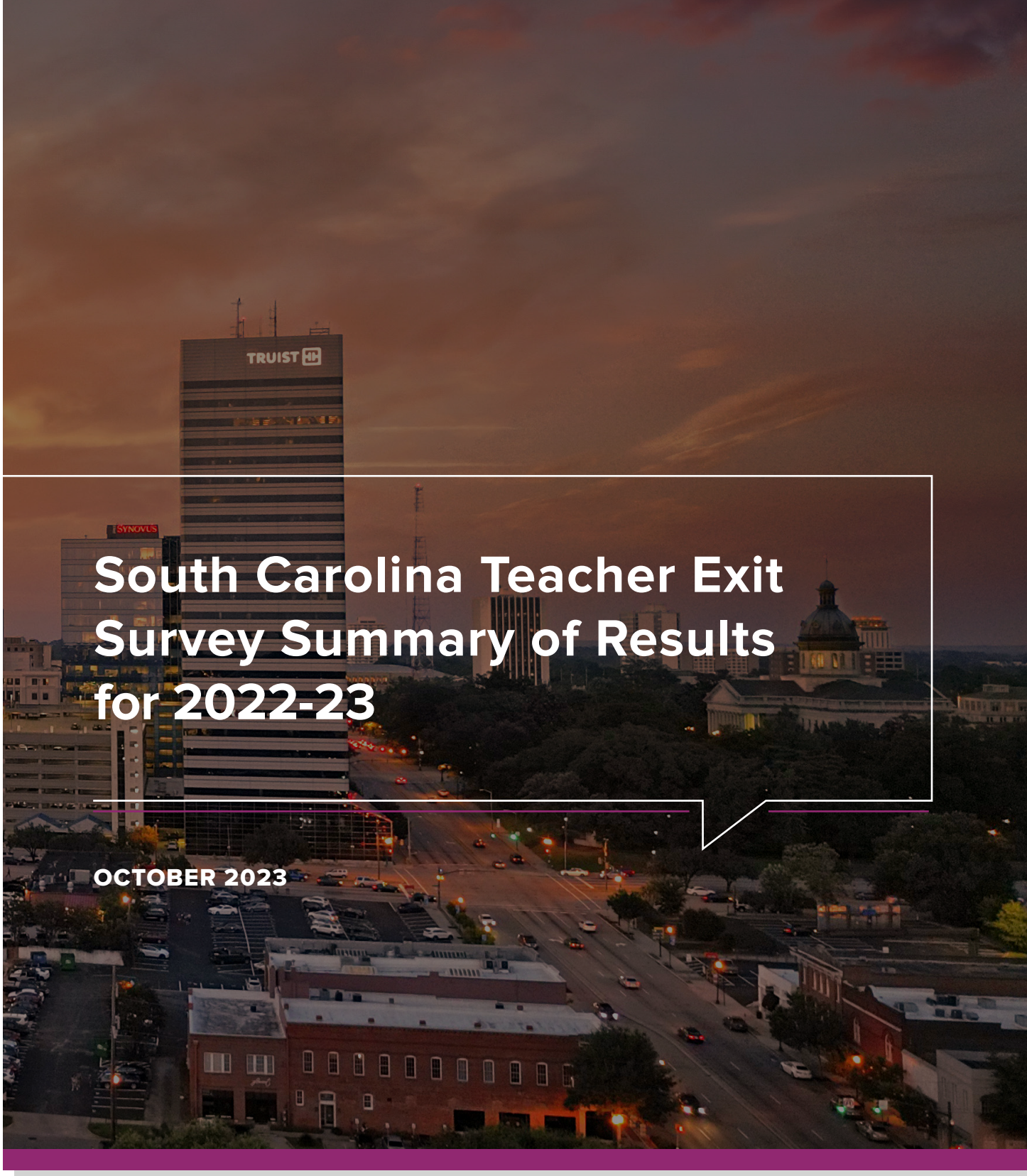

South Carolina Teacher Exit Survey Summary of Results for 2022-23

OCTOBER 2023

SC TEACHER | TEACHER EXIT SURVEY

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In partnership with the Yvonne & Schuyler Moore Child Development Research Center

SC TEACHER provides comprehensive research about South Carolina's educator workforce. We are expanding a robust statewide data network to report results that will inform policy and practice.

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Teacher Exit Survey Results

+ HIGHLIGHTS

Each year, SC TEACHER administers the SC Teacher Exit Survey to public K-12 classroom teachers not renewing their teaching contracts. The survey is designed to offer better insights into how working conditions relate to teachers' decisions to either teach in another school district or leave the classroom. This report highlights the SC Teacher Exit Survey results for the 2022-23 academic year and draws longitudinal comparisons with the 2021-22 SC Teacher Exit Survey results. Results are based on 1,192 teachers across 18 school districts who left their teaching positions at the end of the 2022-23 school year.

Main Findings

- The percentage of non-voluntary leavers (+7%) increased over the course of one year, while the percentage of teachers accepting a teaching position in another district (-3%) slightly decreased. However, results of the SC Teacher Exit Survey continue to show two out of five teachers are lateral movers (i.e., leaving a teaching position to teach elsewhere).
- School Factors (e.g., school discipline problems and dissatisfaction with administration) and Classroom Factors (e.g., dissatisfaction with class size and limited classroom autonomy) are the most important reasons for South Carolina teachers' departure from their teaching positions. Additionally, these two factors have the strongest associations with teachers' emotional exhaustion. These results have been stable over the past two years of the Teacher Exit Survey administration.
- Lateral (i.e., leaving a position to teach elsewhere) and non-lateral movers (i.e., teachers leaving the classroom) differed in their reasons for leaving their teaching positions. Lateral movers placed more importance on School Factors as a reason for leaving, whereas non-lateral movers rated Career-Oriented Reasons of higher importance (e.g., dissatisfaction with teaching as a career and the decision to pursue a career outside of education). While non-lateral movers cited higher salaries as the most compelling reason to consider a return to teaching, lateral movers rated compensation as least important in their decision to move to another district.

For Further Consideration

- Merging exit survey results with the SC TEACHER longitudinal database will provide demographic, preparation, evaluation, and working conditions information to better understand the career trajectories of South Carolina teacher subgroups.
- Many teachers are exiting their current positions but are remaining in the South Carolina teaching workforce. In discussions regarding teacher attrition from schools, it is crucial to recognize that lateral movers differ from teachers exiting the profession. For teachers making lateral moves, SC TEACHER will explore factors that might weaken the affective commitment to one's current school. Retention may be enhanced if schools prioritize school-level administrative support (particularly when addressing student discipline) and create additional avenues for teachers to have leadership responsibilities within the school, a notable result from the 2023 SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey.
- Teaching experience and age have traditionally been related to turnover represented by a U-shaped curve, meaning that less experienced (or younger) teachers and the most experienced (or oldest) teachers were the most likely to leave the profession. For exiting teachers in South Carolina, more than half (51%) of those who responded were veteran teachers with 11 or more years of experience, compared to only 14% who were beginning teachers (i.e., one to two years of experience). However, approximately 40% of the sample had been at their current school for only one to two years. Future SC TEACHER research should explore the frequency of movement among lateral movers to better understand movement patterns that may be unique to South Carolina.

+ INTRODUCTION

Educator recruitment and teacher retention are critical in maintaining effective public schools and school districts. The national teacher shortage (Nguyen et al., 2022) has been exacerbated over the last several years as teachers report heightened levels of exhaustion and stress brought about by changes in conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Darling-Hammond, 2022). Several nationwide surveys have established that teachers are leaving or considering leaving teaching at a higher rate post-pandemic than they were pre-pandemic (Bryant et al., 2023; Steiner & Woo, 2021; Zammaro et al., 2021). The reasons behind the teacher shortage are poorly understood (Nguyen et al., 2022), but what is known is that the shortage is not simply a result of too few qualified educators (Schmitt & deCourcy, 2022). The issue is complex and tied up in structural and contextual factors (Von Feigenblatt, 2023) that need to be better understood so that policymakers and stakeholders interested in education in South Carolina and nationwide may begin to address underlying issues driving teachers from the profession. Identifying and remedying factors contributing to teacher turnover is particularly critical for high-poverty areas and schools with majority underserved populations, as these communities have been hit the hardest by the shortage of qualified educators (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

The survey is designed to offer better insights into how working conditions relate to teachers' decisions to either teach in another district or leave the classroom.

The main factor behind the teacher shortage is teacher attrition (Sutcher et al., 2019), as teachers choose to leave the field to pursue other career paths. There is evidence that high rates of attrition among educators are best captured by analyzing the relative amount of support (e.g., administration and principal support, parent support) and stressors (e.g., workload, student behavior) teachers have in their positions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Baker & Demerouti, 2007) has been adapted and employed by numerous scholars in investigations of teachers' job satisfaction (e.g., Admiraal & Røberg, 2023; Bottiani et al., 2019) and teacher retention (e.g., Björk et al., 2019; Droogenbroeck & Spruyt, 2016). These studies have revealed that teacher attrition is greater when educators face an unbalanced job situation with many demands and few resources. This imbalance can also lead to teacher mobility, as educators may stay in the field but move away from schools with excessive demands or insufficient resources (Sims, 2020). A greater understanding of the relationship between teachers' resources and demands can provide school and district leaders with actionable feedback that can be applied to enact meaningful change.

Since 2020-21, SC TEACHER has administered the South Carolina Teacher Exit Survey to teachers who choose not to return to their positions. The first two years represented pilot years with select districts; however, all districts were eligible to participate in 2022-23. The survey asks teachers about the issues that contributed to their decision to leave their current positions. This report explores the feedback from the Teacher Exit Survey and examines the demands and resources noted by teachers as contributors to this decision. The survey also provided an outlet for teachers to voice their concerns about other important working conditions, such as pay and curriculum (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018), that affected their decision to leave. The overall findings illustrate some of the challenges facing South Carolina teachers and can be used to inform the work of local and state policymakers to foster change and improvement in our schools.

Key Questions

This report addresses the following key questions regarding South Carolina teachers leaving their current positions at the end of the 2022-23 school year:

1. What are the predominant characteristics of South Carolina teachers leaving their current position, and what are their reasons for leaving?
2. How does teachers' emotional exhaustion relate to the reasons for leaving their current position?
3. How do reasons for leaving differ between teachers leaving their position to teach in another school (i.e., lateral movers) and teachers leaving the classroom for a different position or career (i.e., non-lateral movers)?

Survey Administration

Some departing South Carolina teachers participate in exit interviews with their school districts; however, the questions and responses have lacked consistency across districts, and there remain concerns that a lack of anonymity in responses may lead to skewed results. A state-wide exit survey was designed and pilot-tested during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years. These pilot surveys were influenced by the Teacher Follow-Up Survey Questionnaire for Former Teachers to the Schools and Staffing Survey designed by the National Center of Education Statistics (2012) and developed with input from school district partners in South Carolina. The current survey largely resembled the 2021-22 version except for excluding a previously used set of items related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In early April 2023, SC TEACHER emailed superintendents and personnel administrators in all districts (excluding charter districts, SC Governor's schools, and similar unique districts), inviting them to participate in the exit survey. SC TEACHER sent follow-up emails and made phone calls to district personnel through the end of April to solicit participation. Of the 73 districts emailed, 23 districts agreed to participate. Of these districts, 18 districts provided emails for teachers who were not renewing their contracts. Eligible teachers in participating districts were emailed a link to the survey in May 2023. Teachers were sent a reminder email with a survey link every three days until the survey closed two weeks later.

Data, Variables, and Analyses

DATA

A total of 2,167 teachers from 18 districts across South Carolina leaving their current positions were eligible to complete the survey. We received 1,192 (55%) teacher responses from these school districts. Some participants did not fully complete the survey. To acknowledge all responses provided, respondents with incomplete data were included in the analyses.

VARIABLES

In the Exit Survey, teachers were asked several demographic questions, including total years teaching as a certified teacher and number of years at their current school. Teachers were also asked if they were leaving the classroom (i.e., non-lateral movers) or leaving to teach in another district (i.e., lateral movers).

The survey presented teachers with 23 statements that could be related to one's decision to leave their current position. Teachers rated the relative importance of each reason using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all important," 2 = "Slightly important," 3 = "Somewhat important," 4 = "Very important," 5 = "Extremely important"). Items were organized into five overarching categories describing the factors contributing to a teacher's exit: personal reasons, career-oriented factors, school factors, classroom factors, and student assessment factors. Teachers were also asked to identify the specific listed reason that contributed most to their decision to leave.

Teachers who had accepted a teaching position in another district (lateral movers) were also asked about the importance of eight items related to their decision to accept a teaching position in another school district. Non-lateral movers (teachers exiting teaching) were asked whether they would ever consider a return to teaching. These non-lateral movers were also asked to rate the importance of nine factors (e.g., smaller class sizes, salary increase) that could influence their return to the classroom. Factors were rated on the same scale as described above.

All teachers were asked two items about their effectiveness as a teacher (e.g., “During the most recent school year, how effective do you think you were as a teacher?”). They also answered eight items related to the effectiveness of their principals and other school leaders (e.g., “worked with staff to meet curriculum standards”) on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “Not at all effective,” 2 = “Slightly effective,” 3 = “Somewhat effective,” 4 = “Very effective,” 5 = “Extremely effective”). Additionally, participants rated their level of emotional exhaustion by answering nine items (e.g., “I feel emotionally drained from my work”) on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “Never,” 2 = “Sometimes,” 3 = “About half the time,” 4 = “Most of the time,” 5 = “Always”).

Additional details about all items, scales, variables, and factors can be found in the Technical Appendix.

ANALYSES

The overarching aim of the report is to provide information that can result in actions that improve teacher working conditions in South Carolina.

Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and statistical tests of mean differences (i.e., t-tests) were used to answer the key questions. For each question, we provide 1) a summary of the relevant variables, 2) a comparison of 2022-23 results to last year’s Teacher Exit Survey results (2021-22), and 3) an examination of the relationship between feedback from teachers leaving the classroom in South Carolina and the existing research literature. A more detailed, technical description of all research, including comprehensive descriptions of statistical analyses and significance levels, along with examples illustrating qualitative coding of the two open-ended items, can be found in the Technical Appendix.

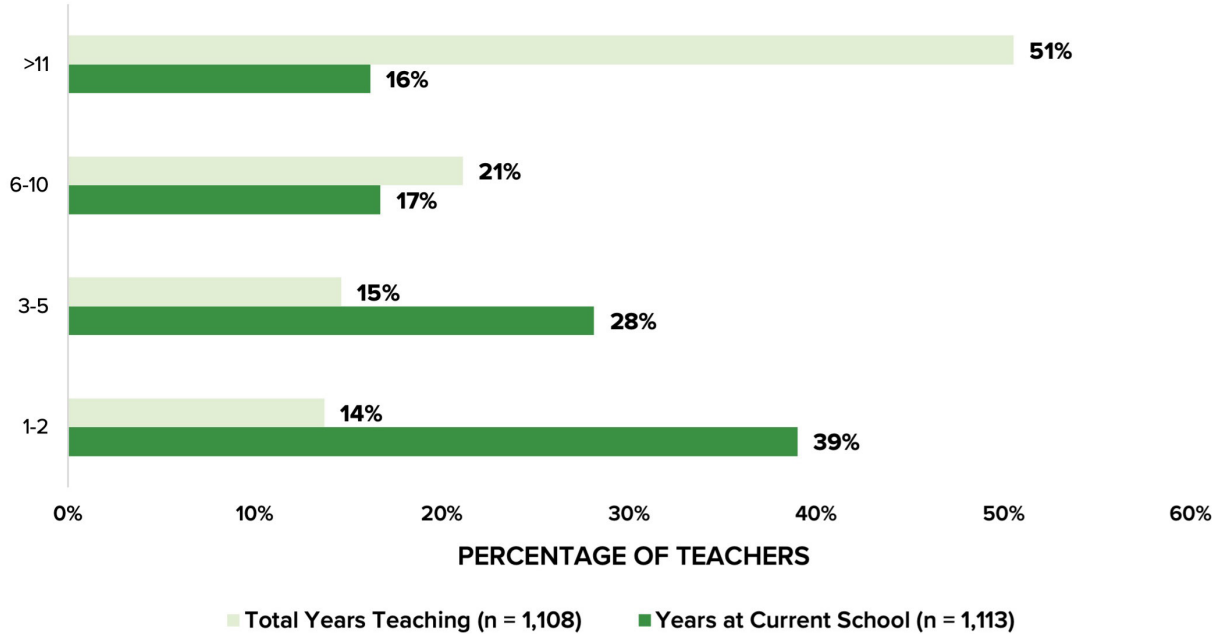
Our Key Questions

+ KEY QUESTION 1:

What are the predominant characteristics of South Carolina teachers leaving their current position, and what are their reasons for leaving?

The first question reports the characteristics of South Carolina teachers electing to leave their current teaching position at the end of the 2022-23 school year. Figure 1 compares the total years of teaching and the number of years at the current school for teachers not renewing their contracts. For exiting teachers, more than half (51%) of those who responded were veteran teachers with 11 or more years of experience. Beginning teachers (i.e., one to two years of experience) leaving their school comprised about 14% of the sample. However, most teachers in the sample (67%) worked at their current school for five years or less. Approximately 40% of the sample had been at their current school for only one to two years. The percentages decreased across categories.

Figure 1. *A Comparison of Total Years Teaching and Years at the Current School Among Exiting Teachers*

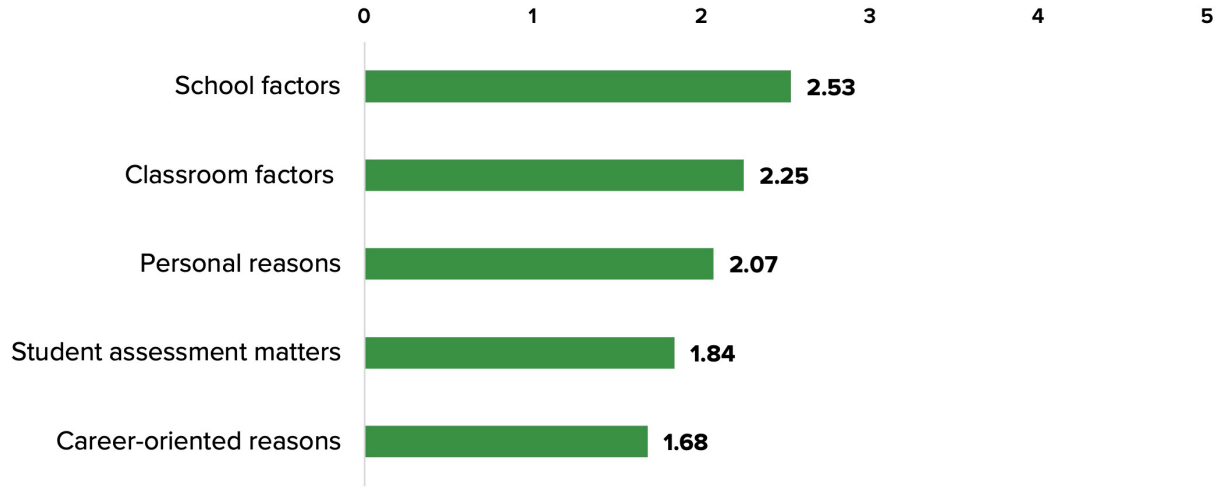


For South Carolina teachers leaving at the end of the 2022-23 school year, 41% revealed they had accepted a teaching position within another school district (i.e., lateral movers). Conversely, 59% of teachers were not signing a teaching contract in another district. Throughout the report, this group is referred to as non-lateral movers, as they could be changing positions within education (e.g., moving into administration) or leaving the profession.

For about 11% of the respondents, leaving the current teaching position was not voluntary (e.g., their contract was not renewed, they were laid off, their school closed or merged). Of these 117 non-voluntary leavers, more than a third had accepted a new teaching position in a different district. Additionally, 18% of the teachers indicated they were retiring.

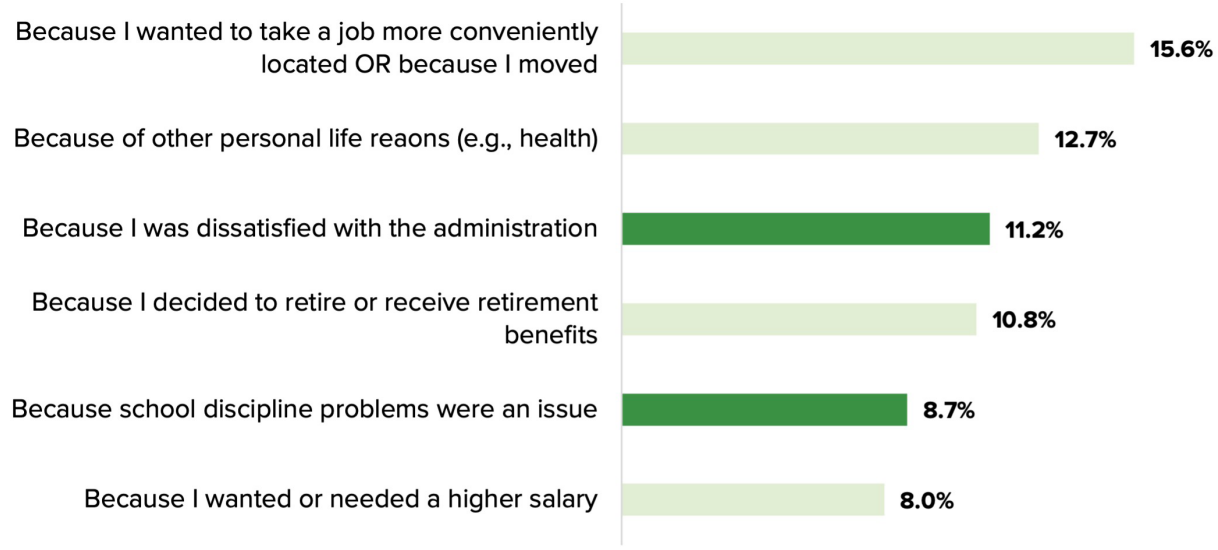
Figure 2 depicts the importance of various factors related to why teachers were leaving their current teaching positions. For South Carolina teachers, school-based factors were most important to their decision to leave their positions. Within this category, teachers rated school discipline and dissatisfaction with administration as the top two reasons for leaving. Classroom factors represented the second most important category, with teachers highly rating concerns about the number of intrusions into their teaching time. Personal reasons for leaving represented the third most important area for teachers exiting, with teachers identifying caring for family, health, or pregnancy as an important reason for leaving. The categories of school assessment and career-oriented reasons received the lowest importance ratings.

Figure 2. *Average Importance Ratings of Factors Related to Decision to Leave Current Position*



Teachers were also asked to name the most important reason for leaving their current position. Figure 3 highlights the top six reasons presented by South Carolina teachers. Four of these statements – a more convenient location, personal life reasons, retirement benefits, and a higher salary – represent personal reasons, whereas the other two – dissatisfaction with administration and school discipline – represent school-based factors.

Figure 3. *Reason Most Important to Decision to Leave Current Position*



Note. The darker shade represents school factors, and the lighter shade represents personal reasons.

South Carolina teachers were asked to provide any additional important reasons for their decision to leave their current position. Responses were qualitatively coded to identify patterns or themes. Table 1 presents these response themes and the frequency of responses among teachers, providing additional reasons for leaving their current positions. The table shows that teachers primarily named an unbalanced workload as an important reason for their decision to leave their position. Teachers also noted other school-based and personal reasons, such as lack of parental support, lack of collegial support, mental, physical, or emotional health, school climate/culture, and inadequate or inappropriate curriculum or standards. A more detailed description of the sampling procedure for coded segments is provided in the Technical Appendix.

Table 1. *Other Factors Reported as Important Decision to Leave Current Position*

Response Category	n	Percentage
Workload issues/Work-life Balance	58	24.8%
Lack of parental support/Issues with parents	31	13.2%
Lack of collegial support/Issues with co-workers	22	9.4%
Mental, physical, or emotional health	21	9.0%
School climate and/or culture	19	8.1%
Inadequate or inappropriate curriculum, standards	13	5.6%
Lack of state support, politics, state policies	12	5.1%
Lack of adequate staffing	10	4.3%
Lack of adequate support for special education	9	3.8%
Lack of support (general)	8	3.4%
Teaching in another district, location, subject, or level	6	2.6%
National climate/Societal view of teachers	6	2.6%
Lack of student engagement	5	2.1%
Lack of support for student mental health	5	2.1%
Lack of professional development	3	1.3%
Lack of community support	3	1.3%
Issues with school grading and/or promotion policies	3	1.3%
Total	**234**	**100%**

More than 40% of exiting teachers stated that they were leaving their current teaching position but were staying in the profession (i.e., moving to a different school district). Figure 4 highlights the most important reasons lateral movers accepted a teaching position in another district. A lack of administrative leadership and vision at their current school was the most important reason for switching placement, followed by the reputation of the new school district. Interestingly, types of compensation, a higher salary and signing bonus, were less important for teachers moving to a different district.

Figure 4. *Average Importance Ratings of Reasons Related to Making a Lateral Move to Another District*

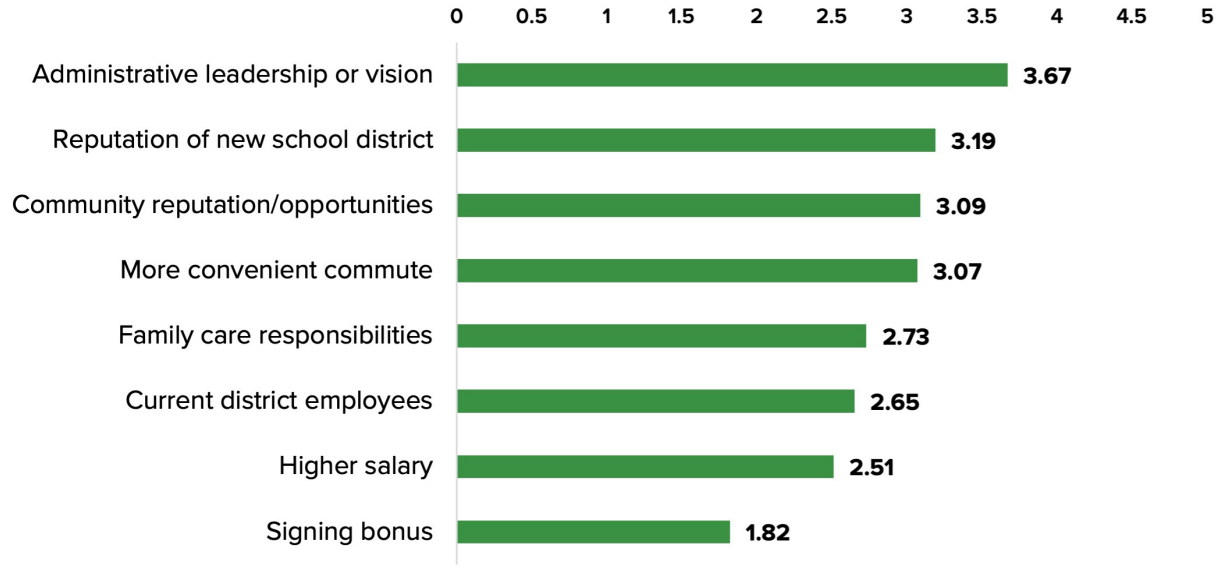
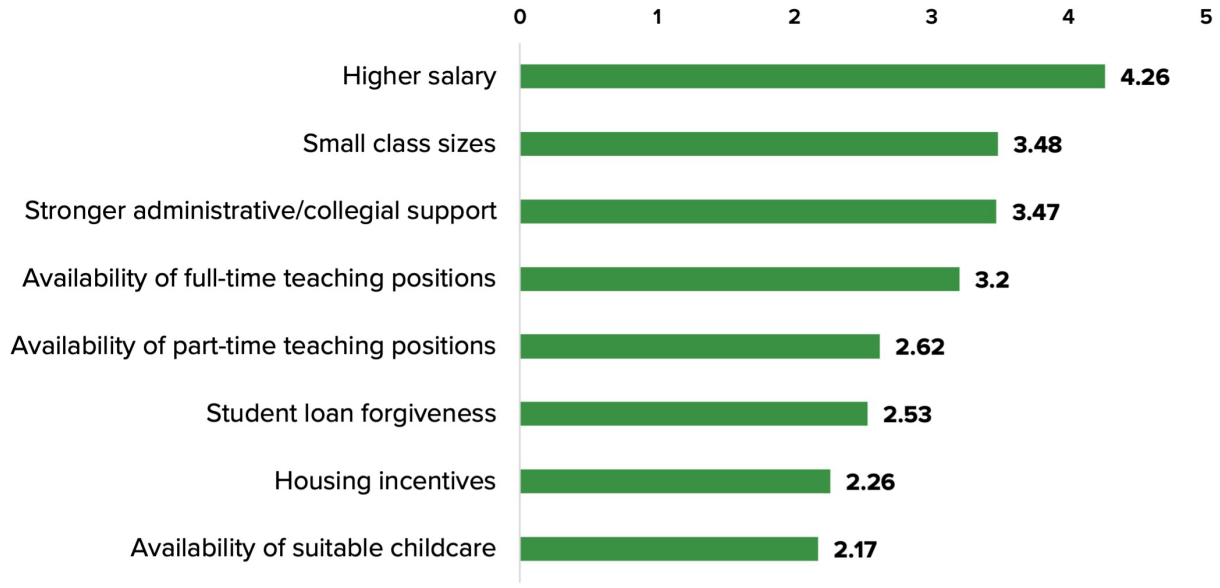


Figure 5 illustrates important factors for non-lateral movers to return to teaching. Non-lateral movers (60%) were asked whether they would consider returning to teaching and, if so, which factors were important in this consideration. Approximately one in four non-lateral movers said they would not consider a return to teaching, compared to three in four saying they would either consider a return (36%) or were unsure (40%). A higher salary was rated as the most important factor that would potentially influence teachers to consider a return to the classroom. Other important factors in teachers' consideration to return to the classroom included small class sizes and stronger administrative and/or collegial support.

Figure 5. *Average Importance Ratings of Reasons Related to Returning to Teach for Teachers Leaving Teaching*



Additionally, open-ended responses revealed other important factors of non-lateral movers in considering a return to teaching. Responses were qualitatively coded to identify patterns or themes. Table 2 provides these response themes and the frequency of responses among non-lateral movers. The most prominent, additional issues that weighed on teachers' considerations to return to the classroom were behavioral issues (student behavior, safety concerns, and lack of discipline policies). The second most noted area was workload-related, including too much work and needing more realistic expectations. A more detailed description of the sampling and coding procedure is provided in the Technical Appendix.

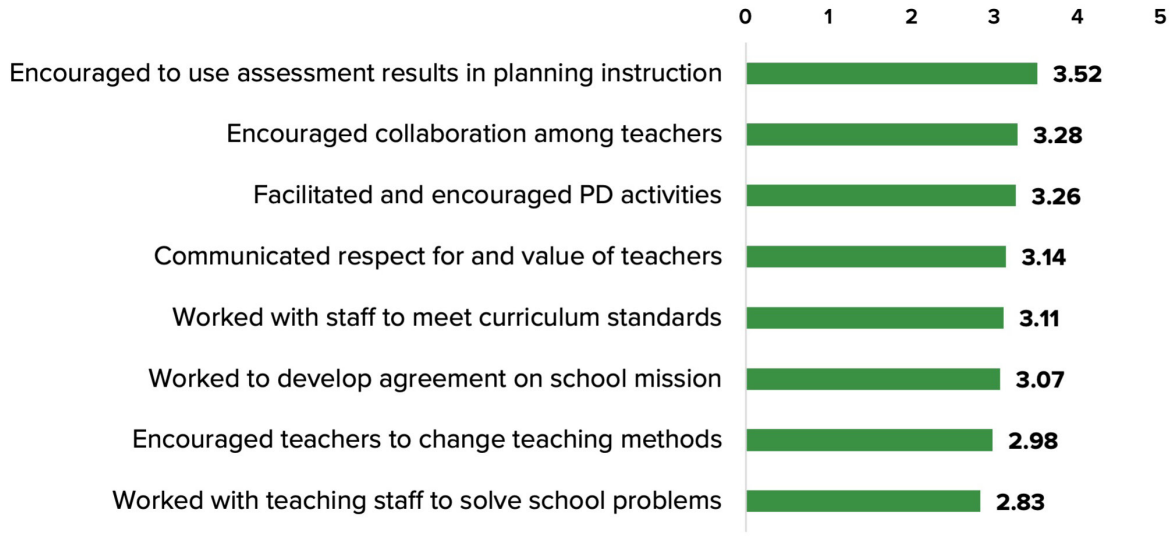
Table 2. *Other Factors Important in Considering a Return to a Teaching Position for Teachers Leaving*

Response Category	n	Percentage
Student behavioral issues	25	23.4%
Workload	24	22.4%
Recognition and respect	8	7.5%
Parental support/involvement	8	7.5%
More resources and support (general)	8	7.5%
Adequate staff	7	6.5%
More appropriate curriculum, assessments, standards	6	5.6%
Better location or remote options	5	4.7%
School climate	4	3.7%
More and better support for special education	4	3.7%
Mental health support for students and/or teachers	2	1.9%
Autonomy in the classroom	2	1.9%
Grading policies	2	1.9%
Opportunity for advancement	2	1.9%
Total	**107**	**100%**

All exiting teachers (i.e., lateral and non-lateral movers) rated the effectiveness of their school principal. Figure 6 presents exiting teachers' perceptions of principal effectiveness. Overall, teachers perceived their principals as somewhat to very effective, with an average rating of approximately 3.14.

Among individual items, principals were perceived as most effective for encouraging teachers to use assessment results in planning curriculum and instruction decisions. Teachers rated their principals as least effective when working with teaching staff to solve school or department problems.

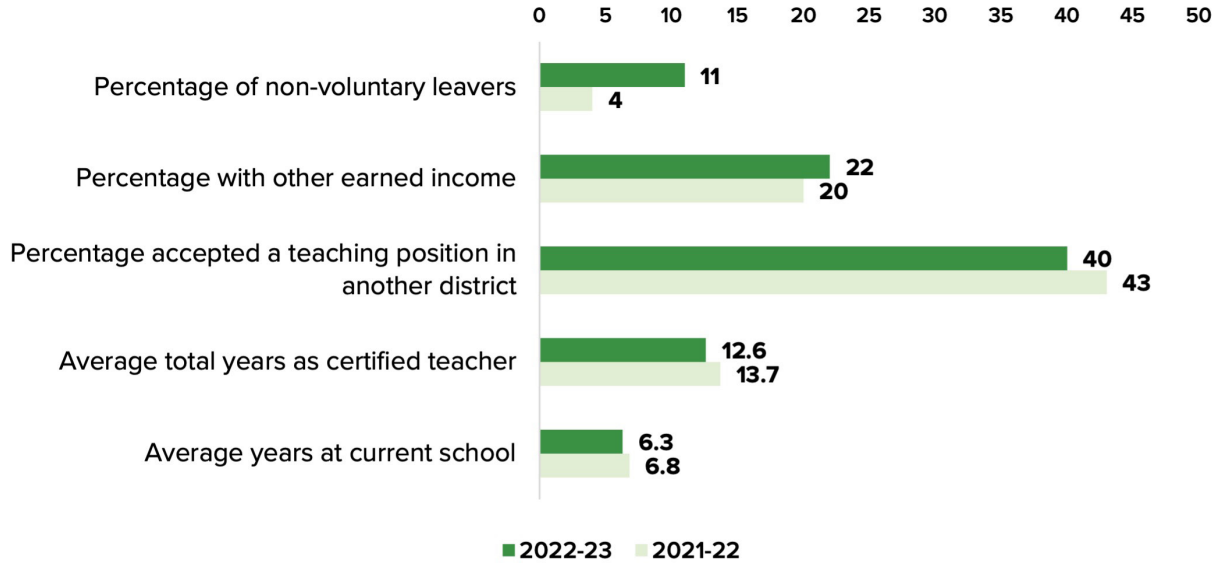
Figure 6. *Average Scores for Perceptions of Principal Effectiveness Among Teachers Leaving Their Current Position*



Comparison to Exit Survey Results Across Time

Figure 7 presents the characteristics of exiting teachers over the last two years of survey administration. The 2022-23 SC Teacher Exit Survey reported a similar percentage of educators accepting a teaching position in another district compared to the previous year. All the characteristics in the profiles of leaving teachers (years of experience, years at current school, percentage with other income) were similar between the two years of survey administration, except the percentage of non-voluntary leavers, which increased from about 4% in 2021-22 to 11% in 2022-23.

Figure 7. *Longitudinal Comparison of Exiting Teacher Characteristics*

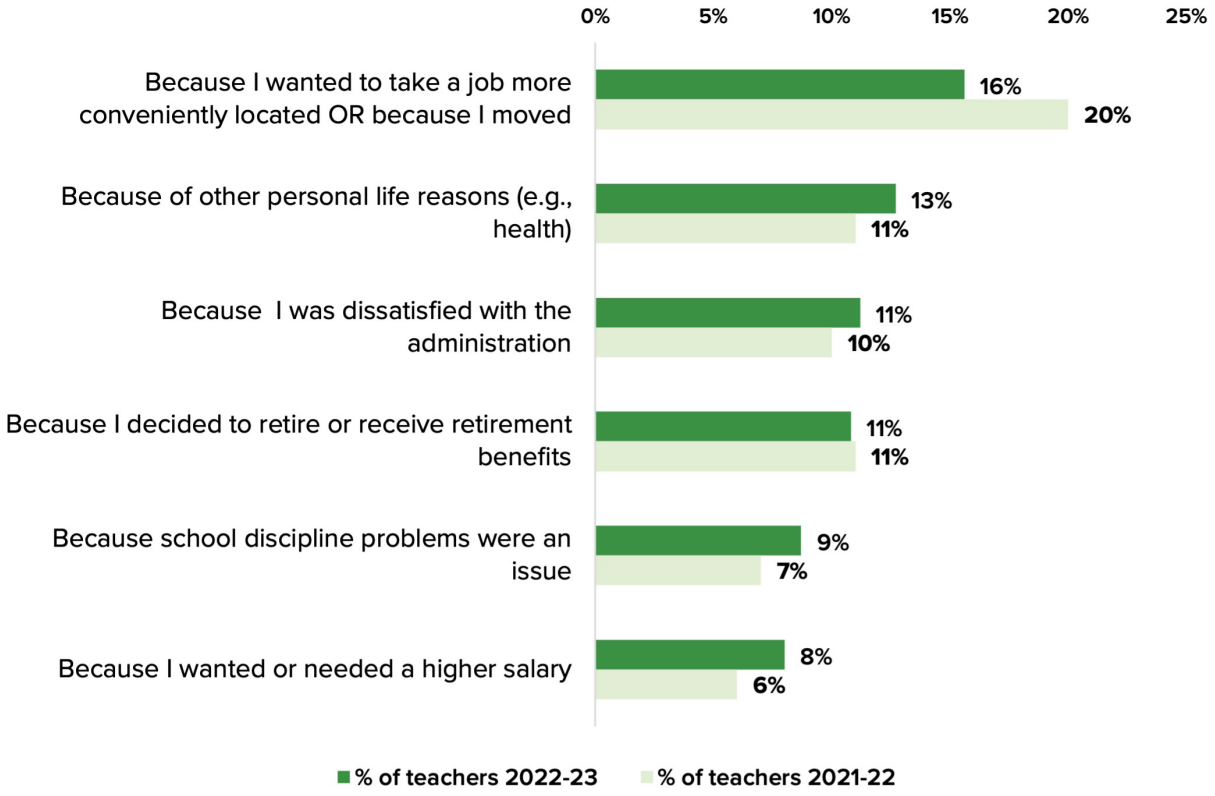


Note. For 2022-23, average total years as certified teacher and average years at current school are estimates using a weighted mean from a categorical variable.

The five areas of reasons for leaving one's current position (i.e., school, classroom, student assessment, personal matters, and career-oriented factors) received similar rankings over the two years, with school factors and classroom factors selected as the main reasons for leaving the field in both years. Within school factors, school discipline and dissatisfaction with administration remained the two most important items.

Figure 8 highlights the similarities of the most important reason for leaving selected by teachers across 2021-22 and 2022-23; however, there was a slight shift in the ranking of importance. In 2021-22, a higher percentage of teachers (+4%) cited a desire to take a job more conveniently located. In 2022-23, a higher percentage of teachers noted other personal life reasons (+2%), school discipline problems (+2%), and the desire or need for a higher salary (+2%).

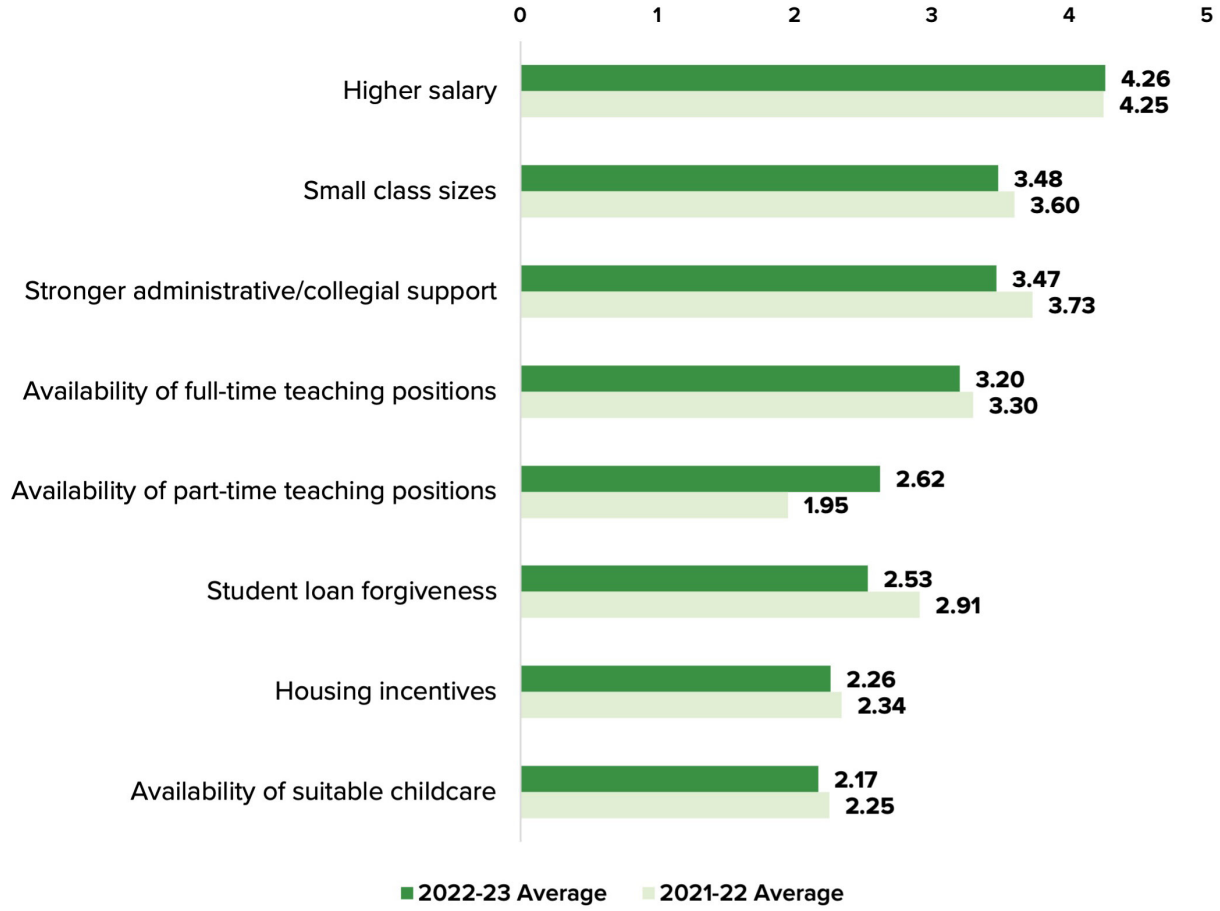
Figure 8. *Longitudinal Comparison of the Reason Most Important to Teachers' Decision to Leave Current Position*



There has been no change in the rank order of reasons for lateral movers' decision to switch districts. For both administrations of the Teacher Exit Survey, issues with administrative leadership and vision was the most influential reason for teachers leaving their current position, and signing bonus was ranked as the least important reason.

For non-lateral movers (i.e., teachers leaving the classroom), potential reasons for possibly returning to teaching were also stable between 2021-22 and 2022-23 survey administrations. A salary increase was the top factor in both years. The most noticeable change was in the increased importance (+0.7) of the availability of part-time teaching jobs factor. Meanwhile, stronger administrative or collegial support (-0.2) and student loan forgiveness (-0.4) slightly decreased in importance in 2022-23 compared to the previous year.

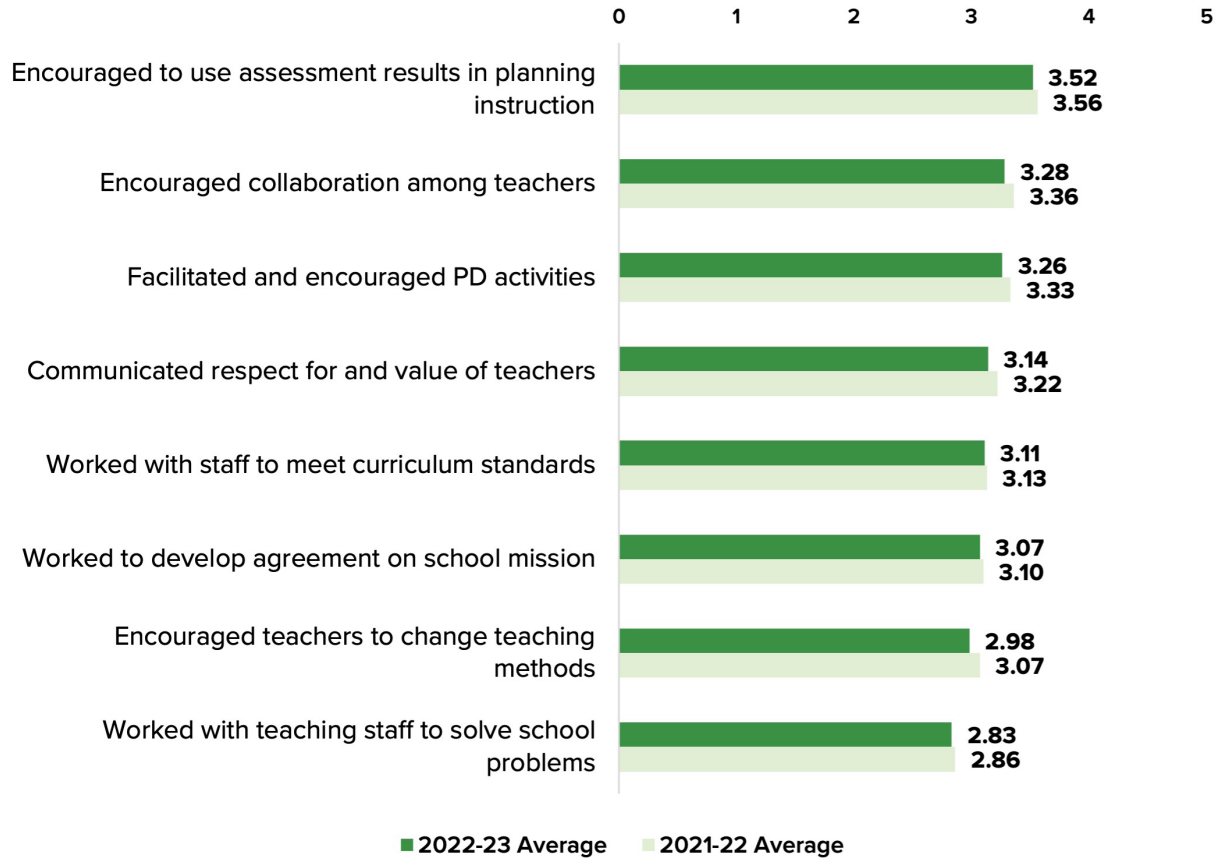
Figure 9. *Longitudinal Comparison of the Average Importance Ratings of Reasons Related to Returning to Teach for Teachers Leaving Teaching*



Additionally, open-ended responses for non-lateral movers reporting “other factors” as important in considering a return to teaching varied across the two survey administrations. In 2022-23, a much higher percentage of non-lateral movers named student behavior and safety (+6%) and workload and more realistic expectations (+17%) as other factors important in considering their return to teaching.

Figure 10 compares exiting teachers' perceptions of principal effectiveness across the two survey administrations. Overall, perceptions of principal effectiveness have not changed. Over the two years, teachers perceived principals as most effective in encouraging the use of assessment results in planning instruction and least effective in working with teaching staff to solve school problems.

Figure 10. *Longitudinal Comparison of the Average Scores for Perceptions of Principal Effectiveness Among Teachers Leaving Their Current Position*



Relationship Between South Carolina Exiting Teacher Profiles and Published Studies

Teacher characteristics (e.g., years of teaching experience), as related to teacher turnover and attrition, have been long studied in the field. Teaching experience and age, two distinct factors that tend to be highly correlated (i.e., less experienced teachers tend to be younger), have traditionally been related to turnover by a U-shaped curve, meaning that less experienced (or younger) teachers and the most experienced (or oldest) teachers were the most likely to leave the profession (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001). Multiple factors are believed to be responsible for this distribution, but many scholars and practitioners point toward an experience threshold that beginning teachers need to settle into the profession as a major contributor (Ingersoll, 2001). The Institute of Education Sciences (IES; 2007), for example, found that almost 25% of public-school teachers left within their first three years, and Ingersoll (2000) claimed that number climbed to as high as 39% within the first five years in the classroom.

These expectations, though, differ from the data from the 2022-23 South Carolina exit survey. The data showed that newer teachers (i.e., those with the fewest years of teaching experience) were the least likely to be exiting their current position. However, attempts at interpreting these findings need to be made carefully, as there could be several explanations. For example, less experienced exiting teachers might have been less likely to take the survey. For the 2022-23 school year, only 14% of teachers had less than three years of experience, compared to 57% with ten years or more of experience (Barth et al., 2023). Additionally, the U-shaped distribution itself may not be a reasonable expectation considering recent conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic added many challenges to teaching, and even as schools returned to more normal circumstances, an increasing number of teachers appeared to be quitting. Research has indicated that older teachers may have been more challenged by changes brought on by the pandemic (e.g., switching modes of instruction, health issues; Zamarro et al., 2022). Increased attrition linked to higher levels of stress and exhaustion post-COVID (Diliberti et al., 2021; Noonoo, 2022; Steiner & Woo, 2021) may have also disproportionately affected older or more experienced teachers. There is also evidence that later career teachers have lower resilience capacities when dealing with misbehavior (Gu & Day, 2013), which has seemingly increased post-pandemic (IES, 2022).

Working conditions in schools play a large role in teacher retention and can often be more actionable than expansive policy changes or salary increases. School-based factors, such as administrative support, have been demonstrated to be critical in the retention of teachers and job satisfaction (Ladd, 2011; Loeb et al., 2005; Sutcher et al., 2019), and these findings in the literature match the results teacher feedback provided with the South Carolina Exit Survey. Discipline problems, largely linked to administrative support, were also a major reason exiting teachers left the profession. This finding also matches findings in the literature from the last 10-15 years (e.g., Buchanan, 2010; Ramos & Hughes, 2020).

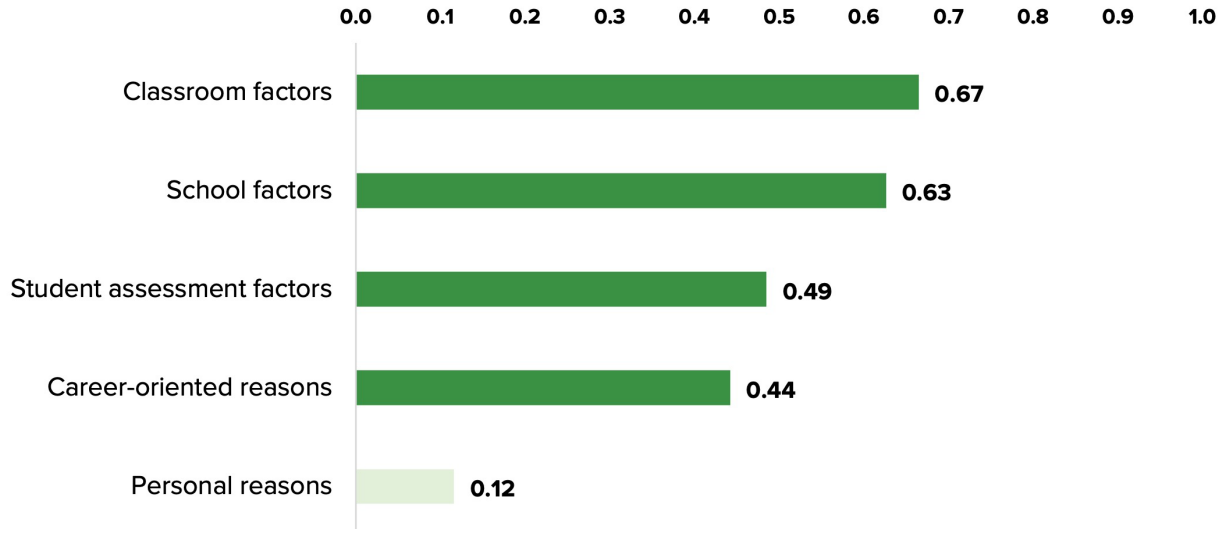
+ KEY QUESTION 2:

How does teachers' emotional exhaustion relate to the reasons for leaving their current teaching position?

To address Key Question 2, we examined correlation coefficients between the measure of emotional exhaustion and each of the five factors within the Reasons for Leaving scale. Emotional exhaustion is one component of burnout. Here, average scores were created for each scale. Correlation values capture the strength of the relationships and range between -1 and 1, where a value of 0 indicates no relationship, and larger values (regardless of sign) indicate a stronger relationship. A positive sign indicates that increasing importance of the reason for leaving is associated with increasing levels of emotional exhaustion. As a large number of exiting teachers provided feedback, statistical significance was observed across all correlations. We focused on correlation values of .30 and higher to more accurately reflect an important relationship.

Figure 11 presents correlations between scales measuring teachers' level of emotional exhaustion and the five areas of reasons for leaving. Classroom and school factors had the largest association with teachers' emotional exhaustion (greater than .60), indicating that these two important reasons for teachers leaving their current positions were also related to higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Student assessment and career-oriented factors also demonstrated an important relationship with emotional burnout, demonstrating moderate-level correlations (both greater than .40). The association between emotional exhaustion and personal reasons, while statistically significant, yielded a weak relationship.

Figure 11. *Correlations Between Reasons for Teachers Leaving Their Current Position and Emotional Exhaustion*

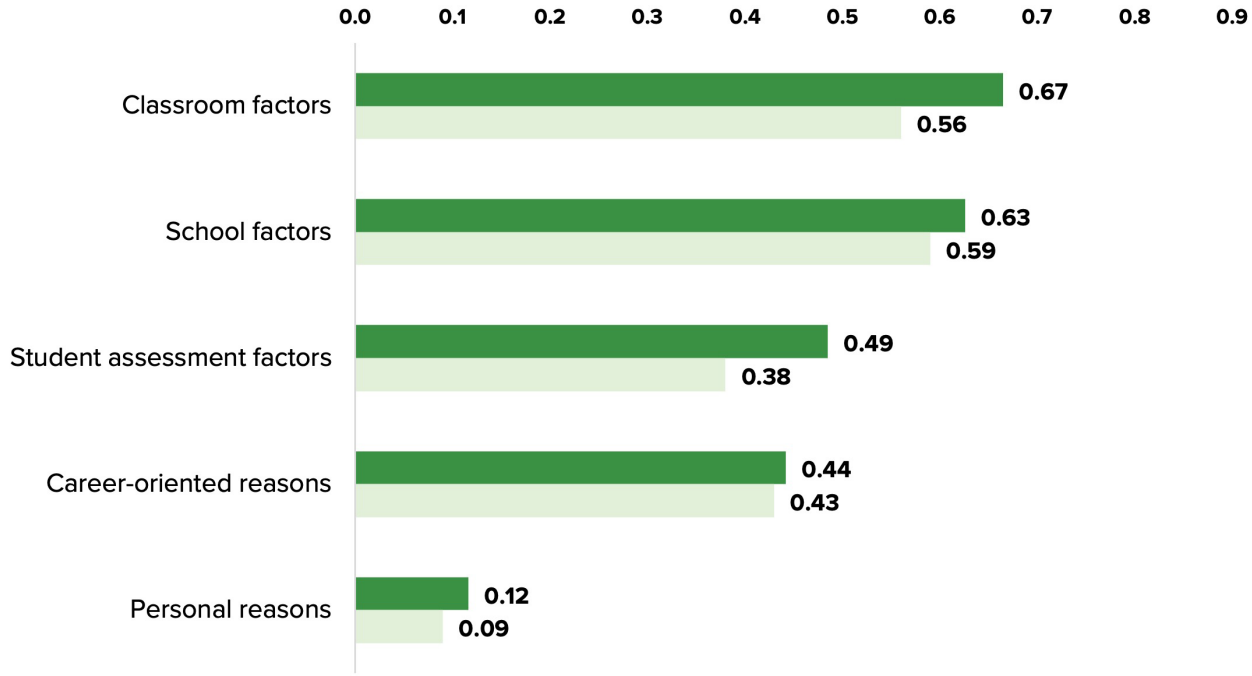


Note. The darker shade represents correlations that were meaningful based on the .30 correlation threshold. The lighter shade represents a correlation that was not considered meaningful based on this threshold but was still significant.

Comparison to Results from Exit Survey 2021-22

Figure 12 compares correlations across time between exiting teachers' levels of emotional exhaustion and reasons for leaving. Most notably, the associations between emotional exhaustion and classroom factors (+0.11) and student assessment factors (+0.11) showed a stronger relationship in 2022-23 than reported in 2021-22. That is, teachers exiting their positions in 2022-23 who placed greater importance on classroom-level and student assessment reasons for leaving also more consistently reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion. For both SC Teacher Exit Survey administrations, school, classroom, career-oriented, and student assessment factors demonstrated moderate associations with emotional exhaustion; the relationship between personal reasons and emotional exhaustion was relatively weak across both data sets.

Figure 12. *Longitudinal Comparison of Associations Between Reasons for Teachers Leaving Their Current Position and Emotional Exhaustion*



Note. Values greater than .30 were interpreted as meaningful.

Relationship Between South Carolina Exiting Teachers' Emotional Exhaustion and Published Studies

Prior research has extensively examined emotional exhaustion, teacher burnout, and teacher retention issues. This scholarship has established that teachers' burnout is strongly related to job dissatisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009) and their intentions to leave their positions (Grant et al., 2019; Vanderslice et al., 2010). Feelings of burnout can largely be attributed to or predicted by an imbalance of job demands and resources available to teachers, with higher levels of demands and lower levels of resources resulting in emotional exhaustion (Lee et al., 2019; Prieto et al., 2008). For example, classroom autonomy, an important resource for teachers, has been shown in the literature to buffer the effects of workload stress and help reduce emotional exhaustion (Sandmeier et al., 2022). Similarly, school factors, including lack of administrative support, have also been linked to teacher stress and exhaustion (e.g., McCarthy et al., 2016; Pressley & Ha, 2022), as has student disruptive behavior (e.g., Bottiani et al., 2019; Shernoff et al., 2011; Sutton et al., 2009). The positive relationship between these factors in the literature and feedback provided by South Carolina exiting teachers are largely aligned.

Research examining relationships between student assessment factors, like preparing students for standardized testing and teacher exhaustion, has been relatively rare but has yielded significant results (e.g., Ares & Morin, 2016). With South Carolina exiting teachers, emotional exhaustion was positively and moderately related to student assessment, showing consistency between teachers in our state and perceptions of teachers from across the U.S. The other two factors examined in this survey, career-oriented factors and personal reasons, and their correlations to teachers' emotional exhaustion, have not been the subject of substantive investigations to this point.

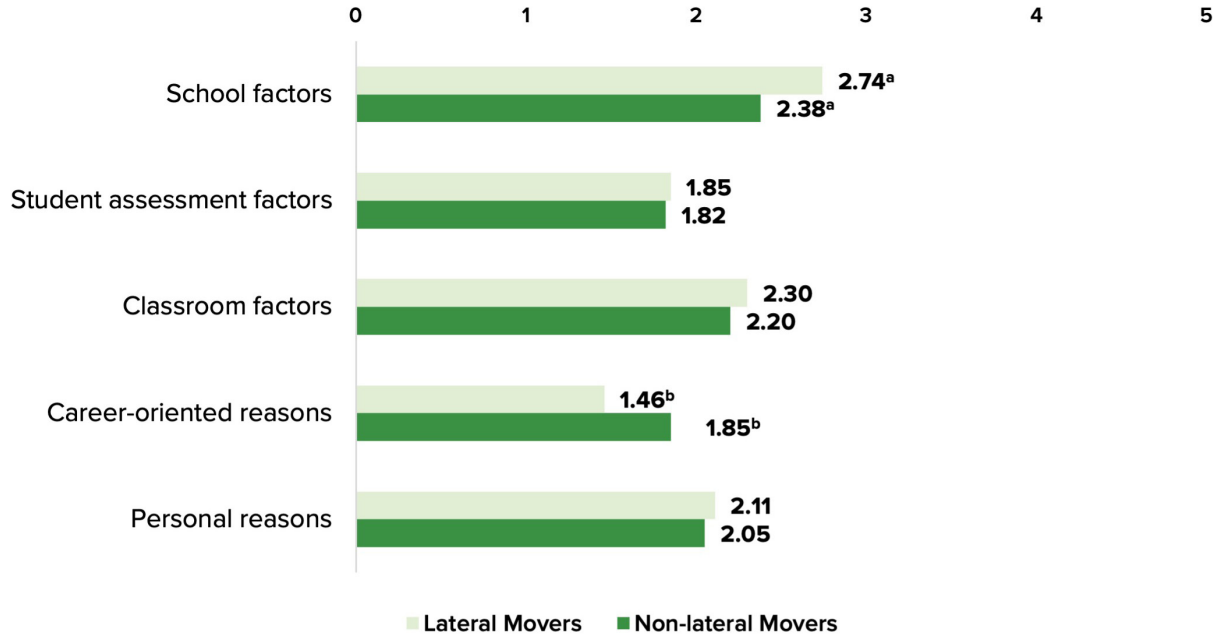
+ KEY QUESTION 3:

How do reasons for leaving differ between teachers leaving their position to teach in another school (i.e., lateral movers) and teachers leaving the classroom for a different position or career (i.e., non-lateral movers)?

To answer this question, average scores for each reason for leaving were compared between lateral and non-lateral movers. First, reasons for leaving the current teaching position were compared across lateral and non-lateral movers using independent t-tests. Figure 13 presents the averages by group for all categories of reasons: personal reason factors, career-oriented reason factors, classroom factors, student assessment factors, and school factors. Significant differences between groups are noted in the figure.

For both groups of teachers, school factors were cited as the most important reason for leaving. However, for lateral movers, reasons related to school factors were significantly more important to the decision to leave one's current teaching position than for non-lateral movers. This suggests that lateral movers may be more likely to leave their current teaching position due to dissatisfaction with school-related factors (e.g., workplace conditions, school discipline, administrative support, and the lack of influence over school policies). However, career-oriented reasons for leaving a current teaching position were of lesser importance to lateral movers as compared to non-lateral movers. This result was not surprising since lateral movers chose to stay in the teaching profession. The two groups of teachers did not show a statistical difference in their importance ratings of personal reasons, classroom factors, and student assessment factors.

Figure 13. *Average Importance Ratings of Factors Related to Lateral and Non-lateral Movers' Decision to Leave Their Current Position*



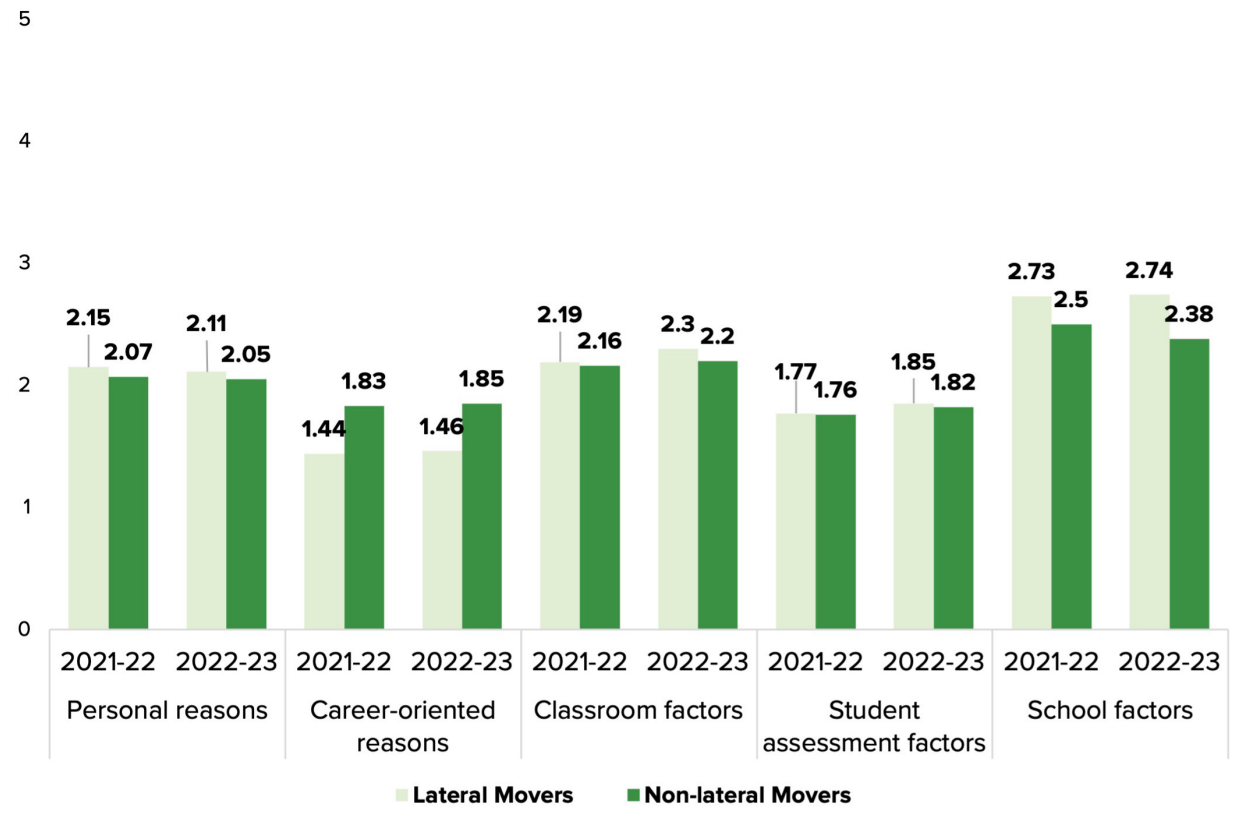
Note. Superscripts denote significantly different means at $p < .001$. All items represent averages on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Not at all important," 2 = "Slightly important," 3 = "Somewhat important," 4 = "Very important," 5 = "Extremely important").

On average, lateral movers (M = 2.86) and non-lateral movers (M = 2.87) did not differ in rating emotional exhaustion. However, the groups were significantly different in their evaluation of principal effectiveness. Lateral movers (M = 2.95) rated the effectiveness of their school principals and other school leaders significantly lower than non-lateral movers (M = 3.30). This result can be viewed in conjunction with the difference between the two groups on school-related reasons for leaving (discussed earlier). Lateral movers showed more dissatisfaction with their principals and rated school factors as more important for leaving their current position.

Comparison to Results from Exit Survey 2021-22

Figure 14 shows that reasons for leaving were largely stable for lateral and non-lateral movers over time. Only school factors and career-oriented reasons were perceived differently by the two groups over the two years. For two consecutive years, lateral movers have rated school-related reasons as more important contributors to leaving relative to how these reasons were perceived by non-lateral movers. To better understand potential changes in the relationship between reasons for leaving and types of movement, we also compared the size of the difference (i.e., the effect size) across the two years. Effect size is important because it goes beyond whether there is a difference or not. It conveys the practical significance or how meaningful that difference is in the real world. Beyond the significance between groups, there has been an increase in the magnitude of the difference in school-related factors between lateral and non-lateral movers, where the effect size increased from .18 in 2021-22 to .28 in 2022-23. This result suggests that school-related factors for leaving have grown in importance for lateral movers. No changes in magnitude were noted for other scales.

Figure 14. *Longitudinal Comparison of the Average Rating of Reasons for Leaving Between Lateral and Non-lateral Movers*



Note. *Denotes a significant difference between lateral and non-lateral movers for the academic year.

For 2022-23, there was no difference in emotional exhaustion ratings across lateral and non-lateral movers when compared to the 2021-22 results. Moreover, the exhaustion level has remained constant for both groups of teachers over the survey administrations.

The pattern of principal effectiveness evaluation has also remained stable, with lateral movers (2021-22: M = 2.93; 2022-23: M = 2.95) rating the effectiveness lower than non-lateral movers (2021-22: M = 3.42; 2022-23: M = 3.30). The magnitude of the difference between the groups has decreased over one year because non-lateral movers' ratings in 2022-23 decreased as compared to the previous year, narrowing the gap between the two groups.

Relationship Between South Carolina Teacher Reasons for Lateral Movement or Leaving the Profession and Published Studies

There needs to be more research comparing teachers leaving the profession with those just moving to a different placement (Vekeman et al., 2017). Some research has pointed out that teachers who transfer to another school may do so out of loyalty to good teaching. Teachers who are dedicated to the profession have been found to move schools when they perceive that their current working conditions are not conducive to effective instruction (Glazer, 2021). If teachers instead attribute obstacles and frustrations to the teaching profession as a whole rather than the specific circumstances of a particular school, they may instead quit the profession (Santoro, 2016). Lateral movers in the 2022-23 exit survey ranking their administrator's effectiveness lower than non-lateral movers may be related to these views, as teachers who deemed school factors as particularly important could be hoping that a change of environment will provide them with stronger administrative support and better working conditions. This difference between leavers and movers regarding their views of administrative support is consistent with the literature (e.g., Kukla-Acevedo, 2009).

+ CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The annual SC Teacher Exit Survey reported reasons that were important to teachers leaving their teaching positions. At the conclusion of the 2022-23 school year, 41% of departing teachers indicated that they had secured teaching positions within a different school district, representing lateral career movers. In contrast, 59% of teachers were not entering into teaching contracts with another district.

For roughly 40% of South Carolina teachers who made a lateral move at the end of the 2022-23 school year, school factors (e.g., discipline problems and lack of administrative support) were important contributors to switching districts. For teachers to stay in their current position, districts could focus on changes in school-level administrative support, especially leveraging teachers' expertise to solve school problems such as student discipline. For example, the 2023 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (SCTWCS) report highlighted how administrative support and teacher influence over decision-making and school policy are strongly associated with job satisfaction and intention to stay in the profession (Starrett et al., 2023).

By and large, the results have been stable over the past two years of the SC Teacher Exit Survey administration, with school and classroom factors being the most important reasons behind teachers' departure from their current teaching positions. These two factors have the strongest associations with teachers' emotional exhaustion and have the highest average rankings among the five groups of reasons we compared. As these factors were noted as most important to teachers' leaving for both years, focusing on improving school and classroom factors should reduce teacher burnout and may encourage teachers to remain in their current positions.

Approximately 76% of teachers exiting the profession reported they would either consider returning to teaching or were unsure about the decision. These teachers noted several factors that could prompt them to consider a return to teaching. One such potential area for change would be an increase in the availability of part-time teaching positions in South Carolina. Although this factor was not listed among the top factors contributing to the decision to return, this area was mentioned more frequently as important to teachers leaving their positions in 2022-23 compared to results from the previous year's exit survey.

Overall, our findings across all the key questions demonstrated a clear need for increased administrative support focused on solving school problems, especially student-related discipline problems. Lack of administrative support was an important reason for leaving for both lateral and non-lateral movers. Several scholars have suggested that including teachers in leadership roles at their schools can promote a positive view of administration and increase their intention to stay in their position (e.g., Brown & Wynn, 2009; Ladd, 2011; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). This area may be an important consideration for school and district leaders.

Moving forward, the SC Teacher Exit Survey data can be integrated with other SC teacher-related data sources to enrich our understanding of the state's teacher workforce. By connecting the exit survey data to the SC TEACHER longitudinal database, which includes demographic, preparation, evaluation, and working conditions data points, we can gain deeper insights into the specific needs and career trajectories of educators in South Carolina. Investigating the relationship between the SC Teacher Exit Survey outcomes and teachers' perceptions of their working conditions is imperative. This will provide important evidence regarding the degree to which the SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey can be utilized for predictive analytics to proactively inform districts of potential attrition.

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+ TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Detailed Technical Analysis Results

This appendix details the data analysis procedure. All the relevant statistical methods, measures, and results are detailed.

Data Sources

We received 1,192 teacher responses from 18 school districts. Participation rates across districts ranged from 10% to 83%. Some participants completed only part of the survey or responded to a subset of questions; however, all available data were used to summarize results. The number of teachers answering each item is presented below.

Measures

This current survey was developed based on the Teacher Follow-Up Survey Questionnaire for Former Teachers to the Schools and Staffing Survey through the National Center of Education Statistics (2012).

The first subscale, Reasons for Leaving Position, included 23 Likert-type items that measured five subscales: Personal Matters (6 items) (e.g., "Because I wanted to take a job more conveniently located OR because I moved"), Career-Oriented (6 items) (e.g., "Because I decided to pursue a position outside the field of education"), Classroom Factors (4 items) (e.g., "Because I did not have enough autonomy over my classroom during the most recent school year), School Factors (4 items) (e.g., "Because I was dissatisfied with the administration during the most recent school year"), and Student Assessment Factors (3 items) (e.g., "Because I was dissatisfied with how student assessments and school accountability measures impacted my teaching or curriculum during the most recent school year").

Teachers rated the importance of each reason for leaving using a five-point scale with anchors of 1 = "Not at all important," 2 = "Slightly important," 3 = "Somewhat important," 4 = "Very important," and 5 = "Extremely important." Additionally, teachers could write in responses and then rate the importance of any other factors not included in the scale.

The second subscale explored lateral movers' reasons for accepting a teaching position in a different school district. The scale was comprised of eight items and was rated using the same five-point importance scale as above.

The third subscale asked non-lateral movers to report on the importance of factors that could contribute to the decision to return to a teaching position. There were nine five-point scale items, with the last item asking teachers to include and rate any other factors not listed previously.

The principal effectiveness evaluation subscale was provided to all teachers. This subscale asked teachers to evaluate their school principal and other school leaders on aspects of school leadership using a five-point scale of 1 = "Not at all effective," 2 = "Slightly effective," 3 = "Somewhat effective," 4 = "Very effective," and 5 = "Extremely effective."

The survey also included the nine-item Emotional Exhaustion subscale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981). This subscale was included to measure the degree to which teachers experienced emotional distress (e.g., fatigue, frustration, burnout) related to their current teaching position (e.g., "I feel used up at the end of the workday"). Teachers rated the frequency of feeling exhausted or "burned out" using a five-point scale: 1 = "Never," 2 = "Sometimes," 3 = "About half the time," 4 = "Most of the time," and 5 = "Always." These nine items were averaged to result in a single factor measuring Emotional Exhaustion. As such, higher average values on the factor represent higher levels of teachers' emotional exhaustion.

Data Analysis

For teachers completing the SC Teacher Exit Survey, first, we conducted a descriptive analysis to explore the reasons for leaving their current teaching position. Average scores were calculated for each item within the five subscales. In addition, the most important reason for leaving was tallied, as well as the percentage of teachers who specified a particular reason as the single most important to leave. We calculated average scores for items in the evaluation of principal effectiveness and for factors that would be important considerations if a teacher was considering a return to teaching. In addition, a descriptive analysis investigated the reasons lateral teachers gave for leaving their current position, with a subsample of teachers moving to a teaching position in a different district.

Second, for teachers leaving the profession, we examined the association between teachers' leaving their positions (i.e., personal reasons, career-oriented reasons, classroom factors, school factors, and student assessment factors) and their level of emotional exhaustion. In this analysis, we used the average scores in each construct. Spearman correlations were used to examine the relationships. Correlation values range from -1 to 1, with the sign of the coefficient (positive or negative) indicating the direction of the relationship. For this relatively large sample of teachers, correlation coefficient values of .30 or higher (irrespective of sign) can be considered meaningful.

Finally, we compared lateral movers and teachers leaving the teaching profession on the main reasons to leave (i.e., personal reasons, career-oriented reasons, classroom factors, school factors, and student assessment factors), the principal effectiveness subscale, and the emotional exhaustion subscale. For these analyses, we employed a series of independent sample t-tests for the two groups of interest. Before running the tests, we examined the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. Nonparametric tests were conducted if assumptions were not met. Cohen's d effect sizes were calculated to measure the magnitude of the difference between the two groups.

Understanding the Sample

Approximately half the participating teachers had been working as certified teachers for 11 or more years (50.5% of respondents, n = 560), followed by those who had been working between 6 and 10 years (21.1%, n = 234), 3-5 years (14.6%, n = 162), and 1-2 years (13.7%, n = 152). At the same time, most of the respondents had been working at their most recent schools for either 1-2 years (39%) or 3-5 years (28%).

Slightly more than 22% (n = 244) of the teachers indicated that they had some other source of earned income beyond their teaching salary, such as from another job. Very few teachers (2%, n = 23) were exiting their current position to take a leave of absence (e.g., maternity or paternity leave). About 11% (n = 117) of the respondents indicated that their reason for leaving their position was not voluntary (e.g., their contract was not renewed, they were laid off, their school closed or merged); however, roughly 35% (n = 41) of these non-voluntary leavers accepted a new teaching position in a different district. Only 18% (n = 200) of the teachers in the sample indicated that they were retiring, whereas a larger portion, 41%, (n = 446), revealed that they had accepted a teaching position in another school district.

Results

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Reasons for Leaving Teaching Position

Teachers were presented with a list of 23 reasons for leaving their current teaching position; each reason was rated using a five-point importance scale. Between 938 and 961 teachers responded to the set of questions. Average scores and standard deviation values for each reason to leave are presented in Table A1.

Overall, school-based factors seemed to play the largest role in teachers leaving their current position, whereas career-oriented reasons seemed to be the least important. At the individual item level, teachers rated the school factor of student discipline as the most important reason for leaving. Personal life reasons (e.g., caring for family) had the second highest mean value, followed by the school factor of dissatisfaction with the administration. The next three highest-scoring items included the need for a higher salary, too many intrusions on teaching, and taking a job in a more convenient location.

Table A1. *Average Scores of Major Reasons to Leave the Current Position*

Major areas	Reasons	Mean	SD	n
Personal reasons	Because of other personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family).	2.68	1.66	960
	Because I wanted or needed a higher salary.	2.47	1.61	954
	Because I wanted to take a job more conveniently located OR because I moved.	2.45	1.70	959
	Because I decided to retire or receive retirement benefits.	1.75	1.45	961
	Because I needed better benefits than I received at my school.	1.75	1.30	956
	Because I was concerned about my job security at my school.	1.36	0.94	958
	Personal matters – average	**2.07**	**0.70**	**949**
Career-oriented reasons	Because I was dissatisfied with teaching as a career.	2.35	1.55	949
	Because I decided to pursue a position outside the field of education.	1.92	1.49	951
	Because there were not enough opportunities for leadership roles or professional advancement at my most recent school.	1.78	1.33	949
	Because I changed roles within the field of education (e.g., administrative, instructional coach, district office personnel, etc.).	1.39	1.05	951
	Because I decided to take courses to improve career opportunities OUTSIDE the field of education.	1.38	1.01	951
	Because I decided to take courses to improve career opportunities WITHIN the field of education.	1.29	0.87	952
	Career – average	**1.68**	**0.73**	**945**
Classroom factors	Because I felt there were too many intrusions on my teaching time during the most recent school year.	2.46	1.56	949
	Because I was dissatisfied with my job description or assignment (e.g., responsibilities, grade level, or subject area).	2.34	1.52	948
	Because I was dissatisfied with the large number of students I taught during the most recent school year.	2.19	1.50	949
	Because I did not have enough autonomy over my classroom during the most recent school year.	1.99	1.37	948
	Classroom factors – average	**2.25**	**1.19**	**947**
School factors	Because school discipline problems were an issue during the most recent school year.	2.95	1.65	948
	Because I was dissatisfied with the administration during the most recent school year.	2.53	1.62	948
	Because I was dissatisfied with workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, classroom resources, school safety) during the most recent school year.	2.33	1.53	947
	Because I was dissatisfied with the lack of influence I had over school policies and practices during the most recent school year.	2.32	1.50	944
	School factors – average	**2.53**	**1.31**	**943**
Student assessment factors	Because I was dissatisfied with how student assessments and school accountability measures impacted my teaching or curriculum during the most recent school year.	2.20	1.44	940
	Because I was dissatisfied with the support I received for preparing my students for student assessment during the most recent school year.	1.82	1.29	938
	Because I was dissatisfied with how some of my compensation, benefits, or rewards were tied to the performance of my students during the most recent school year.	1.49	1.06	940
	Student assessment factors – average	**1.84**	**1.02**	**936**

A total of 911 teachers responded to the survey question asking them to choose the single most important reason for leaving their current position. Of these respondents, 47.3% chose one of the personal matter factor items (items 1-6) as the single most important reason to leave, with the top three reasons in this area being job location or moving (item 1), health concerns (item 2), and retirement (item 3). The second highest-rated category was related to school factors items (items 17-20), with 22.2% of the respondents listing one of these items as the single most important reason for leaving. Within this category, dissatisfaction with the administration (item 19) and school discipline problems (item 18) were listed most frequently. The three categories with the lowest ratings included career-related items (items 7-12) were listed by 10.9% of teachers, classroom factors (items 13-16) by 4.8%, and student assessment factors (items 21-23) by 0.7%. Table A2 presents the number and percentage of teachers choosing each item as the single most important reason. The items are given in descending order based on the frequency of selection.

Table A2. *Percent of Teachers Ranking Each Item as the Most Important Single Reason for Leaving*

Item #	Item	Frequency	Percent
1	Because I wanted to take a job more conveniently located OR because I moved.	142	15.6%
24	Because of the other factors not included elsewhere	129	14.2%
2	Because of other personal life reasons (e.g., health, pregnancy/childcare, caring for family).	116	12.7%
19	Because I was dissatisfied with the administration during the most recent school year.	102	11.2%
3	Because I decided to retire or receive retirement benefits.	98	10.8%
18	Because school discipline problems were an issue during the most recent school year.	79	8.7%
4	Because I wanted or needed a higher salary.	73	8.0%
11	Because I was dissatisfied with teaching as a career.	33	3.6%
8	Because I decided to pursue a position outside the field of education.	21	2.3%
17	Because I was dissatisfied with workplace conditions (e.g., facilities, classroom resources, school safety) during the most recent school year.	20	2.2%
7	Because I changed roles within the field of education (e.g., administrative, instructional coach, district office personnel, etc.).	20	2.2%
13	Because I was dissatisfied with my job description or assignment (e.g., responsibilities, grade level, or subject area).	15	1.7%
12	Because there were not enough opportunities for leadership roles or professional advancement at my most recent school.	14	1.5%
14	Because I did not have enough autonomy over my classroom during the most recent school year.	13	1.4%
9	Because I decided to take courses to improve career opportunities WITHIN the field of education.	11	1.2%
16	Because I felt there were too many intrusions on my teaching time during the most recent school year.	8	0.9%
15	Because I was dissatisfied with the large number of students I taught during the most recent school year.	7	0.8%
21	Because I was dissatisfied with how student assessments and school accountability measures impacted my teaching or curriculum during the most recent school year.	5	0.6%
10	Because I decided to take courses to improve career opportunities OUTSIDE the field of education.	1	0.1%
20	Because I was dissatisfied with the lack of influence I had over school policies and practices during the most recent school year.	1	0.1%
23	Because I was dissatisfied with the support I received for preparing my students for student assessment during the most recent school year.	1	0.1%
5	Because I needed better benefits than I received at my school.	1	0.1%
6	Because I was concerned about my job security at my school.	1	0.1%
22	Because I was dissatisfied with how some of my compensation, benefits, or rewards were tied to the performance of my students during the most recent school year.	0	0.0%
	Total	**911**	**100.0**

More than 700 respondents indicated that there were additional factors in their decision to leave their position beyond those asked about in the objective items. Half of those teachers (n = 348) provided specific responses to an open-ended question asking them to name these other reasons. As some participants stated multiple reasons within a single response, 558 distinct statements were coded. After completing the coding, we eliminated those responses that matched the existing 23 items from the Reasons for Leaving Position subscale. After this exclusion, the final sample included 234 response items coded to represent 17 categories of additional reasons for leaving. Table A3 presents the frequency and percent of responses for each response category in descending order.

Table A3. *Other Factors Reported by Teachers as Important in Their Decision to Leave*

Response Category	n	Percentage
Workload issues/Work-life Balance	58	24.8%
Lack of parental support/Issues with parents	31	13.2%
Lack of collegial support/Issues with co-workers	22	9.4%
Mental, physical, or emotional health	21	9.0%
School climate and/or culture	19	8.1%
Inadequate or inappropriate curriculum, standards	13	5.6%
Lack of state support, politics, state policies	12	5.1%
Lack of adequate staffing	10	4.3%
Lack of adequate support for special education	9	3.8%
Lack of support (general)	8	3.4%
Teaching in another district, location, subject, or level	6	2.6%
National climate/Societal view of teachers	6	2.6%
Lack of student engagement	5	2.1%
Lack of support for student mental health	5	2.1%
Lack of professional development	3	1.3%
Lack of community support	3	1.3%
Issues with school grading and/or promotion policies	3	1.3%
Total	**234**	**100%**

Reasons For Leaving – Lateral Movers

More than 40% (n = 446) of the teachers indicated that they were leaving their current position because they accepted a teaching position within another school district. Teachers were asked about the importance of various factors in their decision to leave. Table A4 provides descriptive statistics for each item. The highest mean was recorded for the "administrative leadership/vision" item, followed by "reputation of new school district" and "community reputation and opportunities." The lowest importance score was related to receiving a "signing bonus").

Table A4. *Average Scores of Reasons to Leave for Accepting a Teaching Position Within Another School District*

Reason	Mean	SD	n
Administrative leadership/vision	3.67	1.51	383
Reputation of new school district	3.19	1.53	382
Community reputation/opportunities	3.09	1.55	382
More convenient commute	3.07	1.71	383
Family care responsibilities	2.73	1.66	381
Current district employees	2.65	1.56	381
Higher salary	2.51	1.64	382
Signing bonus	1.82	1.38	380

Returning to Teaching

Of the 652 non-lateral movers, 91% responded to the question about returning to a teaching position in the future. About 36% (n = 211) of those who responded said they would consider returning, more than 40% (n = 240) were not sure, and slightly more than 24% (n = 143) responded with a no. Non-lateral movers were asked to rate the importance of eight factors in their decision to return to teaching. Additionally, they were asked to list any other factors beyond the options provided. Descriptive statistics for the eight items in the subscale are provided in Table A5.

On average, teachers rated the item of an increase in salary as having the highest importance to returning to teaching. Small class sizes and stronger administrative or collegial support were the next two most important factors in teachers' decision to return to teaching.

Table A5. *Average Scores of Factors for Non-Lateral Movers to Consider Returning to Teaching*

Items	Mean	SD	n
An increase in salary	4.26	1.14	446
Small class sizes	3.48	1.32	446
Stronger admin or collegial support	3.47	1.52	446
Availability of full-time teaching positions	3.20	1.56	442
Availability of part-time teaching positions	2.62	1.53	443
Forgiveness of your student loans	2.53	1.75	443
Housing incentives	2.26	1.56	444
Availability of suitable childcare	2.17	1.62	445

Two hundred non-lateral movers indicated that other factors were important considerations for a possible return to teaching, with 126 elaborating on these additional factors in an open-ended response. Some respondents listed multiple factors in their answers, bringing the total coded responses to 174. After coding all the responses, we eliminated those matching the items in the Considering Return to Teaching subscale, along with reasons mentioned by only one teacher and comments that were unclear. After data cleaning, 107 coded responses representing 16 additional factors were noted by exiting teachers. Table A6 provides the number and percentage of responses for each factor.

Table A6. *Other Factors Important in Considering a Return to a Teaching Position*

Response Category	n	Percentage
Student behavior, safety concerns, and discipline policies	25	23.4%
Workload and more realistic expectations	24	22.4%
Recognition and respect	8	7.5%
More and better parental support/involvement	8	7.5%
Adequate staff	7	6.5%
More appropriate curriculum, assessments, standards	6	5.6%
More and better resources	5	4.7%
School climate	4	3.7%
More and better support for special education	4	3.7%
Better location	3	2.8%
More support (general)	3	2.8%
Mental health support for students and/or teachers	2	1.9%
Autonomy in the classroom	2	1.9%
Opportunity for advancement	2	1.9%
Remote work	2	1.9%
Revised grading policies (e.g., no grading floor)	2	1.9%
Total	**107**	**100%**

Evaluating Principal Effectiveness

Teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of their school principal relative to eight responsibilities; descriptive statistics are noted in Table A7. Six of those received average ratings between moderately effective and very effective. The item "Encouraged to use assessment results in planning curriculum and instruction" had the highest rating. Two responsibilities were evaluated as slightly below the rating of moderately effective. "Worked with teaching staff to solve school or department problems" had the lowest rating.

Table A7. *Average Scores for Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Effectiveness*

Responsibility	Mean	SD	n
Encouraged to use assessment results in planning curriculum and instruction	3.52	1.24	1,003
Encouraged collaboration among teachers	3.28	1.33	1,011
Facilitated and encouraged PD activities	3.26	1.34	1,006
Communicated respect for and value of teachers	3.14	1.33	1,015
Worked with staff to meet curriculum standards	3.11	1.30	1,010
Worked to develop agreement on school mission	3.07	1.38	1,005
Encouraged teachers to change teaching methods	2.98	1.33	1,010
Worked with teaching staff to solve school or department problems	2.83	1.40	1,011
Average across items	**3.15**	**1.33**	**1,009**

Associations Between Reasons for Teachers' Leaving Their Position and Their Emotional Exhaustion

As shown in Table A8, all five reasons for teachers' leaving their current position (i.e., personal reasons, career-oriented reasons, classroom factors, school factors, and student assessment factors) demonstrated significant and positive relationships with a teacher's level of emotional exhaustion, indicating that teachers showing higher concerns with those factors were more likely to experience emotional exhaustion.

Specifically, classroom factors (r = 0.67) and school factors (r = 0.63) showed a strong correlation with teachers' emotional exhaustion. Student assessment factors (r = 0.49) and career-oriented reasons (r = 0.44) demonstrated a moderate correlation with teachers' emotional exhaustion, while personal reasons showed a weak correlation with teachers' emotional exhaustion (r = 0.12). All correlations are Spearman correlations, as detailed in the data analysis section earlier.

Table A8. *Correlation Between Reasons for Teacher Leaving and Teacher Emotional Exhaustion*

Reasons for leaving	Emotional exhaustion
Classroom factors	.665**
School factors	.626**
Student assessment factors	.485**
Career-oriented reasons	.442**
Personal reasons	.116**

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Comparisons Between Lateral and Non-Lateral Movers

We compared lateral movers (i.e., teachers who are taking a new teaching position in another school district) and non-lateral movers (i.e., teachers who are leaving the teaching profession altogether) on reasons for leaving, the emotional exhaustion subscale, and the principal effectiveness subscale. An average score was used for all the constructs.

Before running the independent samples t-test, we examined all variables of interest for the normality and homogeneity of variance assumptions. The normality assumptions were met for all the variables based on item skewness < |2.0| and kurtosis values < |7.0| (Hair et al., 2010). The homogeneity of variance assumption was tested using Levene's test statistic for the equality of variances between the groups. The homogeneity of variance assumption was not met for the subscales of personal matters and career-oriented matters. Therefore, in these two cases, we conducted an independent samples t-test assuming unequal variances. Full results are presented in Table A9.

The differences in means between lateral and non-lateral movers were statistically significant for two groups of reasons: career-oriented reasons and school factors. On average, as compared to lateral movers, non-lateral movers ascribed higher importance to career-oriented reasons ($p < .001$, $d = .54$). At the same time, lateral movers rated school-related reasons for leaving as more important in comparison to non-lateral movers ($p < .001$, $d = .28$). One other area, evaluation of principal effectiveness, showed a difference between groups. Lateral movers evaluated principal effectiveness in their schools lower as compared to non-lateral movers ($p < .001$, $d = .31$).

There were no differences between the two groups on personal matter, classroom, and student assessment factors. Also, lateral and non-lateral movers did not differ in their stated level of emotional exhaustion.

Table A9. *Results Comparing Lateral and Non-lateral Movers on Various Factors*

	Lateral movers		Non-lateral movers					
	M	SD	M	SD	*df*	*t*	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Personal reasons	2.11	0.77	2.05	0.64	747.8[a]	-1.39	.165	.09
Career-oriented reasons	1.46	0.62	1.85	0.76	926.5[a]	8.53***	<.001	.54
Classroom factors	2.30	1.16	2.20	1.21	944	-1.28	.202	.08
School factors	2.74	1.33	2.38	1.27	940	-4.26***	<.001	.28
Student assessment	1.85	1.04	1.82	1.01	933	-0.49	.625	.03
Emotional burnout	2.86	1.06	2.87	1.10	1011	0.11	.914	.01
Principal effectiveness	2.95	1.17	3.30	1.16	994	4.77***	<.001	.31

*** Result is significant at the .001 level; [a]*df* were calculated based on Satterthwaite's approximation formula due to unequal variances.

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