SAMPLE Exit Survey and Interview Protocol

Purpose of the Resource

The Exit Survey and Interview Protocol are designed to help school districts and administrators gain information to better understand why staff choose to leave their positions. Understanding the factors that influence an educator’s decision to leave an organization can direct districts to identify policies, supports, and resources that can support successful retention efforts.

Overview of the Resource

The Exit Survey and Interview Protocol resource is divided into two parts. The first, a short survey, gathers broader employee demographics and perspectives on the separation from the organization and is suited for distribution to a staff member electronically, through the district’s human resources department, with the option for the individual completing the survey to remain anonymous. Data collected in this manner could then be shared with appropriate personnel at the district and building levels. Aggregate data might further be shared with other district program and policy stakeholders, such as school boards.

The second part is an Interview Protocol that can be used to solicit more in-depth and contextual information from educators who are choosing to leave the district. The interview may be conducted by building principals, the district superintendent, or human resources staff, depending on the circumstances of the separation, in order to ensure a level of comfort for the employee that is most likely to elicit honest feedback. Though utilizing this protocol in concert with the survey is ideal, there may be circumstances under which the administration may determine that an exit interview is neither necessary nor prudent.

Preparing for the Exit Interview

Because the exit interview requires the principal or superintendent to meet face-to-face with the educator who is leaving his or her position, it is important to create a welcoming and safe environment for the discussion. The interviewer should consider the following aspects inherent in creating such an environment:

1. **Set the tone.** Explain to the educators that the purpose of the interview is to gather more detailed feedback on their experience in an effort to help improve the school or school district. Let them know that their perspective is important and their openness and honesty is appreciated.
2. **Ensure anonymity.** Share that the information that is collected will remain anonymous and that at no time will the employee’s name or identifying characteristics be attached to the data when they are shared with others for the purpose of school/district improvement.
3. **Allocate enough time**. Plan a sufficient amount of time for the discussion. Starting and ending on time, as well as moving intentionally and responsively through the interview, communicates the importance of the meeting’s purpose and allows the interviewer to probe further into areas of relevance.
4. **Listen actively and respond objectively**. Actively engaging in the conversation and maintaining an objective stance throughout will help the interviewer develop a better understanding of the interviewee’s experience and result in more useful information.

Sample Survey

The questions from this survey might be programmed into an online survey (e.g., SurveyMonkey), which will allow the district to more easily collect, organize, and analyze the data.

1. First and last name:: (open ended; optional)
2. School(s) at which you worked? (open ended; optional)
3. Which grade band most accurately describes the position you are leaving?
   1. Elementary (PK–5)
   2. Middle (6–8)
   3. High school (9–12)
   4. Multiple grades/levels
   5. Other
4. Including this year, how many total years have you worked in the school(s) you are leaving?
   1. 0–3 years
   2. 4–6 years
   3. 7–10 years
   4. 11–15 years
   5. 16–20 years
   6. 21–25 years
   7. 26–30 years
   8. 31+ years
5. Including this year, how many years of experience do you have as an educator? (Include years spent in positions outside of this district, if applicable.)
   1. 0–3 years
   2. 4–6 years
   3. 7–10 years
   4. 11–15 years
   5. 16–20 years
   6. 21–25 years
   7. 26–30 years
   8. 31+ years
6. How would you classify the position from which you are currently leaving? (If you serve in more than one role, choose the one that makes up the greater percentage of your work day/week.)
   1. Classroom teacher
   2. Special education teacher
   3. Allied arts (e.g., music, art, library/media)
   4. Itinerant teacher (teaches in more than one school)
   5. Clinician (e.g., guidance, speech, O/T, P/T, social work)
   6. Educational technician/aide
   7. Building or district administrator
   8. Other

**Please indicate the degree to which each of the factors listed has impacted your decision to leave your current position.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Major Factor | Moderate Factor | Minor Factor | Not a Factor |
| Interest in pursuing a different career path (unrelated to other factors, such as salary/working conditions) |  |  |  |  |
| Long commute |  |  |  |  |
| Challenging needs of student population |  |  |  |  |
| Opportunity for more competitive salary elsewhere OUTSIDE the field of education |  |  |  |  |
| Opportunity for more competitive salary elsewhere WITHIN the field of education |  |  |  |  |
| Dissatisfied with position reassignment or changes in job description/role |  |  |  |  |
| Break from career/work altogether |  |  |  |  |
| Disagreement with district/building initiatives |  |  |  |  |
| End of contract/temporary assignment |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of advancement opportunities in the profession |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of teacher leadership opportunities |  |  |  |  |
| Inadequate mentoring/general support |  |  |  |  |
| Inadequate professional development opportunity |  |  |  |  |
| Lack of collaborative working environment |  |  |  |  |
| Administrative leadership |  |  |  |  |
| Low level of autonomy |  |  |  |  |
| Poor relationship with supervisor |  |  |  |  |
| “Top-down” leadership culture/lack of shared leadership structures |  |  |  |  |
| Unprofessional treatment of staff |  |  |  |  |
| Unprofessional treatment of students |  |  |  |  |
| Relocation |  |  |  |  |
| Other – please explain |  |  |  |  |

1. If you indicated pursuing a career change as a major factor in your decision, which of the following best explains the reason for this change?
   1. To return to school to advance career WITHIN education field
   2. To secure a job with a higher salary
   3. To return to school to advance career OUTSIDE education
   4. Other
   5. N/A
2. If you indicated a break from career/work altogether as a major factor in your decision, which of the following best describes your reason for such a break?
   1. Sabbatical
   2. Personal health
   3. Caring for family
   4. Other
3. If you indicated relocation as a major factor in your decision, which of the following best describes where you are relocating?
   1. Within Maine
   2. Outside Maine
   3. N/A
4. Do you feel you received the requisite training and support needed to be successful in the position you are now leaving?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. N/A
5. If you answered “yes” to question 10, what training/support had the most impact on your success in your position?
6. If you answered “no” to question 10, what training/support would have better prepared you to work in your position? (open ended)
7. Please share any additional comments you may have regarding your decision to leave. (open ended)

**Please select up to two factors, if any,** which might have most encouraged you to remain in this school or district:

1. Higher pay
2. Different supervisor
3. Smaller classes/caseload
4. More time for planning/preparation
5. More opportunities for professional collaboration
6. Better facilities/resources
7. Opportunities for advancement
8. School/district philosophy of teaching and learning more in line with my own
9. More support for the challenging needs of students
10. Other
11. None of the above

Interview Protocol

As noted in the introduction, the exit interview requires the interviewer to create a welcoming and safe environment for the discussion. The interviewer can create this environment by setting the tone, ensuring confidentiality, allocating enough time for the discussion, and actively engaging in the conversation.

Name of teacher:

Years in the school:

Years in the district:

1. Talk a little bit about the role(s) you have served in during your time with the organization.
2. What prompted you to decide to leave your position in this school/district?
3. Describe some of the challenges that exist in your position, school, or the district and any ideas/suggestions you may have for how we might improve in these areas.
4. Would you recommend working in this school/district to another educator? Why or why not?
5. Is there anything else that you can share that would help us to better serve the students, staff, and community of this school/district?