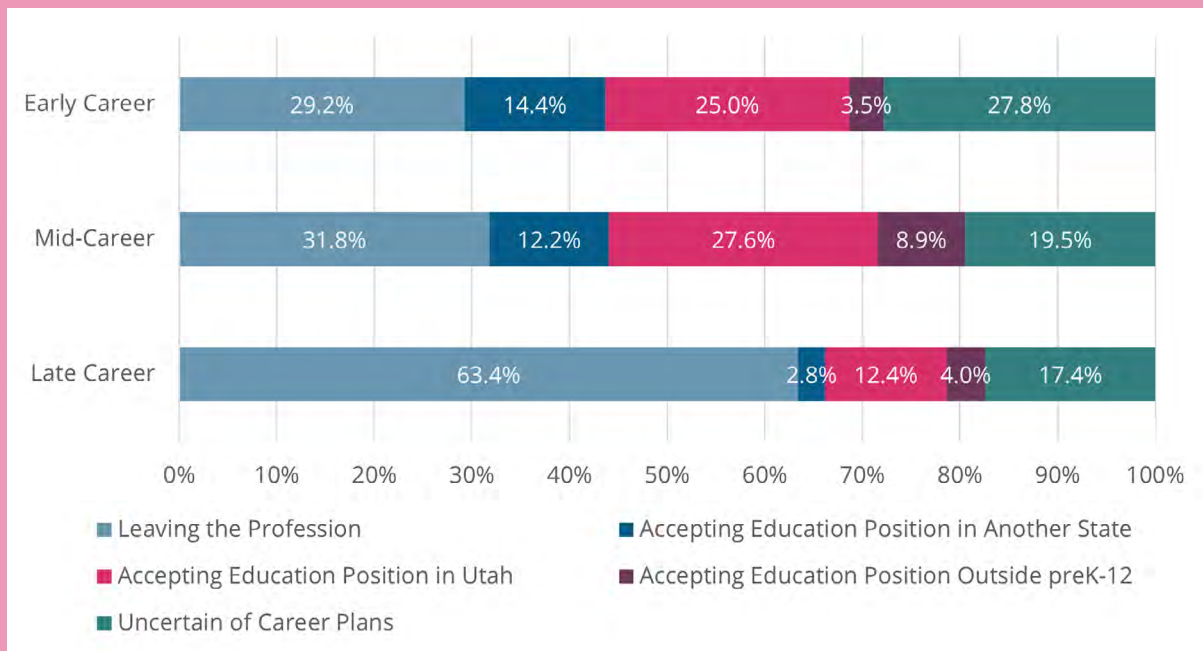
Figure 5  
**Educators Leaving the Profession  
 by Years of Experience**



**Note:** This figure shows “I am leaving the education profession” responses to the question “Which statement best describes why you are leaving your current position?” disaggregated by educators’ years of experience teaching in Utah. *N* = 456.

Additional examination of attrition based on years of experience reveals that 29% of early career educators who are departing their positions are leaving the profession while another 28% are uncertain of their future career plans. Among mid-career educators, 31.8% are leaving the profession and 19.5% are uncertain of their future career plans. For late career educators, 63.4% are leaving the profession and 17.4% are uncertain about their plans. Thus, among all experience subgroups, most educators are leavers, rather than transferrers. A summary of these data appears in Figure 6.

Figure 6  
**Early, Mid- and Late Career Educators' Reasons for Leaving**

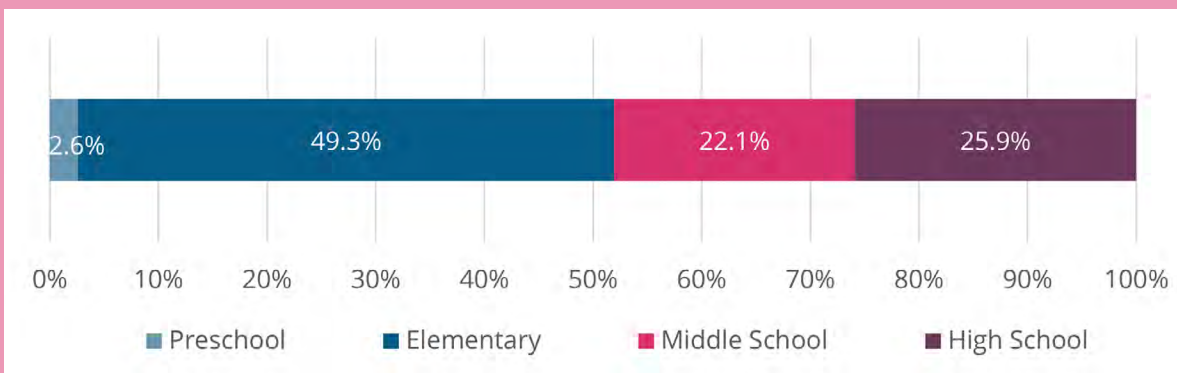


**Note:** This figure shows the distribution of reasons for leaving among early, mid-, and late career educators. Early career educators are those with three or fewer years of experience, mid-career educators have between four and 10 years of experience, and late career educators have more than 10 years of experience.  $n_{early} = 284$ ;  $n_{mid} = 384$ ;  $n_{late} = 396$ .

## REASONS FOR DEPARTURE BY GRADE LEVEL ASSIGNMENT

As shown in Figure 7, of the 456 educators who indicated they were leaving the profession entirely, 2.6% were preschool educators, 49.3% were elementary educators, 22.1% were middle school educators, and 25.9% were high school educators. Thus, the primary source of grade-level attrition, based on responses to this survey, is among elementary educators.

Figure 7  
**Educators Leaving the Profession  
 by Grade-Level Assignment**

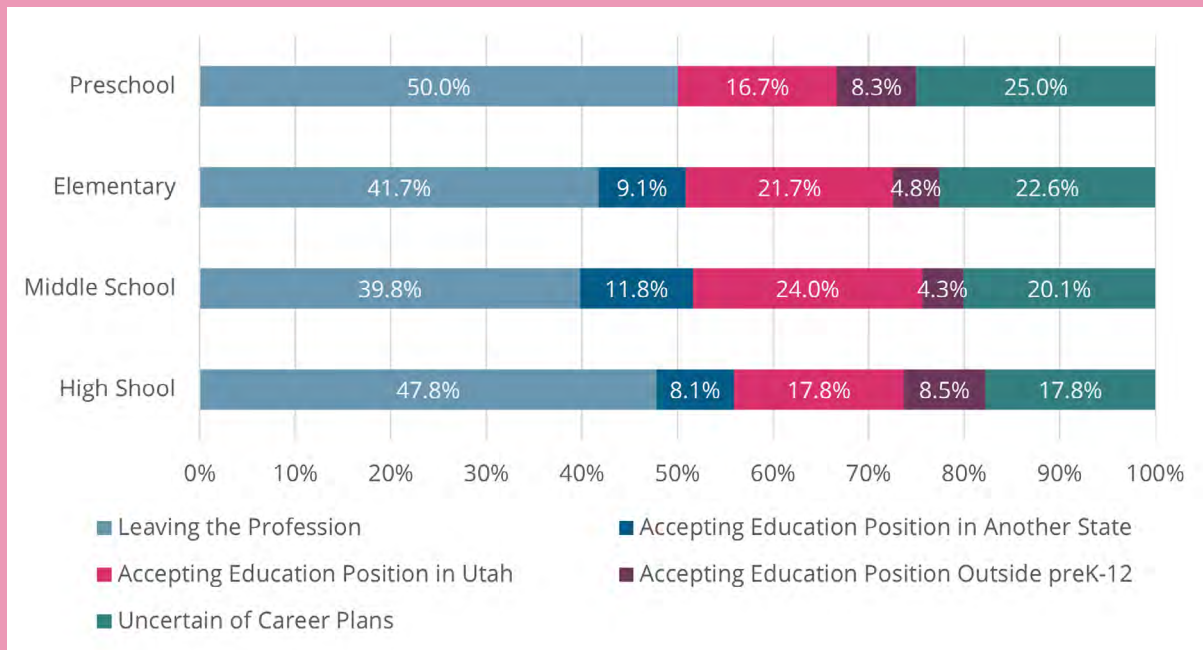


**Note:** This figure shows “I am leaving the education profession” responses to the question “Which statement best describes why you are leaving your current position?” disaggregated by educators’ grade level assignment. *N* = 456.



Further examination of responding educators based on grade level assignment reveals that 50.0% of the preschool educators departing their positions were leaving the profession while another 25.0% were uncertain about their future career plans. Among responding elementary educators, 41.7% were leaving the profession and 22.6% were uncertain of their future career plans. For responding middle school educators, 39.8% were leaving the profession and 20.1% were uncertain about their plans, while among departing high school educators, 47.8% were leaving the profession and 17.8% were uncertain about their plans. Thus, among all grade-level subgroups, forty percent or more of educators are leaving the profession. Further summary of these data appears in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**  
**Educators' Reasons for Leaving**  
**by Grade Level Assignment**

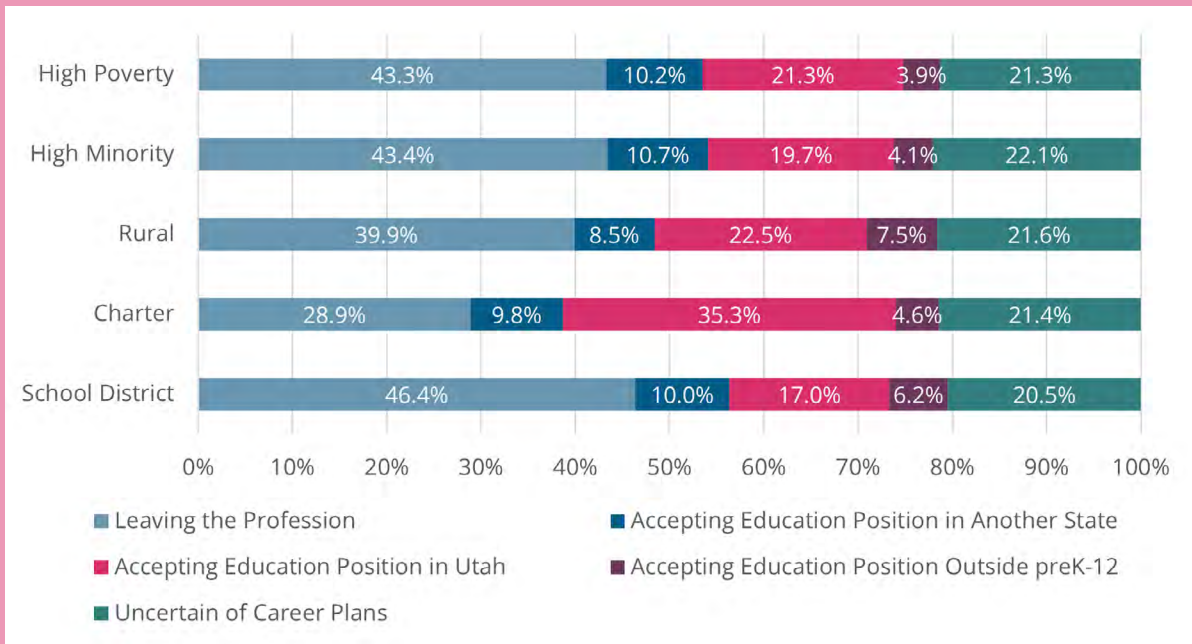


**Note:** This figure shows the distribution of reasons for leaving among educators at all grade levels.  $n_{\text{preschool}} = 24$ ;  $n_{\text{elementary}} = 539$ ;  $n_{\text{middle}} = 254$ ;  $n_{\text{high}} = 247$ .

## REASON 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 9, of the 254 educators who indicated they were employed in a high poverty school environment, 43.3% are leaving the profession entirely. This percentage is similar (43.4%) for those indicating they were employed in a high minority school environment. Among rural school educators, 39.9% were leaving the profession. In charter schools, 28.9% of departing educators were leaving the profession, while 46.4% 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. However, in each case, more than 700 of the 1,064 educators who took the survey, approximately two-thirds of the responding educators, provided responses to these questions.

Figure 9  
**Educators' Reasons for Leaving  
 by School Environment**



**Note:** This figure shows the distribution of reasons for leaving among educators employed in the indicated school environments.

$n_{\text{high poverty}} = 254$ ;  $n_{\text{high minority}} = 244$ ;  $n_{\text{rural}} = 213$ ;  $n_{\text{charter}} = 173$ ;

$n_{\text{school district}} = 552$ .

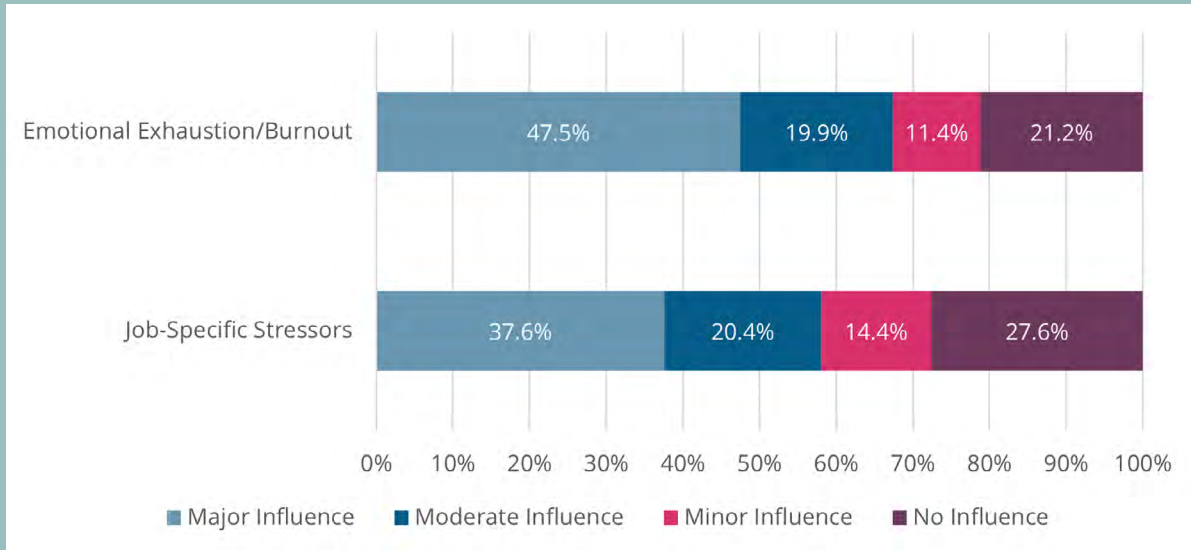
# FACTORS INFLUENCING EDUCATORS' DECISIONS TO LEAVE

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 47.5% of educators indicated emotional exhaustion/burnout as having a major influence on their decision while 37.6% indicated job-specific stressors had a major influence. Additional summary of responses for these two influences appears in Figure 10.

Figure 10  
**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. *N* = 1,064

### 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.”

More than 460 educators provided written responses to clarify their sentiments connecting their decision to leave their position to emotional exhaustion, burnout, or job-related stress. Several common themes emerged in an examination of a random sample of 200 of these comments. Within the sampled responses, 35.8% of the educators indicated that they felt they were exposed to **unrealistic workload expectations** that simply challenged their ability to do everything that was required. These educators expressed sentiments such as:

*"I was asked to do so much every day as part of my job and it was exhausting. I left everyday feeling like I had been hit by a bus. ..."*

*"... this year I feel as though the expectations of teachers to manage online curriculum, in-school instruction, and then have additional expectations of intensive professional development (LETRS) without paid time to complete the hours needed for it has made it impossible to have ample family time after work and on weekends. I feel like my quality of life has declined due to the expectations and extreme stress I have been experiencing over the last several years."*

Another common sentiment was feeling a **lack of recognition, respect or general accountability** from within and beyond the school. In total, 20.4% of the sampled responses expressed this sentiment with statements such as

*"I think the major piece of my burnout was not feeling valued and not feeling like I belonged anywhere."*

*"... Teachers are being asked to parent students these days, and it's hard. ... Then add politicians to the mix, making parents think that teachers are out to indoctrinate their children ... it's just too much."*

*"I am feeling burnt out from parent expectations of leniency in my classroom. I have had many parents tell me exactly how they feel I should be running my classroom and/or handling situations with their students. I have not felt well supported in setting boundaries and expectations with students."*

Nineteen percent of educator responses also expressed **lack of training, support and/or resources** as contributing to feelings of exhaustion and stress, while 15.9% mentioned specific incidents of **lack of professionalism** among school leaders or staff, and 12.4% mentioned **extremes in student behavior** as leading to exhaustion. A sample statement from these themes include:

*"... Lack of support for students with special needs and behavior issues, not necessarily special education students. ..."*

*"Admin/staff issues prevented and undermined student learning. Student behavior created unsafe environment and was not dealt with."*

*"Because we weren't able to work together as a team, it got exhausting doing everything I needed to do by myself. ... When help was sought from team, very little help was given. ..."*

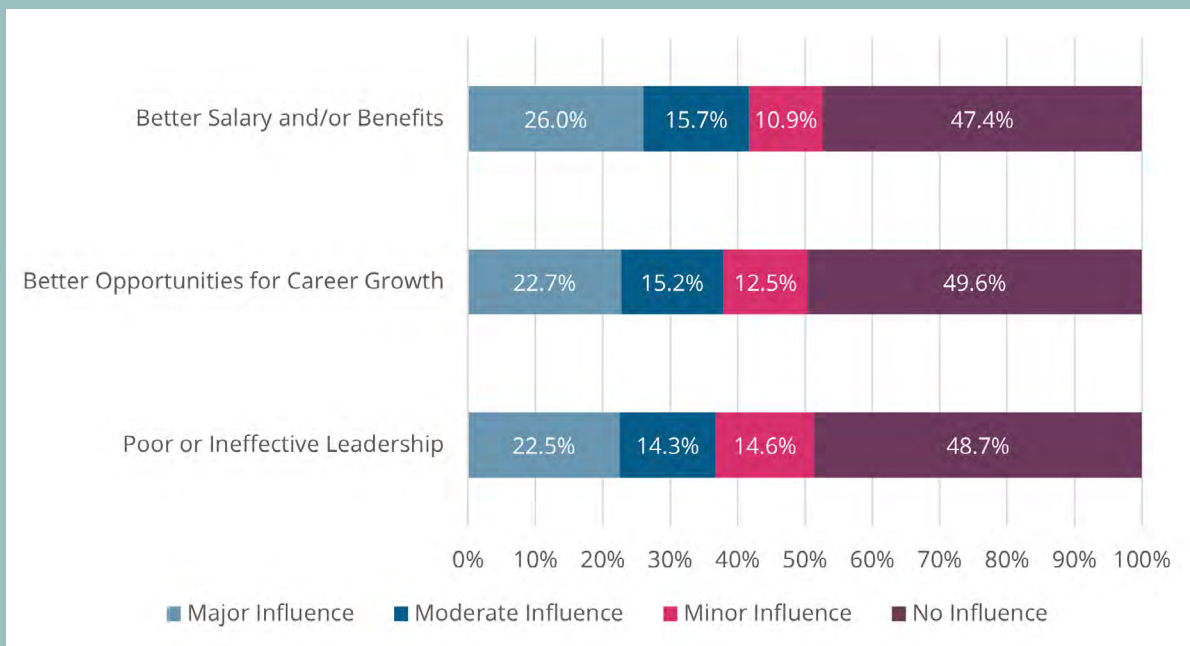
*"... This year has been the most difficult year I have experienced in this profession. The challenges that have come with this school year have caused a lot of extra work, without support from admin and the community. ..."*

Several additional themes appeared with less regularity, including **issues re-lated to the pandemic, too many demands on personal time, overwhelming class sizes or caseloads, pay that was not commensurate with the work, excessive state**

mandates, lack of sufficient planning time, and health-related concerns that created additional stress.

Secondary factors influencing educators’ decisions to leave their positions include **better salary and/or benefits** (indicated as a major influence for 26.0% of educators), **better opportunities for career growth** (indicated as a major influence for 22.7% of educators), and **poor or ineffective leadership** (indicated as a major influence for 22.5% of educators). A detailed summary of educator perception of the influence of these factors is provided in Figure 11. It should be noted that despite these factors ranking as secondary in influence, in all cases nearly half of departing educators indicated that these factors had no influence on their decision to leave their positions.

Figure 11  
**Distribution of Secondary Factors 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. *N* = 1,064.

## Understanding Perspectives of Ineffective Leadership

To better understand departing educators' perceptions related to ineffective leadership, educators who indicated poor or ineffective leadership as having a major influence on their decision to leave were provided the opportunity to provide written comment to further explain their perception. Specifically, these educators were provided with the following prompt: "You indicated that poor or ineffective leadership had a major influence on 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 poor or ineffective leadership that are contributing to your decision to leave your current position."

An analysis of the 200 responses provided to this prompt revealed three primary themes: **a lack of support, poor communication and inaction on the part of leadership**. Among the sentiments expressing perceptions of a lack of support (present in 25.0% of the responses) were

*"... I also feel extremely unsupported by the people making policies – from the teaching end they do not offer us help in teaching students but offer a great amount of leniency for kids to walk all over teachers because we are not always supported."*

*"Admin trained us on other things, but never addressed/trained us on HOW to manage 6th graders at a junior high level. ..."*

*"... The principal offered me no training, or support when I asked for help with the safe school violations and threats. ..."*

*"The administration at my school provided little to no support to me as a new teacher."*

Comments expressing perceptions related to poor communication (present in 24.5% of the comments) included **failure of leadership to listen, failure to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders and failing to keep promises**. Comments in this category include:

*"Communication from administration is inconsistent and oft times unprofessional; nothing inappropriate, only a lack of respect. ..."*

*"... he made decisions on his own that would affect all teachers and students in the program. If he would have gathered information from program coordinators, teachers and so forth, he might have a better decision for students, teachers, the school and the program."*

*"The first thing they do is blame the teachers for problems. It is always the teacher's fault and they never even ask things of parents like have you spoken with the teacher about this problem? Simply asking the teacher how they can make things better could be amazing. ..."*

*"There is no communication and the teachers' opinions and needs are listened to but not actually heard. They promise things they cannot do. ..."*

Comments related to administrative inaction (present in 22.5% of the comments) most typically were made in reference to **administrative lack of follow through on issues related to student behavior**. These comments include:

*"I felt that I was not supported regarding inappropriate student behavior. I had a student become somewhat physical with me on three separate occasions, and nothing was done to correct that behavior or support me in the matter. I felt that admin did not seem to care for my well-being or listen to my concerns. I felt that some school policies were enforced more than others. ..."*

*"... the district is full of people that won't tell people how to do things because they don't want to 'micro-manage,' but telling people how to set up response to intervention, how to do interventions, manage behaviors in their classes, or even just educating teachers on what special education is and should look like for them isn't micro-managing ... it's called doing your job by telling people how to do theirs. ..."*

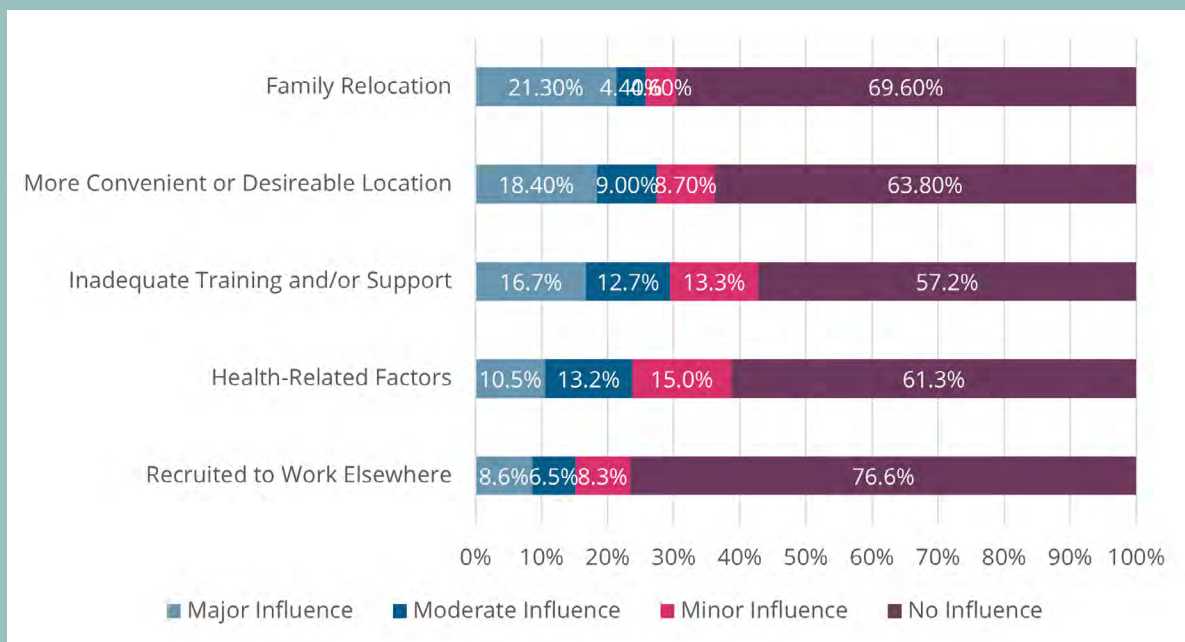
*"There were multiple situations that happened that I had major concerns over. I approached my administrator about several different things and never received any type of response or support."*

Secondary topics of concern related to leadership include **perceptions of un-professional or unethical behavior** on the part of leadership (present in 17.0% of the comments), **lack of empathy or expressed appreciation for teachers and staff** (present in 15.5% of the comments), and **leadership self-centeredness, instances of nepotism or having clear "favorites" on the staff** (present in 13% of the comments). Less common topics of concern include general **disorganization, lack of administrative presence** in the school or in classrooms, **disagreement regarding the school mission and vision** of leadership, **micromanagement** on the part of leadership, **general unapproachability**, and too much **administrative turnover**.



Among factors identified as being least influential in educators’ decisions to leave their positions were family relocation, more convenient or desirable location, inadequate training and/or support, health-related factors, and being recruited to work elsewhere. These factors were rated as having a major influence for 21.3%, 18.4%, 16.7%, 10.5%, and 8.6% of departing educators respectively. In all cases the percentage of educators indicating these factors as having no influence exceeded 57%. A detailed summary of these data is presented in Figure 12.

Figure 12  
**Distribution of Least Influential Factors  
 in Educators’ Decision to Leave**

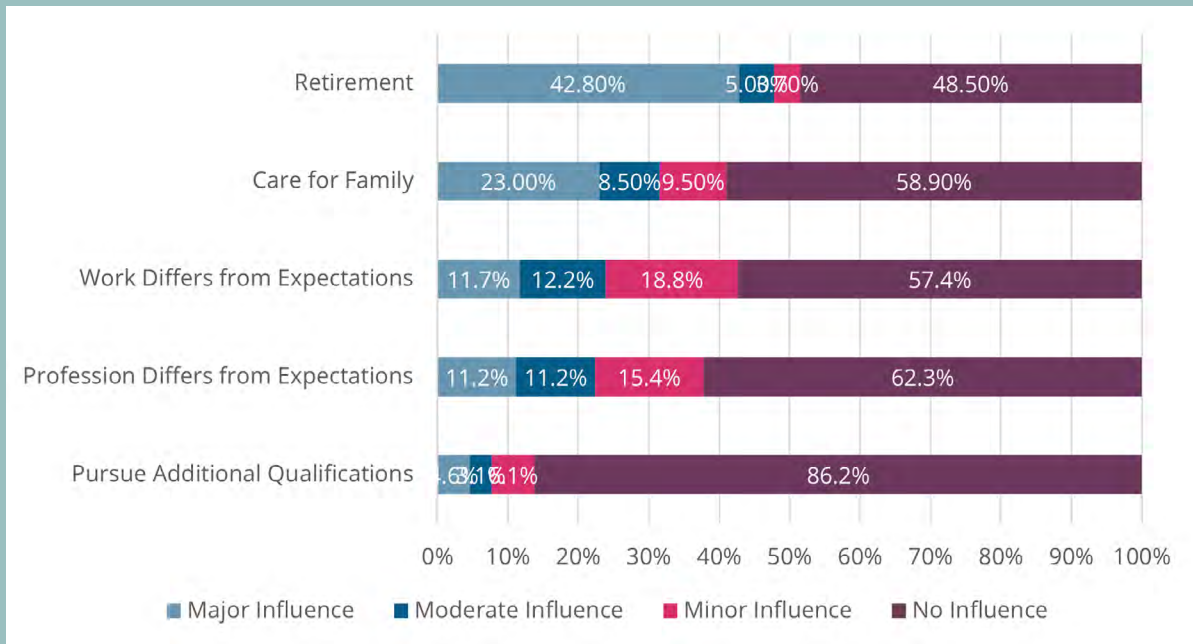


**Note:** This figure shows educators’ ratings associated with whether the indicated factors had a major, moderate, minor, or no influence on their decision to leave their current position. *N* = 1,064.

### FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISIONS TO LEAVE THE PROFESSION

In addition to identifying the influential magnitude of the factors above, educators who indicated that they were leaving the profession entirely were also asked to provide influential ratings for five additional categories. Among those leaving the profession, 42.8% indicated retirement as having a major influence while 23.0% indicated taking a career break to care for family was a major influence. As shown in Figure 13, educators also ranked the influence of differences in job and career expectations as well as the pursuit of additional qualifications on their decision to leave.

Figure 13  
**Distribution of Influential Factors  
 in Educator Decision to Leave the Profession**



**Note:** This figure shows leavers ratings associated with whether the indicated factors had a major, moderate, minor, or no influence on their decision to leave their current position.  $n_{\text{care for family}} = 504$ ;  $n_{\text{work differs}} = 608$ ;  $n_{\text{profession differs}} = 456$ ;  $n_{\text{pursue additional qual}} = 456$ ;  $n_{\text{retirement}} = 456$ .

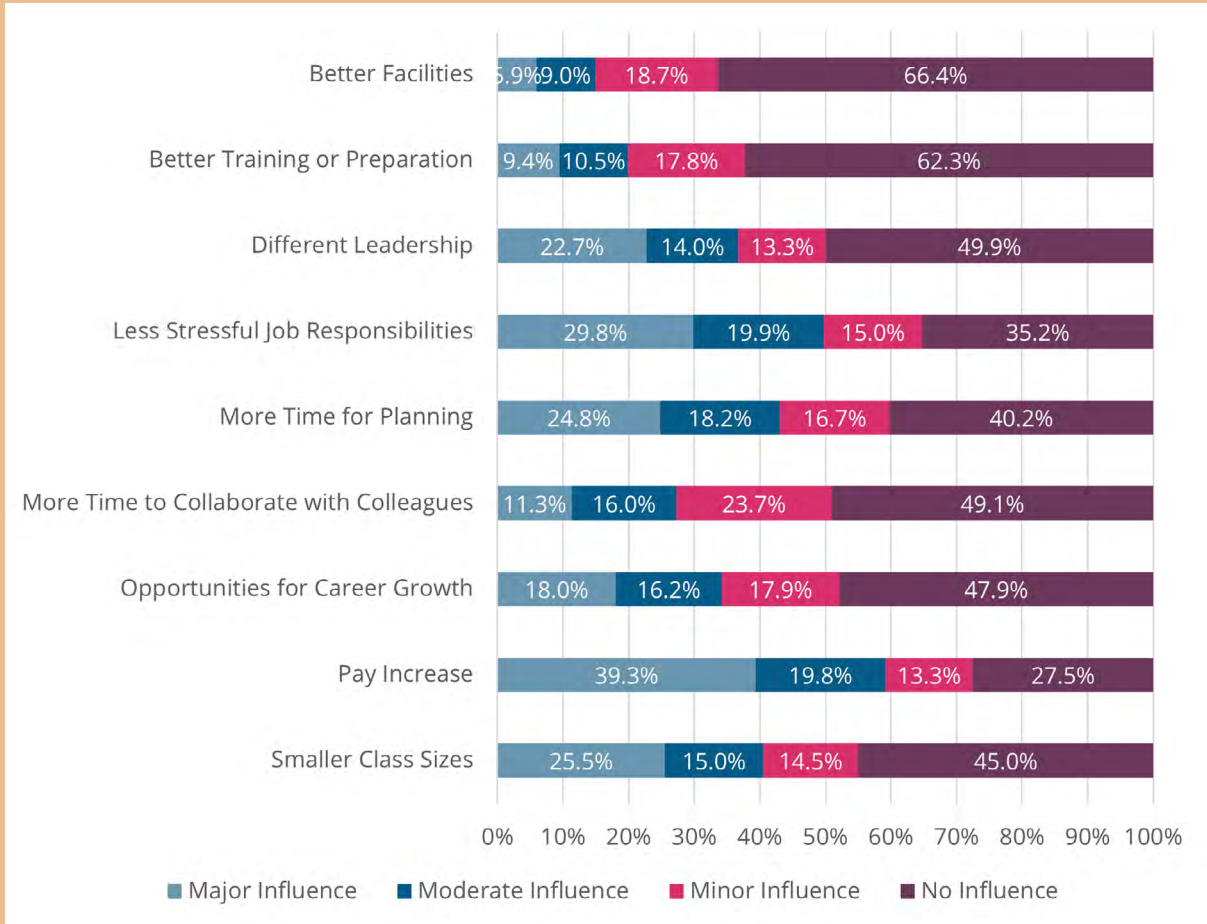
## FACTORS WITH POTENTIAL INFLUENCE ON ENCOURAGING EDUCATORS TO STAY

To help ascertain whether certain factors might have helped encourage educators to remain in their positions, all departing educators were asked to rate nine separate factors as having a major, moderate, minor, or no influence in this regard. Factors receiving the highest percentage of major influence include:

- A pay increase (39.3%)
- Less stressful job responsibilities (29.8%)
- More time for planning (24.8%).

Interestingly, although 47.4% of departing educators indicated that better salary and or benefits had no influence on their decision to leave (see Figure 11), 59.1% indicate that a pay increase would have had a major or moderate influence on encouraging them to remain in their positions. One potential interpretation of this seeming contradiction is that while educators do not leave their positions primarily because of their pay, they may be incentivized to endure other influential factors if their pay were higher. Also noteworthy is that nearly half of departing educators might be encouraged to remain if their job responsibilities were less stressful. Figure 14 shows further distribution of these data.

Figure 14  
**Distribution of Factors Encouraging Educators to Remain in Their Positions**



**Note:** This figure shows departing educators' ratings associated with whether the indicated factors would have had a major, moderate, minor, or no influence on encouraging them to remain in their current position. *N* = 1,064.

## CONCLUSION

This report has provided a summary of 1,064 departing educators' perspectives related to their decision to leave their current position. Among the critical take-aways resulting from this survey are:

- Elementary teachers are leaving their positions at more than twice the rate of middle school and high school educators.
- Early, mid-, and late career educators are leaving their positions with approximately equal frequency.
- Late career educators are most likely to be leaving the profession, but retirement is a major influence for these educators.
- More than half of early and mid-career educators leaving their positions are leaving the profession or are uncertain about their career plans.
- School district educators are more likely to leave the profession, while charter school educators are more likely to accept another preK-12 position elsewhere in Utah.
- Emotional exhaustion, burnout and job-specific stressors are the most influential factors in educators' decisions to leave their positions.
- Increased pay, less stressful job responsibilities and more time for planning are factors with the greatest potential influence in encouraging educators to remain in their positions.



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