

Illinois Agriculture Teacher Exit Survey for the Year 2009
 Respectively Submitted by:
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 Project Director

The data collection stage of this project successfully yielded 10 usable surveys out of a possible 11. The actual response rate for this project was 91%. The project director determined there were 11 individuals that decided to leave the profession in 2009. There were 31 actual state-wide openings. The project director was able to locate personal information for 11 out of the 11 individuals to be utilized for data collection. Once the data collection stage was completed, there was one individual that did not respond to the survey after several attempts by phone and mailed survey. This year the project was successful in acquiring information, through electronic methods when home addresses were not available. Table 1 outlines district responses and the number of individuals identified to collect exit data.

Table 1: District Responses

District	Individuals Identified	# Surveys Collected	Response Rate
1	1	1	100%
2	5	5	100%
3	4	3	75%
4	0	0	100%
5	1	1	100%
Totals	11	10	91%

Each individual was sent a survey instrument utilized to collect perceptual data on reasons for leaving the profession of Agricultural Education. Along with the survey was a cover letter that introduced them to why the state is trying to collect this data. The survey and cover letter was sent with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope to ensure a quick response. If a survey was completed and returned, a thank you letter was sent to that individual to thank them for their time. The data collection ended after three attempts of correspondence with these individuals. The overall response rate was 91% lacking only one individual out of 11 individuals. The response rate increased by 2% from last year's response rate, which is an excellent return rate for any mailed survey. The first of round of surveys were sent on July 20th, 2009 and the final round of surveys was sent on August 17th, 2009.

A comparative analysis of demographic data has been summarized in Table 2. The results indicated that the respondents had an average of 7.25 years (7.46 years in 2008, 8.57 years in 2007, and 6.36 years in 2006) of teaching experience and 5.5 years (4.31 years in 2008, 5.28 years in 2007, and 5 years in 2006) of experience within their current school district in 2008-2009. This year's group possessed less years of teaching experience than last year's group. This year's group also had 3 individuals (30%) that had 10+ years of teaching experience, but when compared to last year's group 4 individuals (25%), it is substantially higher percentage. It is more important to note that 3 individuals (30%) had 5+ years at their current school, which is enough to gain security through tenure.

Demographic data also indicated that 70% (n=7) of the respondents were male and 30% (n=3) were female. These percentages are more skewed this year when comparing the gender variable

over the four years of data collection. An important point to highlight is that males are leaving the profession at a higher rate than females, because the average percentage of males in the field is higher than 56% state-wide average. The results also indicated that 80% (n=8) of the respondents were fully certified and 10% (n=2) were provisionally certified. However, these percentages are very representative of the demographics across the state, which indicates that 86% of the teachers are fully certified and 14% are provisionally certified. This year's group appeared to be more diverse in their plans for employment for this upcoming year. Two individuals (20%) were planning on staying in the field of education, two individuals (20%) were planning on staying in the field of agriculture, and two individuals (20%) were planning not to be in either field. Two individuals (20%) were unsure of what they were going to do for employment. The other two individuals were pursuing higher education or taking care of family.

Table 2: Comparative Demographic Data

Variables	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Individuals Identified	15	15	18	11	59
# Surveys Collected	11	14	16	10	51
Response Rate	73%	93%	89%	91%	86%
# of Females	5	6	7	3	21 (41%)
# of Males	6	8	9	7	30 (59%)
# Fully Cert	10	12	14	8	44 (86%)
# Provisional Cert	1	2	2	2	7 (14%)
Years of Teaching	6.36	8.57	7.46	7.25	7.41 yrs
# of State Openings	42	55	59	31	187
% of State Openings	36%	27%	31%	35%	31.5%

The following 17 variables were ranked according to their impact on the decision to leave the profession. It is important to note that there were only 10 respondents, so averages can be swayed by each respondent. The following table illustrates each variable on its impact on the decision-making process. The first variable had the greatest impact and the last variable had the least impact on their decision based upon the overall mean for each variable. The table also illustrates the frequency of respondents that identified that variable as a reason to leave the profession. The respondents had the opportunity to rank each variable by placing a "1" by the variable that had the greatest impact on their decision and then descend through "17" from there for the remaining applicable variables. The variables with the smallest mean had the greatest impact. Tables 3, 4, 5, & 6 illustrate the ratings of 2009, 2008, 2007, & 2006 groups respectively.

Table 3: 2009 Group Ratings (*) indicates that 50% of participants selected the variable

Variable (2009 Group N=10) 91% Response Rate	Mean	Rank	Frequency
*Family/personal reason	2.00	1 st	n=5 (50%)
*Other (identified a specific variable)	2.50	2 nd	n=6 (60%)
Long commute	3.33	3 rd	n=3 (30%)
*Limited administrative support	4.00	T4	n=7 (70%)
Lack support from colleagues	4.00	T4	n=3 (30%)
Salary does not reflect effort	4.25	6 th	n=4 (40%)
Was not offered a contract for 09-10	4.50	7 th	n=4 (40%)
Lack of time and/or resources	5.00	8 th	n=3 (30%)
*Too many out-of-classroom expectations	5.40	9 th	n=5 (50%)
Discipline problems	5.50	10 th	n=2 (20%)
Change of heart about teaching	5.66	11 th	n=3 (30%)
Lack of parent/community support	6.33	12 th	n=3 (30%)
Salary not competitive	7.25	13 th	n=4 (40%)
Lacked proper credentials	9.00	14 th	n=1 (10%)
Lack of for professional development	13.00	15 th	n=1 (10%)
Felt unprepared	14.00	16 th	n=1 (10%)

Variables Identified as not Impacting their Decision	Frequency
Health-related	n=0

Table 4: 2008 Group Ratings (*) indicates that 50% of participants selected the variable

Variable (2008 Group N=16) 89% Response Rate	Mean	Rank	Frequency
Other (identified a specific variable)	1.40	1 st	n=5 (31%)
Was not offered a contract for 08-09	2.00	2 nd	n=1 (6%)
*Limited administrative support	2.37	3 rd	n=8 (50%)
*Family/personal reason	2.91	4 th	n=11(69%)
Salary does not reflect effort	3.14	5 th	n=7 (44%)
Salary not competitive	3.83	6 th	n=6 (38%)
*Too many out-of-classroom expectations	4.12	7 th	n=8 (50%)
Discipline problems	4.43	8 th	n=7 (44%)
Lack of parent/community support	4.86	9 th	n=7 (44%)
Long commute	5.25	10 th	n=4 (25%)
Lack support from colleagues	6.33	11 th	n=3 (19%)
Lack of time and/or resources	6.50	12 th	n=4 (25%)
Change of heart about teaching	6.80	13 th	n=5 (31%)
Health-related	7.50	14 th	n=2 (13%)
Lack of for professional development	8.50	15 th	n=2 (13%)
Lacked proper credentials	9.50	16 th	n=2 (13%)
Felt unprepared	10.50	17 th	n=2 (13%)

Table 5: 2007 Group Ratings (*) indicates that 50% of participants selected the variable

Variable (2007 Group N=14) 93% Response Rate	Mean	Rank	Frequency
*Family/personal reason	2.00	T1	n=8 (57%)
Was not offered a contract for 07-08	2.00	T1	n=1 (7%)
Discipline problems	2.50	3rd	n=4 (29%)
*Too many out-of-classroom expectations	2.87	4th	n=8 (57%)
Change of heart about teaching	3.66	5th	n=3 (21%)
*Other (identified a specific variable)	3.77	6th	n=9 (64%)
*Salary does not reflect effort	3.85	7th	n=7 (50%)
Long commute	4.00	8th	n=5 (36%)
Lack of time and/or resources	4.66	9th	n=3 (21%)
Salary not competitive	5.75	10th	n=4 (29%)
Limited administrative support	6.00	11th	n=1 (7%)
Lack of parent/community support	6.50	12th	n=2 (14%)
Felt unprepared	10.00	T13	n=1 (7%)
Health-related	10.00	T13	n=1 (7%)

Variables Identified as not Impacting their Decision	Frequency
Lack support from colleagues	n=0
Lack of for professional development	n=0
Lacked proper credentials	n=0

Table 6: 2006 Group Ratings (*) indicates that 50% of participants selected the variable

Variable (2006 Group N=11) 73% Response Rate	Mean	Frequency
Was not offered a contract for 06-07	1.00	n=2 (18%)
Other (identified a specific variable)	1.50	n=2 (18%)
*Family/personal reason	2.00	n=6 (55%)
*Too many out-of-classroom expectations	2.44	n=7 (64%)
Salary does not reflect effort	2.50	n=4 (36%)
Discipline problems	4.20	n=5 (45%)
Salary not competitive	4.50	n=4 (36%)
Limited administrative support	4.75	n=4 (36%)
Lack of time and/or resources	5.20	n=5 (45%)
Long commute	6.25	n=4 (36%)
Change of heart about teaching	6.33	n=3 (27%)
Lack of parent/community support	6.75	n=4 (36%)
Felt unprepared	7.25	n=4 (36%)
Lack support from colleagues	9.00	n=2 (18%)
Lack of for professional development	11.00	n=2 (18%)

Variables Identified as not Impacting their Decision	Frequency
Health-related	n=0
Lacked proper credentials	n=0

It is important to note again in Table 3, that these rankings and means can be skewed, due to the nominal amount of respondents (n=10). It is also important that respondents had the opportunity to select variables as “Not Applicable” if that variable had no bearing on their decision to leave the profession that is why you see the differences in frequencies. As a researcher, it is important that all of the 17 identified variables be reviewed to better understand how the respondents reacted to each item. The variables that need the most attention are the ones with the greatest frequency.

Frequencies are more important than the overall mean to truly evaluate how these variables impact the decision to leave the profession. We are now beginning to see what variables are truly impacting the decision making process for these individuals. Table 7 illustrates the frequency a variable was selected by the participants over the four year period (2006-2009). Family/personal reasons, too many out-of-classroom expectations, salary does not reflect effort, lack of administrative support, and “other” variables appear to rise to the top based upon frequency rates. In Table 7, there are natural breaks in the data, which are highlighted by a line. These natural breaks aids in the digestion of the data. Each line could illustrate the difference in high, moderate, and low priorities for state leadership to address in helping to conquer retention rates in the state. It is imperative that state leadership try to assist with these variables to help eliminate these items as reasons for leaving the profession. On a positive note, the respondents indicated that professional development activities, support from colleagues, and the lack of proper credentials had little impact on their decision to leave the profession as a comparative group.

Table 7: Frequency Comparative Analysis among Groups

Variable (Combined Group N=51)	Frequency	Rank	Percentage
Family/personal reason	29	1 st	57%
Too many out-of-classroom expectations	28	2 nd	55%
Salary does not reflect effort	22	T 3 rd	43%
Other (identified a specific variable)	22	T 3 rd	43%
Limited administrative support	20	5 th	39%
Discipline problems	18	T 6 th	35%
Salary not competitive	18	T 6 th	35%
Long commute	16	T 8 th	31%
Lack of parent/community support	16	T 8 th	31%
Lack of time and/or resources	15	10 th	29%
Change of heart about teaching	14	11 th	27%
Felt unprepared	8	T 12 th	16%
Lack support from colleagues	8	T 12 th	16%
Was not offered a contract for 08-09	8	T 12 th	16%
Lack of for professional development	5	15 th	10%
Health-related	3	T 16 th	6%
Lacked proper credentials	3	T 16 th	6%