

Austin Independent School District Human Resources Exit Survey: Interim Human Resources Report

OVERVIEW

This interim report is a brief summary of findings from analysis of the Human Resources (HR) Exit Survey and response to an ad hoc request for a supplementary bilingual analysis. Detailed analyses and findings are available in the full HR Exit Survey Report titled: *Human Resources Exit Survey: Summary of Results, 2014*.

In 2013, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) began administering a voluntary online exit survey to all professional and administrative employees leaving the district. Employees leaving the district were given the opportunity to complete the survey regardless of their terms of leaving (e.g., retirement, termination, moving). The HR Exit Survey had 20 items, including questions about demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, most recent assignment, and experience); reasons for leaving; training received; work environment; and overall AISD experience. The purpose of the Interim Human Resources Report is to briefly describe the response characteristics of the leavers completing the online exit survey.

ANALYSIS

Responses to the each item in the Human Resources (HR) Exit Survey as of October 22, 2014 ($n = 356^2$) are summarized in Appendix A and in detail in the full HR Exit Survey Report. Responses were not required to any items, and many items allowed respondents to *select all that apply*. Consequently, surveys varied in the number of total items responded to, the specific items responded to, and the number of responses per item. All responses were included in the analysis; missing responses were individually excluded. All reported percentages were based on the distribution of responses, excluding missing data for each individual item. It is important to note that these self-reported data did not align exactly with official district records for factors such as years of experience and area of specialization (AoS). Comparisons of self-reported and district database values for some items are described in another section of this report.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXIT SURVEY RESPONDENTS VERSUS ALL DISTRICT LEAVERS

To assess how closely the respondents completing the HR Exit Survey matched the population of leavers from the district, demographic comparisons were made between the HR Exit Survey respondents

² The number of survey respondents is qualified by a date of October 22, 2014 because the data base is live. Consequently, the count of both survey respondents and individual item responses updates whenever a new leaver completes the survey. Reporting is continuous over time; this report represents a snapshot in time.

and the district-wide leavers (Table 1). A close match was desirable to make valid generalizations from the approximately 350-person HR Exit Survey sample to all similar employees in the district. For comparison, district-wide records were limited to those employees with a last day of employment within the same range of dates reported in the HR Exit Survey (i.e., January 1, 2013 to October 1, 2014). For the purpose of comparison with all district teacher leavers, the HR Exit Survey was limited to teacher respondents, although the full survey also included non-teaching professional and administrative respondents. The delimitations for this comparison restricted comparisons to (a) leavers versus leavers, rather than leavers and stayers versus leavers; (b) leavers versus leavers from the same time period in attempt to control for relevant issues of the time that may have contributed to staying or leaving; and (c) teacher leavers versus teacher leavers, rather than teacher leavers versus teacher, non-teaching professional, and administrative leavers. A sample of 1,709 district teacher leavers during the relevant time span and 274 teacher leavers from the HR Exit Survey was identified. The variables compared included gender, ethnicity, school level, experience, and AoS.

Table 1. Demographic Comparisons Between Human Resources (HR) Exit Survey Respondents and District-wide Leavers

Items compared	District leavers <i>n</i> = 1,709			Survey leavers <i>n</i> = 274		
Gender						
Female	76%			75%		
Male	24%			25%		
Ethnicity						
White	64%			65%		
Hispanic	25%			23%		
African American	8%			9%		
Asian	2%			2%		
Other	1%			1%		
Level						
Elementary	45%			48%		
Middle	20%			18%		
High	23%			31%		
Special/other	12%			3%		
Experience ³						
	In AISD:	Outside AISD:	Total:	In AISD:	Outside AISD:	Total:
<i>Less than 1 yr</i>	15%	52%	7%	14%	42%	3%
<i>1 to 5 yrs</i>	40%	24%	32%	44%	27%	34%
<i>6 to 10 yrs</i>	20%	13%	22%	17%	16%	18%
<i>11 to 20 yrs</i>	13%	9%	18%	11%	11%	21%
<i>More than 20 yrs</i>	13%	2%	21%	14%	4%	23%

³ District experience was calculated from PEIMS data representing official experience on record. HR Exit Survey experience was calculated from the self-report data provided by leavers completing the respective years of experience inside/outside AISD exit survey items. Self-reported experience did not match district records for many survey respondents. Consequently, survey leaver experience was adjusted to reflect district records for the purpose of comparison in Table 1. The full HR Exit Survey Report provides detailed analysis of experience differences between the data sets.

Table 1 (continued). Demographic Comparisons Between Human Resources (HR) Exit Survey Respondents and District-wide Leavers

Items compared	District leavers <i>n</i> = 1,709	Survey leavers <i>n</i> = 274
Area of specialization (AoS) ⁴		
Bilingual	20%	15%
English as a second language	17%	21%
Special education	14%	15%
Teacher other	49%	50%

Source. AISD employee records and the HR Exit Survey

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The HR Exit Survey leaver respondents and district teacher leavers from the same time period aligned closely in gender, ethnicity, level, AoS, and experience band distributions. Demographically, the HR Exit Survey sample of teacher leavers appeared representative of the district’s population of teacher leavers.

To further assess how closely the respondents completing the HR Exit Survey matched the population of leavers from the district, additional comparisons were made between the HR Exit Survey respondents and the district-wide leavers not completing the HR survey, using data for student performance, teacher appraisal, and school climate ratings. These particular types of measures were examined because they were being studied in parallel research efforts comparing teachers who leave the district with teachers who stay in the district; therefore, in addition to demographic variables, it was also important that respondents and non-respondents be similar in outcome measures of interest.

Across all Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) and appraisal data, no differences between HR Exit Survey respondents and non-respondent district leavers were apparent. Although a few within-year differences were suggested between HR Exit Survey respondents and non-respondent district leavers in school climate data, the miscellaneous differences were neither consistent across all years of available data nor revealing of consistent patterns that would suggest one group of leavers was markedly different from the other (see the full HR Exit Survey Report for detailed results).

HR EXIT SURVEY RESPONSES

A comprehensive descriptive analysis of all survey responses is provided in the full HR Exit Survey Report. Exit survey respondents’ profiles, reasons for leaving, and open-ended responses are summarized in this section. Affective response ratings (i.e., very positive, positive, neutral, negative, very negative) to items regarding the working environment in AISD, the training received, and the AISD experience were consistently positive to very positive.

⁴ The distribution of self-reported area of specialization differed from district records due to coding of missing data. Further analysis of survey response patterns and district job codes revealed close alignment between leavers in the two data sets. Consequently, survey leaver AoS was adjusted to reflect district records for the purpose of comparison in Table 1. The full HR Exit Survey Report provides detailed analysis of AoS differences between the data sets.

Survey Respondents' Profiles

Individual item response proportions are available in Appendix A (and in detail in the full HR Exit Survey Report); however, Table 2 presents the most frequent demographic profiles of teacher respondents. The most frequent profiles were determined by counting the instances of respondents with shared demographic characteristics (i.e., ethnicity, gender, level, AoS, and alternative certification program [ACP] status). Then, the frequency of each demographic profile was ranked in descending order of occurrence. Next, within each demographic profile, the average number of years of experience in AISD, outside AISD, and total were computed to complete the profile.

Although the majority of teacher profiles were later career teachers with no ACP, the three early career teacher profiles (i.e., total average years of experience less than 10) all shared the characteristics of being white, secondary (i.e., middle or high school), general education teachers, with an ACP. Together, the frequency of occurrence of the early career, white, secondary, general education teacher, with an ACP ($n = 24$) would rank second among all HR Exit Survey respondents. The only distinguishing demographic characteristic among this group is gender.

Table 2. Top Ten Most Frequent Demographic Profiles of Respondents Completing the Human Resources Exit Survey.

Rank	Count	Ethnicity	Demographic profile				Average years of experience		
			Gender	School level	AoS	ACP	In AISD	Outside AISD	Total
1	38	White	F	E	ESL	No	11	4	15
2	18	White	M	H	Gen Ed	No	6	7	13
3	16	White	F	H	Gen Ed	No	11	3	16
5	14	Hispanic	F	E	BIL	No	8	9	17
5	14	White	F	M	Gen Ed	No	10	6	17
6	11	White	F	H	Gen Ed	Yes	3	2	5
7	10	White	F	E	Gen Ed	No	13	5	19
8	7	White	M	H	Gen Ed	Yes	2	5	7
10	6	Hispanic	M	H	Gen Ed	No	3	20	24
10	6	Hispanic	F	E	BIL	Yes	4	6	10
10	6	White	F	M	Gen Ed	Yes	2	2	3

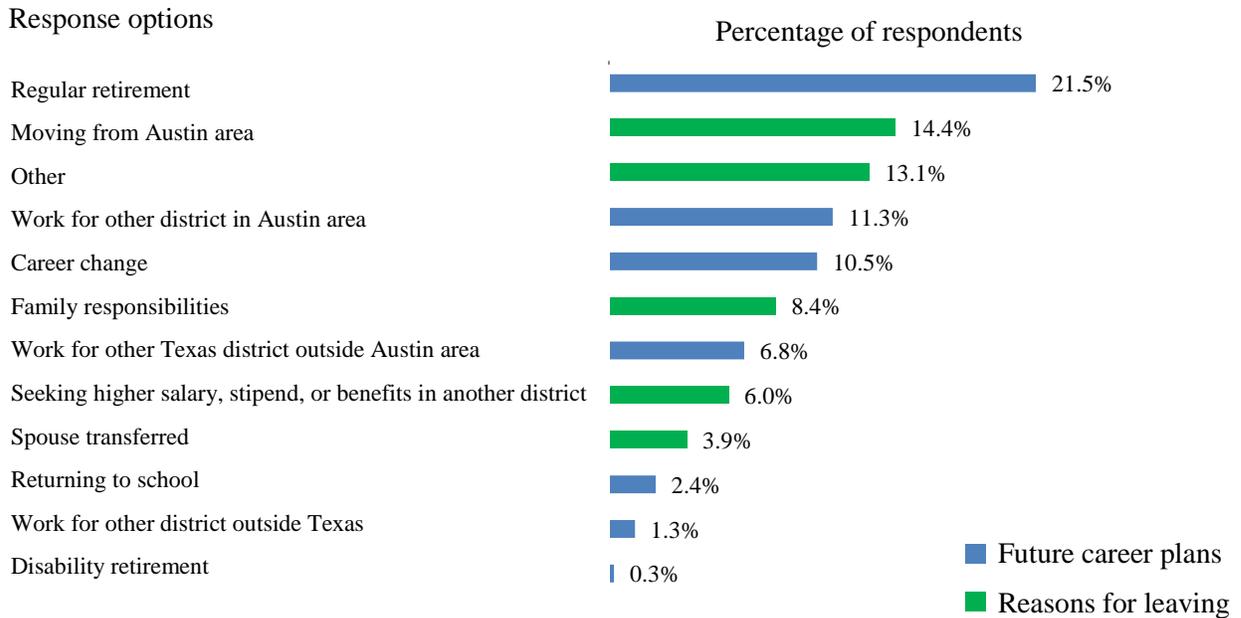
Note. E is elementary, M is middle, H is high; ESL is English as a second language; AoS is area of specialization; ACP is alternative certification program

Reasons for Leaving

Regular retirement was the most frequent reason for leaving indicated by the survey respondents (Figure 1). See the full HR Exit Survey Report for a detailed review of reasons for leaving. Combining the three response options of “work for other district in Austin area,” “work for other Texas district outside Austin area,” and “work for other district outside Texas” reveals that 19% of teacher leavers move on to

work for another district. The two most frequent write-in reasons for leaving (i.e., “Other”) were to pursue another opportunity and dissatisfaction with working in AISD.

Figure 1. Reason for Leaving Response Percentage for Each Item Option



Further review of the response options provided in the survey for the reason for leaving question suggested that respondents were actually asked two subtly overlapping questions: (a) what are your future career plans and (b) why did you leave the district? To explore the potential overlap, the response options were split out into two groups, and the reasons for leaving were examined for each type of future plan indicated. The disaggregated responses are shown in the full HR Exit Survey Report. The majority of respondents who indicated a future career plan provided no additional information. Small sample size notwithstanding, the respondents who indicated they were leaving the Austin area to teach in another district tended to also suggest that moving from the area was the reason for leaving AISD. However, the respondents who indicated they were staying in the Austin area to teach tended to also suggest that seeking higher compensation was the reason for leaving AISD. The vast majority of respondents who indicated they were leaving the Austin area to teach and of respondents who indicated they were staying in the Austin area to teach did not provide further reasons (79% and 71%, respectively).

Adequacy of AISD Training for Working With Students in the Classroom

When asked whether the training received from AISD prepared them to work with students in the classroom, 69% of respondents answered yes. See the full HR Exit Survey Report for a detailed review of responses. Comments provided by these respondents suggest that the training was appreciated and/or helpful to their practice; however, some respondents further indicated that additional resources were needed to transition training to the classroom environment or to keep training relevant for experienced

teachers. Among the respondents answering no (31%), many commented that training was insufficient due to being repetitive, weak relative to what was offered elsewhere, lacking relevance to the classroom, too infrequently offered, or only applicable to new teachers. Some respondents emphasized concerns that the training failed to prepare teachers for students' behaviors and the classroom environment. These comments stood out due to the safety implications and consistency with open-ended responses to the survey item regarding preparation to work in an urban school district.

Preparation to Work in an Urban School District

When asked whether they felt well prepared to work in an urban school district, 89% of respondents answered yes. See the full HR Exit Survey Report for a detailed review of responses. Almost half of these respondents commented that their feelings of preparation were due to experiences gained prior to AISD, not the training offered by AISD. In response to what additionally would have helped prepare them for working in an urban school district, respondents suggested the following types of resources/skills:

- More training in classroom management skill for handling students' behavior
- More support staff and school resources
- More mentoring
- More social and emotional learning (SEL) training
- Learning Spanish as a second language
- Better understanding for how to work in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools
- Better understanding about how to teach and manage large class sizes
- Additional student teaching experience
- Better understanding about how to instruct students from multiple levels in a single classroom

CONCLUSIONS

The sample of survey respondents was similar to the population of district-wide leavers with regard to demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, level, areas of specialization, and experience) and outcomes (i.e., student performance, teacher appraisal, and school climate data). The comparisons support the generalizability of the HR Exit Survey. Further analysis is required to understand the representativeness of retirees between the all district leavers and the HR Exit Survey sample of leavers.

The most frequent demographic profile of survey respondent was the White, female, elementary, ESL specialization teacher, with no ACP, 11 years average experience in AISD, 4 years average experience outside AISD, and 15 years average total experience. This common profile closely aligns with individual demographic item response characteristics. However, what may not stand out from the individual item response characteristics is the prevalence of the early career, White, secondary, general education teacher, with an ACP among the top 10 demographic profiles.

Approximately 350 leavers completed the HR Exit Survey between early 2013 and mid 2014. The most frequently identified reason for leaving the district was regular retirement (22%), although 19% left to work for another district. Seventy-seven percent of respondents did not participate in an alternative certification program. Ratings indicated that most exit survey respondents felt positively toward the AISD working environment, the training received inside and outside AISD, and their overall AISD experience. Of the few HR Exit Survey respondents who left the district on unfavorable terms and/or were unsatisfied with the training received, some notable comments included leaving because of an unsafe work environment and feeling the training provided was inadequate preparation for the classroom management skills needed for students' behavioral issues. Further exploration is needed for this subset of respondents to determine trends related to specializations, campuses, school climate, attachment, self-efficacy, and so on.

Future analyses will shift the emphasis from descriptive statistics of all leavers to rates and distinguishing characteristics of teacher leavers. Comparisons will focus on teacher leavers relative to teacher stayers to assess what groups leave at the greatest rates, and whether differences vary according to important variables of interest (e.g., campus, teacher effectiveness, and AoS). The need to explore district-level data for both leavers and stayers should further be emphasized. Many interesting questions about teacher leavers require understanding teacher characteristics of both leavers and stayers. For example, characteristics of leavers should be understood in the context of how many total teachers of each type (e.g., specialization, level) are desired by the district; how many of these teachers the district starts each year with; how many teachers stay; and what characterizes the stayers. Although knowing the frequency or percentage of each teacher type who leaves the district is important, ultimately, understanding leavers and stayers is a relative question that highlights the importance of understanding *rates of loss* and the characteristics that distinguish groups of teachers with different rates of loss (see Appendix A for an example case).

RECOMMENDED SURVEY IMPROVEMENTS

The format in which the survey data were stored was not ideal for analysis. One challenge in analysis of the HR Exit Survey data was conversion of the person period data file into a flat, person-level data file. Due to the specific nature of the person period data file, flattening the data into the person-level data format was cumbersome and impossible for some survey items (see Supplemental Technical Report for details of the report format and requirements for converting between formats for analyses).

During the process of working with the exported exit survey data and compiling results, a number of potential improvements to survey administration were noted that may help make future analyses more efficient and future results more informative. Several improvements are suggested.

- Focus the exit survey on questions of *why*, rather than questions of *who*. As long as the employee ID is known, questions of who dilute the purpose and make the survey longer than needed.

- Do not collect data redundant with district records. Demographic data only introduces potential errors for data such as ethnicity, specialization, and years of experience.
- Standardize data collection so a response is recorded for every answer field for survey items, including non-responses.
- If any numerical information is collected, suggest or require a format (e.g., MM/DD/YYYY for dates); otherwise, analysis must accommodate different write-in formats and also text and numeric responses (e.g., Oct 1st, October first, 10/1, 1 OCT, 10.1).
- Clarify whether the free text field after a multiple choice item is specific to any of the response options or to a specific option. Furthermore, force an answer to multiple choice items in order to enter free text. A response option may be “other.”
- Pair “other” (or similar) and its associated free text field as related options. As is, respondents can select “other” but not specify, leave “other” blank yet still write in a free text response, or select “other” and include a free text response. Without a consistent response characteristic, aggregating the data across respondents is difficult (i.e., the number of “other” responses is not a one-to-one match with the number of free text responses for the same item). In general, all write-in responses should be paired with a previously selected response option (e.g., “move to a district in the Austin area” should be paired with a specific corresponding open-ended response for “district__”).
- Revise the “reasons for leaving” survey item (i.e., item #7) into one question about future plans after AISD and one question about why the employee left AISD.

APPENDIX A: BILINGUAL SPECIALIZATION CASE

Table 3. HR Exit Survey Descriptive Statistics Presented, by Survey Item

Item		Full sample (<i>n</i> = 356)	Bilingual teachers (<i>n</i> = 50)
Gender			
	Female	75%	72% (<i>n</i> = 36)
	Male	25%	28% (<i>n</i> = 14)
Ethnicity			
	White	64%	18% (<i>n</i> = 9)
	Hispanic	23%	78% (<i>n</i> = 39)
	African American	10%	2% (<i>n</i> = 1)
	Asian	~2%	NA
	Other	~2%	2% (<i>n</i> = 1)
What was your last day of employment?			
	Most common date: End of 2013-2014 school year	77%	76% (<i>n</i> = 34)
In how many districts have you worked in addition to Austin?			
	None	32%	33% (<i>n</i> = 17)
	One other district	28%	22% (<i>n</i> = 11)
	Two other districts	20%	20% (<i>n</i> = 10)
	Three or more other districts	20%	25% (<i>n</i> = 13)
At what level in AISD did you work most recently?			
	Elementary	45%	82% (<i>n</i> = 42)
	Middle	18%	8% (<i>n</i> = 4)
	High	27%	4% (<i>n</i> = 2)
	Special/other	10%	6% (<i>n</i> = 3)
What was your most recent assignment?			
	Teaching	78%	76% (<i>n</i> = 38)
	Non-teaching professional	15%	18% (<i>n</i> = 9)
	Administrative positions	7%	6% (<i>n</i> = 3)
Did you participate in an alternative certification program?			
	No	77%	60% (<i>n</i> = 30)
	Yes	23%	40% (<i>n</i> = 20)
How much work experience do you have?			
Less than 1 year	In AISD	4%	13% (<i>n</i> = 6)
	Out of AISD	20%	35% (<i>n</i> = 16)
	Total	1%	26% (<i>n</i> = 12)
1 to 5 years	In AISD	49%	47% (<i>n</i> = 24)
	Out of AISD	34%	35% (<i>n</i> = 16)
	Total	20%	12% (<i>n</i> = 6)
6 to 10 yrs	In AISD	17%	22% (<i>n</i> = 11)
	Out of AISD	19%	26% (<i>n</i> = 12)
	Total	23%	25% (<i>n</i> = 13)
11 to 20 yrs	In AISD	12%	20% (<i>n</i> = 10)
	Out of AISD	18%	13% (<i>n</i> = 6)
	Total	23%	31% (<i>n</i> = 16)
More than 20 yrs	In AISD	18%	10% (<i>n</i> = 5)
	Out of AISD	9%	13% (<i>n</i> = 6)
	Total	34%	31% (<i>n</i> = 16)

Human Resources Exit Survey: Interim Human Resources Report

Item	Full sample (<i>n</i> = 356)	Bilingual teachers (<i>n</i> = 50)
Reasons for leaving AISD		
Regular retirement	22%	11% (<i>n</i> = 6)
Moving from the area	14%	26% (<i>n</i> = 14)
Other	13%	9% (<i>n</i> = 5)
Work for another local area district	11%	9% (<i>n</i> = 5)
Career change	11%	15% (<i>n</i> = 8)
Family responsibilities	9%	13% (<i>n</i> = 8)
Work for another Texas district outside of the Austin area	7%	4% (<i>n</i> = 2)
Seeking higher salary/benefits	6%	7% (<i>n</i> = 4)
Spouse transferred	4%	4% (<i>n</i> = 2)
Returning to school	2%	2% (<i>n</i> = 1)
Work for a district outside of Texas	1%	NA
Disability retirement	>1%	NA
How do you regard the working environment for AISD teaching employees?		
Positive to very positive	65%	76% (<i>n</i> = 38)
Neutral	19%	10% (<i>n</i> = 5)
Negative to very negative	16%	14% (<i>n</i> = 7)
How do you regard the working environment for AISD teaching employees in comparison with other districts about which you have some knowledge?		
Positive to very positive	54%	70% (<i>n</i> = 35)
Neutral	25%	16% (<i>n</i> = 8)
Negative to very negative	21%	14% (<i>n</i> = 7)
Did the training you received from AISD prepare you to work with the students in your classroom?		
No	31%	24% (<i>n</i> = 12)
Yes	69%	76% (<i>n</i> = 38)
How do you regard the working environment for AISD non-teaching employees?		
Positive to very positive	56%	61% (<i>n</i> = 30)
Neutral	33%	31% (<i>n</i> = 15)
Negative to very negative	11%	8% (<i>n</i> = 4)
How do you regard the working environment for AISD non-teaching employees in comparison with other districts about which you have some knowledge?		
Positive to very positive	47%	49% (<i>n</i> = 23)
Neutral	41%	43% (<i>n</i> = 20)
Negative to very negative	12%	9% (<i>n</i> = 4)
How do you feel about the training you received in AISD?		
Positive to very positive	61%	74% (<i>n</i> = 37)
Neutral	25%	22% (<i>n</i> = 11)
Negative to very negative	14%	4% (<i>n</i> = 2)
How do you feel about your last job assignment in AISD?		
Positive to very positive	68%	71% (<i>n</i> = 36)
Neutral	11%	20% (<i>n</i> = 10)
Negative to very negative	21%	10% (<i>n</i> = 5)
In general, how do you feel about your overall experience in AISD?		
Positive to very positive	71%	78% (<i>n</i> = 39)
Neutral	13%	10% (<i>n</i> = 5)
Negative to very negative	15%	12% (<i>n</i> = 6)

Item	Full sample (n = 356)	Bilingual teachers (n = 50)
Were you prepared well to work in an urban school district?		
No	11%	9% (n = 4)
Yes	89%	91% (n = 43)
How do you feel about your profession at this time in your career?		
Positive to very positive	76%	84% (n = 43)
Neutral	12%	6% (n = 3)
Negative to very negative	12%	10% (n = 5)
If you had it to do over again, would you accept the job(s) you held in AISD?		
No	14%	10% (n = 5)
Yes	70%	78% (n = 40)
Uncertain	16%	12% (n = 6)

Source. AISD HR Exit Survey

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Key Considerations

Table 3 compares the bilingual subset with the respondents of the overall set of survey respondents. The table further highlights the importance of understanding rates of loss, given relative cross sections of teachers who stayed in the district and teachers who left the district. That is, it is also important to drill down to numerous other teacher leaver groups of interest, but they should each be understood relative to their analogous group of teacher stayers.

An example case is offered to demonstrate the relative nature of leaver data. Eighteen percent of the teacher leavers responding to the HR Exit Survey reported a bilingual specialization (15% used district job titles for those respondents). Is 18% (or 15%) too high? The bilingual specialization is the smallest group of teachers represented in the exit survey. Does infrequent representation mean AISD retains most of its bilingual teachers?

To understand the latter question, a count (in the same comparative time range) of stayers is needed. Given a count of bilingual stayers during the same time period, the relative loss of bilingual teachers could be assessed, and thus the answer to degree of retention among bilingual teachers determined. Once the total stayers and leavers for a time period was determined, then the rate of loss could also be determined. Given the rate of loss of bilingual teachers, the answer (at least partially) to relative degree of loss among other specializations could be determined. Relative rate of loss is still only a partial answer because the rate of bilingual teacher loss and its magnitude relative to other specializations addresses neither the district’s goal of growing, maintaining, or reducing the number of bilingual teachers nor the rate at which bilingual teachers were hired during the same time period.

The same relative context is required to further interpret the subset of bilingual descriptive statistics in Table 3. Only 23% of all leaver respondents were Hispanic (Table 3), yet 78% of all bilingual leaver respondents were Hispanic. How many (and what percentage of) Hispanic bilingual teachers stayed in the district during the same time period? Similarly, only 23% of all leaver respondents participated in an

ACP (Table 3), yet 40% of all bilingual leaver respondents participated in an ACP (Table 3). Some characteristics of leavers may differ between groups among leavers (this is expected unless it can be assumed that all teachers were exactly the same except for a group characteristic such as specialization), but within groups across stayers and leavers, distinguishing characteristics may be common to everyone; and therefore, are neither predictive of which teachers might leave nor indicative of what might be done to keep those teachers we do not want to lose.

About this report. The current report is part of a larger series of reports examining teacher retention in AISD. The Interim Human Resources report provides a brief summary of findings from the more extensive full HR Exit Survey Report. In general, the series is concerned with the rate of teacher loss in the district and identifying what characteristics meaningfully distinguish whether the rate of loss differs among teachers. Beginning in 2013, the exit survey was administered to all professional and administrative employees leaving the district. More broadly, the series of reports seek to address the following research questions:

- What were the characteristics of teachers who left AISD schools since 2007?
- What were the most common, actionable reasons teachers gave for leaving their schools?
- To what extent did teachers who left AISD schools move to area districts?
- How did the effectiveness of teacher leavers compare with the effectiveness of teachers who stayed?
- What financial factors contributed to, or resulted from, teacher attrition?

Funding source. Funding for this report was provided by district local funds under the Title II, Part A Teacher and Principal Training and Recruitment Fund, 2014–2015.

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