Summary of Findings and Recommendations:

Cognitive Testing of Proposed Items for the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey (BTLS)

Submitted to:
United States Census Bureau

August 2009

Table of Contents

Background

In the spring of 2009, the Census Bureau contracted with ICF Macro, a research and evaluation company in Calverton, MD, to plan and carry out a series of cognitive interviews with current teachers in K-12 schools. The purpose of these interviews was to gather feedback on a number of proposed questions for the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey (BTLS), which is a national survey that will be administered for the first time during the 2009-10 school year by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Census Bureau.

This report is a summary of the feedback that ICF Macro received from participants, as well as the methodology that was used in conducting the interviews. The report also provides Macro's recommendations for revisions to the proposed BTLS items.

Summary of Methodology

Research Timeline

The interviews were carried out in two separate phases. The first phase focused on testing a set of 17 items with teachers who had returned to teaching after a short time away from the field. The second phase tested an additional 9 items with teachers who had either a) served as a mentor teacher or b) taught at a school affected by a reduction-in-force.

The first phase of interviews began in May, and findings were presented to NCES and the Census Bureau on June 16. The second phase began in early June, and ICF Macro presented findings on July 7.

Description of Recruiting Process

To facilitate recruitment of participants, the Census Bureau provided Macro with a list of schools that were included in the sampling frame of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) but had not been sampled for SASS.   Macro then created a stratified random list of schools by region and grade level, and researched the names and emails of five teachers in each school using the school's online website. If a school did not have a website, the school was removed from the sample and replaced with another school in the region. The five teachers in each school were then sent an email which indicated that they should forward the message to any colleagues that they believed might be qualified to participate in the study. To qualify for the first phase of the study, teachers had to be current K-12 teachers, have left teaching for three years or less, and returned to teaching within the last four years.[1] To qualify for the second phase, teachers had to be current K-12 teachers and have either a) served as a mentor teaching or b) taught at a school affected by a reduction-in-force.

In addition to using the list provided by the Census Bureau, email invitations were sent to an ICF Macro internal database of educators. The email sent to these participants also asked them to forward the message to colleagues who they thought might qualify for the study.

---

[1] The recruiting criteria were later updated to also require that participants have less than three years of teaching experience.

Description of Participants

During the first phase of research, ICF Macro conducted a total of 16 interviews with returning teachers. Seven of these teachers taught at the high school level, four at the middle school level, two at the elementary/middle level, and three at the elementary level. Five of the 16 teachers had been teaching for three years or less. Participants represented eight different states: California, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia.

During the second phase, ICF Macro conducted interviews with 12 additional teachers. Of these teachers, all but one had experience as a mentor teacher, and five had taught at a school that had experienced a reduction in force. Five taught at the high school level, one at the middle school level, and six at the elementary level. Eight different states were represented (California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia), as well as the District of Columbia.

Structure of Interviews

Each interview was approximately 45 minutes long and was conducted by phone. Prior to each interview, the participant was emailed a copy of the proposed items and told to print them out but not to read them. During the interview, participants were asked to answer each of the proposed items as they normally would if they were answering a paper survey. As they answered each item, they were asked to "think aloud"—that is, to describe out loud what they were thinking as they read and answered the question and point out anything that surprised or confused them. After the participant had answered a set of items, the interviewer would then ask a series of follow-up questions or probes, as well as asking for clarification of responses as necessary. If a skip pattern caused a participant not to respond to an item, he or she was later asked to review the item and provide feedback. A copy of the protocols for the two phases of the study are included as Appendices A and B to this report.

Summary of Participant Feedback and Recommendations

The following section of this report summarizes the results of this study. For each item, we provide the wording of the question being tested, a list of relevant findings, and then our recommendations for how the item could be improved.

First Phase of Testing
(May/June 2009)

ITEM 1

You were teaching in [*school*] during the 2007-08 school year. Did you return to that school?

    __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 2.
    __ **No** → GO TO Item 3 below.

Findings:

- All respondents thought this question was clear.

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

ITEM 2

Have there been any changes in your current school, such as a change in name, location, or grades offered?
　　　__ **Yes** → GO TO Item 5 below.
　　　__ **No** → GO TO Item 5 below.

Findings:

- Almost all the teachers who answered this question thought it was clear. One teacher hesitated in answering this question as she wasn't sure if the question referred to a change in grade levels or in the grading system. She eventually decided the question referred to grade levels.

- Only one teacher answered this question incorrectly. She responded "Yes" to this question even though there had been no changes in grade levels offered at her school. She incorrectly thought the question was asking if there had been any changes in the grade levels <u>she taught</u>.

Recommendations:

- Change the word "grades" to "grade levels"—"*Have there been any changes in your current school, such as a change in name, location, or grade **levels** offered?*"

ITEM 3

Are you currently teaching in the SAME STATE as you were during the 2007-08 school year?
        __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 4.
        __ **No** → GO TO Item 4.

Findings:

- All respondents thought this question was clear.

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

ITEM 4

Which of the following describes the change from your 2007-08 school to your current school? (For this question, all charter and Bureau of Indian Education [BIE]-funded schools are considered public schools.)

Mark (X) only one box.

__ Moved from a PUBLIC school to another PUBLIC school in the SAME SCHOOL DISTRICT.

__ Moved from a PUBLIC school to another PUBLIC school in a DIFFERENT SCHOOL DISTRICT.

__ Moved from a PUBLIC school to a PRIVATE school.

Findings:

- Almost all respondents who answered this question thought it was clear. One teacher was confused about whether a charter school was a public school, and did not see the sentence in the question that addressed this issue. As this teacher had never taught at a charter school, her misunderstanding did not affect the accuracy of her response.

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

ITEM 5

Indicate the level of importance EACH of the following played in your decision to return to the position of a pre-K-12 teacher.
Mark (X) one box on each line.
The following scale is used for the items below: 1) Not at all important, 2) Slightly important, 3) Somewhat important, 4) Very important, 5) Extremely important

If any of the reasons for returning to teaching do not apply to you, mark "1" as not at all important.

I returned to the position of a pre-K-12 teacher:

	1	2	3	4	5
a. Because I had a change in residence or wanted to take a job more convenient to my home.					
b. Because my maternity/paternity leave ended or I no longer needed to stay at home with my children.					
c. Because my health or the health of a loved one no longer required me to be out of teaching.					
d. Because I decided I was not ready to stop teaching.					
e. Because I passed the required test(s).					
f. Because I was offered the grade level or subject area that I wished to teach.					
g. Because I needed the income to meet my financial obligations (e.g., rent, loans, credit card payments).					
h. Because my current school or district offered at least partial forgiveness of my student loans.					
i. Because I needed the health benefits.					
j. Because I wanted the retirement package.					
k. Because I could continue receiving my teacher retirement benefits.					
l. Because I was given a housing incentive by my current school.					
m. Because I wanted a higher standard of living than my household income provided.					
n. Because I wanted job security.					
o. Because I decided to pursue a pre-K-12 teaching position as a career.					
p. Because I completed the coursework I was pursuing.					
q. Because a part-time teaching assignment became available.					
r. Because I liked the school schedule/calendar.					
s. Because I obtained a position in a school with desirable characteristics.					
t. Because I was able to maintain my seniority.					
Other factors					
u. Because of other factors not included in previous items a – t → *please specify:*					

Findings:

Instructions and Layout

- The instructions for the question asked respondents to select "1" if a particular reason did not apply to them. However, two respondents commented that assigning the value of "1" to two different values ("not at all important", and "does not apply") seemed inappropriate.

Individual Items

- *Part (d):* Respondents thought this question meant that an individual took a break from teaching and now wanted to return.

- *Part (i):* Respondents understood this item, and did not feel it was too specific. They felt that other important teacher benefits, including retirement benefits and the school schedule/calendar, were already covered in other parts of the question.

- *Part (j):* All respondents understood that this question referred to the desirability of the state's retirement package for future use.

- *Part (k):* Only half (8) of all respondents understood that this question was intended for teachers who officially retire but then come back to teach in some capacity. Four respondents were not currently receiving retirement benefits, but provided a rating for this factor greater than 1 (which was clearly not what the item intended).

- *Part (l):* All respondents understood the term "housing incentive."

- *Part (m):* Respondents understood this question to mean that they wanted additional income above and beyond what they require to meet their basic financial obligations. They saw this part of the question as being distinct from part (g).

- *Part (o):* Respondents thought this question referred to an individual who left teaching to pursue another career, who now decided to return to teaching to pursue it as a career.

- *Part (r):* Respondents had no difficulty with this item. When asked what they thought were the aspects of the school schedule/calendar being referenced, they mentioned the time off during school breaks and the early end to the school day.

- *Part (s):* Respondents had no difficulty with this item. When asked what characteristics they thought of when they saw the term "desirable characteristics," they mentioned the location, type of students, and characteristics of their administration, colleagues, and students' parents.

- *Part (t):* Respondents had different ideas of what "seniority" meant. About half of all respondents stated that seniority was related to pay scale, while the other half associated seniority with privileges given to teachers who have been at a school for a long time (e.g., selecting their own class).

- It was not clear that participants distinguished between parts (d) and (o) when answering the question. In 9 of 16 interviews, respondents gave the same ratings to parts (d) and (o). The situations of these 9 respondents are as follows:

  Had always planned to return

  - This respondent returned to teaching after taking sick leave. She rated both (d) and (o) as 5. Her most important reason for returning was listed as (i).

  - This respondent always planned to return to teaching when your youngest child started kindergarten. She rated both (d) and (o) as 5. Her most important reason for returning was listed as (b).

  - This respondent planned to return to teaching after completing her Master's. She rated both (d) and (o) as 5. She rated her most important reason for returning as (o).

  - This respondent returned to teaching as had she finished her graduate work and wanted to get additional teaching experience so she could move into administration. She rated both (d) and (o) as 4. Her most important reason for returning was listed as (u) (in which she explained exactly why she wanted teaching experience).

  Changed mind about leaving teaching

  - This respondent left teaching to go back to her work as a magazine editor. While there she realized she missed teaching. She rated both (d) and (o) as 5. Her most important reason for returning was listed as (d).

  - This respondent left teaching to be in politics, but returned to teaching because she felt "dead-ended." She rated both (d) and (o) as 4. Her most important reason for returning was listed as (d).

  - This respondent returned to teaching after trying to pursue another career. He rated both (d) and (o) as 4. He rated his most important reason for returning as (r). When probed, he said he would change his answer to (d).

  Other reasons

  - This respondent moved to be closer to family and teaching was the first job she was able to get. She rated both (d) and (o) as 2. Her most important reason for returning was listed as (g).

  - This respondent returned when she was able to get the position she wanted. She rated both (d) and (o) as 5. She rated her most important reason for returning as (o).

- One respondent had left teaching to become an actuary, but then decided to go back to teaching. He rated (d) as 5, (o) as 4, and listed his most important reason for returning as (d).

Recommendations:

- Modify part (k) so that participants understand this question applies only if they are currently receiving teacher retirement benefits.

- Consider adding a "Not Applicable" column to reduce confusion among teachers if items do not apply to them.

- In Macro's briefing on this research, NCES indicated that the part (d) was intended to refer to teachers who had retired and were coming back, while part (o) was intended to refer to teachers who were returning to teaching from another career. This distinction was clearly not evident to the respondents, many of whom answered (d) even though they had not retired. Therefore, parts (d) and (o) should be clarified so that their meanings are distinct and clear to respondents.

ITEM 6

From the items above, which do you consider the one most important reason in your decision to return to the position of a pre-K-12 teacher?
    Enter the letter from Item 5 above.
 	
    |___| Most important

Findings:

- In general, respondents did not have any difficulty responding to this question.

- Prior to beginning the interview, each respondent was asked to describe their primary reason for returning to teaching. The purpose of this question was to determine if respondents' answers to Item 6 would be consistent with the answer given at the start of the interview. In all but two interviews, respondents either readily selected reasons for returning to teaching from the list that closely matched their true reason, or entered their own reason for returning using the "other" option.

- One of the two respondents whose responses appeared inconsistent said at the beginning of the interview her primary reason for returning was because her health had improved (which would seem to most closely match option (c)). For Item 6, however, she selected option (i): "*Because I needed the health benefits.*" When asked about this inconsistency, she indicated that to her both items meant the same thing.

- The other respondent stated at the beginning of the interview that she returned to teaching because she decided that she missed it. When answering Item 6, however, she initially chose option (g): "*Because I needed the income to meet my financial obligations (e.g., rent, loans, credit card payments).*" She commented that this was the primary purpose of any job, since if she had no need for money she would not work. After thinking about it, however, she decided that this was not in the spirit of what Item 6 was asking, and she changed her answer to option (d): "*Because I wasn't ready to stop teaching,*" which was more consistent with her explanation at the beginning of the interview.

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

ITEM 7

Since December 31, 2008, have you completed a teacher preparation program leading to your initial teaching certificate?
        __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 8.
        __ **No** → GO TO Item 9 below.

Findings

- Most respondents found this question to be clear. There was no confusion about the definition of a "teacher preparation program" or an "initial teaching certificate."

- Three respondents were initially confused as to whether the word "since" was to be interpreted as <u>prior to</u> December 31, 2008 or <u>after</u> December 31, 2008. After some thought these three respondents correctly concluded that the questions should be interpreted as <u>after</u> December 31, 2008.

- One respondent who completed her teacher preparation program since December 31, 2008 but did not yet have an initial teaching certificate answered "Yes" to this question.

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

ITEM 8
Was the teacher preparation program a part of an alternative certification program? *(An alternative certification program is a program that was designed to expedite the transition of non-teachers to a teaching career, for example, a state, district, or university alternative certification program, Teach For America, or National Teacher Project).* __ **Yes** __ **No**

Findings:

- Almost all respondents found this question clear. Two respondents obtained their certification through alternative means (Teach for America and Maryland's Resident Teacher Certificate program) and found the definition to accurately reflect their own understanding.

- After reading the definition, only one respondent remained unclear as to what an alternative certification program entailed. This respondent thought an alternative certification program was one that prepared you for teaching through online courses.

- One respondent who possessed a Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) commented that in some states the MAT is considered an alternative program, while in other states it is considered a traditional program. She classified her program as traditional.

Recommendations:

- If appropriate, consider adding language to this question that clarifies how MAT programs should be classified.

ITEM 9

Since December 31, 2008 have you renewed your teaching certificate?
> __ **Yes**
> __ **No**

Findings:

- Most respondents were able to answer whether they had renewed their teaching certificate since December 31, 2008. Two respondents again struggled to determine whether "since" meant prior to or after December 31, 2008. Again, these respondents eventually correctly concluded that the question should be interpreted as after December 31, 2008.

- Three respondents that were fairly new to teaching were not sure what it meant to "renew their certificate." Since these respondents were not yet required to renew their certificates, this did not affect the accuracy of their responses.

- One respondent had moved to a new state, and therefore had to obtain a new teaching certificate for that state. She answered "no" to this question, because she did not consider this to be "renewing" her certificate.

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

ITEM 10

Since December 31, 2008 have you received an endorsement to your certificate?
  __ **Yes**
  __ **No**

Findings:

- Four respondents did not understand the meaning of the word "endorsement." Of these four:

  o One left the question blank because he did not know what it meant.

  o One responded "No," which turned out to be the correct answer.

  o One responded "Yes," but after the definition of "endorsement" was explained to her it became clear that she actually did not have one. She stated that she had initially answered "Yes" because she had completed her Masters and had moved up on the pay scale.

  o The final respondent responded "No." She was initially certified to teach multi-categorical special education grades 6-8. Due to changes in her state's criteria for "highly qualified" teachers, she was required to re-certify to teach grades K-12. She completed the requirements to become highly qualified after December 31, 2008.

- One respondent commented that she had <u>lost</u> some of her endorsements. This teacher was initially certified to teach in grades K-6. When she changed states and needed to become re-certified, she was only able to obtain certification for grades K-3.

Recommendations:

- Provide a definition for "endorsement" as part of this question.

ITEM 11

Since December 31, 2008 have you completed a master's degree, educational specialist or professional diploma, doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D), or professional degree (M.D., J.D., D.D.S.)?

        __ Yes → GO TO Item 12.
        __ No → GO TO Item 13.

Findings:

- All respondents thought this question was clear.

Recommendations:

- For consistency consider inserting the word "degree" after the word "educational specialist." Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) programs are generally considered to be degree programs.

ITEM 12
Please specify the field of the master's degree, educational specialist or professional diploma, doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D), or professional degree (M.D., J.D., D.D.S.) that you have completed.   **Record one of the assignment field codes and names listed in Table 1 on page 7.* |___|

Note: The list of field codes and names that was given to participants is provided on the following page.

Findings:

- Several respondents with Master's degrees experienced difficulty identifying the field of their degree from the table. One respondent commented that the list more closely resembled a Bachelor's degree list than a Master's degree list, and that the majority of educational fields were not reflected.

- Several respondents found themselves trying to combine degrees, such as Administration (131) and Policy Studies (134).

- One respondent had multiple graduate degrees, and was unsure which to use in his response to Item 12.

Recommendations:

- Replace the current degree list with a Master's degree list that includes programs with concentrations in areas such as Administration and Supervision, and Curriculum and Instruction. This list should also include Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) and Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degrees.

- For consistency consider inserting the word "degree" after the word "educational specialist." Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) programs are generally considered degree programs.

Table 1. Major Fields of Study Codes
General Education

Elementary Education

101   Early childhood or Pre-K, general
102   Elementary grades, general

Secondary Education

103   Middle grades, general
104   Secondary grades, general

Special Education

110   Special education, any

Other Education

131   Administration
132   Counseling and guidance
133   Educational psychology
134   Policy studies
135   School psychology
136   Other non-subject matter specific education

Subject Matter Specific

Arts and Music

141   Art or arts or crafts
142   Art history
143   Dance
144   Drama or theater
145   Music

English and Language Arts

151   Communications
152   Composition
153   English
154   Journalism
155   Language arts
156   Linguistics
157   Literature or literary criticism
158   Reading
159   Speech

English as a Second Language

160   ESL or bilingual education: general
161   ESL or bilingual education: Spanish
162   ESL or bilingual education: other languages

Foreign Languages

171   French
172   German
173   Latin
174   Spanish
175   Other foreign language

Health Education

181   Health education
182   Physical education

Mathematics and Computer Science

190   Mathematics
197   Computer science

Natural Sciences

211   Biology or life sciences
212   Chemistry
213   Earth sciences
214   Engineering
217   Physics
218   Other natural sciences

Social Sciences

221   Anthropology
222   Area or ethnic studies (excluding Native American Studies)
223   Criminal justice
224   Cultural studies
225   Economics
226   Geography
227   Government or civics
228   History
229   International studies
230   Law
231   Native American studies
232   Political science
233   Psychology
234   Sociology
235   Other social sciences

Vocational, Career, or Technical Education

241   Agriculture and natural resources
242   Business management
243   Business support
244   Marketing and distribution
245   Health occupations
246   Construction trades, engineering, or science technologies (including CADD and drafting)
247   Mechanics and repair
249   Manufacturing or precision production (electronics, metalwork, textiles, etc.)
250   Communications and related technologies (including design, graphics or printing; not including computer science)
253   Personal and public services (including culinary arts, cosmetology, child care, social work, protective services, custodial services, and interior design)
254   Family and consumer sciences education
255   Industrial arts or technology education
256   Other vocational, career, or technical education

Miscellaneous

261   Architecture
263   Humanities or liberal studies
264   Library or information science
265   Military science or ROTC
266   Philosophy
267   Religious studies, theology or divinity

Other

268   Other

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

ITEM 13

This school year (2008-09) have you been assigned as a mentor to other teachers in your school or district?

        __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 14.

        __ **No** → GO TO Item 17.

</div>

Findings:

- Of all the respondents who answered this question, one was currently a mentor and two were former mentors.

- Almost all respondents assumed that the question referred to being formally assigned as a mentor. Only one thought the question could also refer to being an unofficial mentor. As this respondent did not operate in either capacity, this incorrect assumption did not affect the accuracy of his response.

- Two respondents who worked with student teachers wondered whether the question included this type of mentoring. They eventually decided it did not, and responded "No."

Recommendations:

- Consider modifying the question to read "…*formally* assigned as a mentor…" if this is the intent of the question.

ITEM 14
How many teachers are you mentoring in your school or district this year?
|__|

Findings:

- Three respondents provided answers to this question—one who was currently a mentor and two who were former mentors. None had any difficulty answering the question.

- One respondent, in addition to mentoring one teacher in her school, was a part of a district-wide mentoring program through which she works with 20-25 teachers. She did not consider her district-wide role when answering this question, and responded "1."

- Respondents who were not mentors were also asked to review this question. One respondent was not sure if the question referred to the current calendar year, or the current school year. Two respondents who had never been mentors thought that mentors might have difficulty reporting the number of mentees with whom they worked—although as noted above, this did not appear to be the case.

Recommendations:

- Consider modifying the question to read "…this school year."

ITEM 15

Were you given any training related to mentoring by your school or district prior to becoming a mentor?
  __ **Yes**
  __ **No**

Findings:

- The respondent who currently serves as a mentor responded "Yes" to this question. However, she commented that she would have wanted to be able to provide more detail about her experience, rather than just answering "Yes" or "No." She recommended the following response options: "formal mentor training program," "informal mentor training," and "no training."

- One of the former mentors who answered this question indicated that she received training <u>while</u> she served as a mentor, but not prior to becoming a mentor. Therefore, she would have answered "No" to Item 15.

Recommendations:

- Consider modifying the question so that it also captures information about training that is provided <u>while</u> teachers are serving as mentors, not only before.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;">

ITEM 16

To what extent do you feel prepared to be a mentor?
    __ Not at all prepared
    __ Somewhat prepared
    __ Well prepared
    __ Very well prepared

</div>

Findings:

- The three respondents who were current or former mentors had no difficulty rating their level of preparedness on this scale. The current mentor felt "somewhat prepared", while the former mentors felt "well prepared" and "very well prepared."

- One respondent commented that there were two distinct aspects to mentoring—content (mentoring on how to teach a specific subject) and process (mentoring on how to handle other teacher issues, such as classroom management and time management). This respondent indicated that it would be possible to have different levels of preparedness in these two aspects, and therefore felt that perhaps the question should ask about both separately.

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

ITEM 17

For your main teaching assignment have you:
Mark (X) one box on each line.
(Please answer yes or no to the following):

		Y	N
a.	Received an in-state teaching certificate in this field		
b.	Received an in-state teaching certificate for the grades you teach		
c.	Received a National Board Certification in this field		
d.	Earned a bachelor's or higher degree in this field		
e.	Taken and passed a state exam showing subject competency in this field		
f.	Taken and passed the HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) in this field		

Findings:

- Three respondents initially thought that the question was asking about a specific time frame (either "this school year" or "since December 31, 2008"). This was likely because previous questions were limited to specific time frames. All three participants eventually understood that this question did not include a time frame, so this misconception did not impact their responses to the questions.

- *Part (a)*: Three participants were unsure what to consider their "field" for the purposes of this question. One, who possessed a certificate to teach in elementary grades but specifically taught math, was not sure whether her "field" was elementary education or mathematics (she did not possess any certification in mathematics). She eventually decided to respond to the questions using elementary education as her field. Another reported that she had certification in both social studies and in elementary education but was unsure which of the two was her "field" (she eventually answered the question based on her certification in social studies). A third teacher was also initially unsure of her "field," but eventually concluded that she was certified to teach kindergarten.

- *Part (b)*: Respondents had no difficulties with this question.

- *Part (c):* National Board Certification was familiar to all respondents.

- *Part (d):* Respondents had no difficulties with this question.

- *Part (e):* Two respondents were unsure of whether they had taken a state exam showing subject competency in their field. These respondents had taken the PRAXIS content exam, but they were not sure if this was also considered the state test. Both answered "No" to this question. One respondent who had taken the PRAXIS test did respond "Yes" to this question, because he knew his state had adopted the PRAXIS as the state exam.

- *Part (f):* Only one of 16 respondents had ever heard of HOUSSE. This participant had recently taken and passed the HOUSSE in her state.

Recommendations:

- While two interview participants had difficulty answering part (a) because they were unsure what to consider their "field," this may have been in part because no context was provided for this item. If it is preceded by other items that ask respondents to specify their field, this confusion should be reduced. This potential confusion may be more frequent among elementary school teachers.

- Consider clarifying whether PRAXIS II content exams should be considered "state exams."

Second Phase of Testing
(June/July 2009)

ITEM 1

What was the primary reason for this reduction in force?
- ☐ **Budget cuts or budget shortfalls**
- ☐ **Reduced pupil enrollment**
- ☐ **School and/or district merger**
- ☐ **Reason unknown**
- ☐ **Other reason – please specify** _____

Findings:

- Of the twelve teachers interviewed, three had failed to have their contract renewed due to a reduction in force. However, all remaining teachers had taught in schools affected by a reduction in force.

- Seven teachers gave the first response to this question ("budget cuts or budget shortfalls"), while five gave the second response ("reduced pupil enrollment").

- Although all teachers were knowledgeable about the reasons for the reduction in force at their school, several said they could not answered confidently as to which was the <u>primary</u> reason. In fact, about half reported that they would like to be able to select more than one option from the list as their reduction in force was due to a combination of several factors. One specifically noted that since budget cuts are often due to reduced pupil enrollment, the first two response options will often overlap.

- Teachers were not able to identify any additional reasons for reductions in force that should be included in the list.

Recommendations:

- As teachers may not know the primary reason for the reduction in force, consider allowing respondents to check all responses that apply to their situation.

ITEM 2

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

		Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) My principal supports me in classroom management issues.		☐	☐	☐	☐
b) My principal supports me in my interactions with parents.		☐	☐	☐	☐
c) My principal is readily available to me.		☐	☐	☐	☐
d) My principal listens to my concerns.		☐	☐	☐	☐
e) My principal takes time to visit my classroom.		☐	☐	☐	☐
f) My principal supports my professional development.		☐	☐	☐	☐
g) My principal provides me with useful feedback about my teaching.		☐	☐	☐	☐
h) My principal has respect for teachers.		☐	☐	☐	☐
i) My principal has respect for students.		☐	☐	☐	☐
j) My principal treats teachers fairly.		☐	☐	☐	☐
k) My principal encourages collaboration among teachers.		☐	☐	☐	☐
l) My principal supports student teachers in my school.	☐ There are no student teachers in my school	☐	☐	☐	☐
m) My principal is readily available to student teachers in my school.	☐ There are no student teachers in my school	☐	☐	☐	☐

Findings:

Specific Items:

- *Part (a):* Two respondents had difficulty answering this part of the question because although their principal is generally helpful, they do not need support in classroom management issues. One commented that disagreeing with this statement seemed to be a negative statement about the principal, when in fact it could mean that no support is necessary.

- *Part (c):* Two teachers had difficulty answering this question. One teacher was unsure how to interpret the question as her principal is readily available by email, but face-to-face contact is minimal. The other teacher thought the question was ambiguous as her principal is frequently required to be out of the building and this teacher wasn't clear if the question seemed to suggest that the principal's lack of availability was due to him neglecting his responsibilities.

- *Part (e):* Teachers had differing interpretations of what "takes time to visit my classroom meant." Some felt that a brief visit lasting a few minutes would qualify, while others only counted incidents when the principal observed an entire class.

- *Part (e):* Two principals commented that at their school it is not the principal's job to visit classrooms; they both selected "somewhat agree."

- *Part (f)*: One teacher was unsure of how to answer this question as her principal supports teachers' required professional development, but not necessarily their preferred professional development (e.g. enrolling in a graduate program). She indicated that her principal "checked the box" with respect to professional development, but was not particularly helpful. This teacher eventually selected "somewhat agree."

- *Part (g)*: Two teachers stated that as it was not the principal's job to provide feedback (it is her supervisor's responsibility). One said that she would have preferred a "not applicable" option, because disagreeing with this statement seemed to reflect badly on her principal. Both respondents eventually selected "somewhat disagree."

- *Part (h):* Three teachers thought the term "respect" was too broad. Two thought a distinction should be made between personal and professional respect for teachers, while one commented that there were many different levels of respect, such as listening to teachers' concerns vs. seeking teacher input in decision making.

- *Parts (l) and (m):* Teachers were split almost evenly on whether they thought respondents to this survey would know the extent to which their principal supported or was available to student teachers.

Overall:

- One respondent questioned the efficacy of having "somewhat agree" and "somewhat disagree" options instead of "agree" and "disagree." She would have preferred the latter response choices.

- When asked what additional aspects of a principal's job could be added to the list, teachers suggested:
  - Principal's support for new teachers.
  - Principal's support or enforcement of school-wide discipline.

- Principal's interaction with the community.
- Principal's effective use of teacher time (especially with regard to scheduling and planning meetings).

Recommendations:

- Reword parts (a) and (b) as "My principal *is able to provide me with* support in classroom management issues/in my interactions with parents."

- It is likely that in larger schools principals delegate to other administrators the job of visiting classrooms and providing feedback. Consider including a "not applicable" column for parts (e) and (g).

- Consider including a "don't know" column in parts (l) and (m).

ITEM 3
How satisfied are you with the principal at your current school?
☐ **Very satisfied**
☐ **Somewhat satisfied**
☐ **Somewhat dissatisfied**
☐ **Very dissatisfied**

Findings:

- Most teachers (9 of 12) had no difficulty responding to this question.

- Two teachers felt the question was ambiguous, because there were some things with which she was satisfied and some with which she was not. They indicated that they had to "average out" their opinions to select their responses (one ended up selecting "somewhat satisfied," while the other selected "somewhat dissatisfied").

- Another teacher reported that she always has a hard time answering these types of questions as she hates to give anyone a "bad review." She also expressed concern that a teacher might rate a principal poorly on the basis of one or two experiences.

- When asked what factors they considered in determining their level of satisfaction, teachers stated:

  o Respect for teachers (6 of 12)

  o Principal availability (5 of 12)

  o Support (5 of 12)

  o Leadership skills (2 of 12)

  o Student discipline (2 of 12)

Recommendations:

- No changes are necessary for this item.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

ITEM 4

Did you have input in choosing your mentee(s)?
- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

</div>

Findings:

- All teachers were either current mentors or had previously been mentors.

- Only one teacher reporting having had input in choosing their mentee(s). However, this may have been because several respondents were actually "mentors" for student teachers, not other faculty members at their school.

- Teachers were asked if in their general experience, mentor teachers had input in selecting their mentees. Almost all said that in their experience mentor teachers did not have input, although again several may have been thinking of how their school treats student teachers, not new teachers.

- When asked what type of "input" they thought the question referenced, teachers' responses generally fell into two categories:

  o   Having the ability to select a mentee from a group of mentees; or

  o   Having their opinions considered in the assignment of a mentee (i.e. being able to accept or reject the mentee they were assigned).

Recommendations:

- If the intent of the question matches respondents' interpretations of "input" as described above, no changes are necessary.

ITEM 5

Did your principal work with you to choose your mentee(s)?
- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

Findings:

- All but one respondent answered "No" to this question. The one who responded "Yes" later explained that despite her response, it was actually her Assistant Principal that worked with her, not the principal.

- Two teachers reported that usually there is some dialogue between principal and mentor teacher regarding mentees. The other ten participants indicated that in their experience, principals do not usually work with mentor teachers to choose their mentees.

- About half of the respondents said that it was someone else's job to select mentees, not their principal's. For example, the one respondent who indicated in Item 4 that they had input in choosing their mentee indicated that her principal was not involved at all in the process; it was handled by another member of her school's leadership team.

Recommendations:

- In a significant number of schools, the selection of mentees seems to be handled by someone other than the principal. Therefore, consider revisiting the question to determine whether the intent is to measure specifically whether respondents worked with the principal to choose their mentees, or whether they worked with anyone. If the intent is the latter, also consider whether Item 5 is redundant with Item 4.

ITEM 6

Has your principal discussed your mentoring relationship with you this school year?
- ☐ **Yes** → GO TO Item 7.
- ☐ **No** → GO TO Item 8.

Findings:

- Only two of twelve teachers responded affirmatively to this item. One of these teachers stated that her district requires principals to meet with mentors once a month.

- When asked to explain the phrase "discuss your mentoring relationship with you," teachers' responses fell into two categories:

  o Discussing how mentees were progressing; and

  o Discussing how the mentors themselves were managing their mentor responsibilities.

  Some teachers referenced both categories in their response while other teachers only referenced one of these categories.

- As with Item 5, several participants indicated that while they answered "No" to Item 6, they actually meet with some other staff member other than the principal.

Recommendations:

- Consider clarifying the item as to which of the two types of discussions described above should be considered. Discussions about the progress of mentees and discussions about the progress of the mentor relationship itself are very different, and perhaps their frequency should not be measured through the same question.

- As with Item 5, consider revisiting the question to determine whether the intent is to measure specifically whether respondents had discussions with <u>the principal</u> specifically, or whether they had these discussions with <u>anyone</u>.

ITEM 7

How often does your principal discuss your mentoring relationship with you?
- ☐ **At least once a week**
- ☐ **Once or twice a month**
- ☐ **A few times a year**

Findings:

- All teachers indicated that this question was clear.

- Of the two teachers who answered this question, one responded "once or twice a month", and the other responded "a few times a year". As noted above, one teacher stated that monthly meetings between principals and mentors are required by her district.

Recommendations:

- No changes are required for this item—although any changes to Item 6 (such as changing the item to address all administrators rather than the principal specifically) should obviously be carried through to Item 7 as well.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                  ITEM 8                                       │
│                                                                               │
│  To what extent do you agree with the following statement?                    │
│                                                                               │
│  Outside my school, I have a strong support system (e.g. family, close        │
│  friends, neighbors).                                                         │
│                                                                               │
│     ☐  Strongly agree                                                         │
│     ☐  Somewhat agree                                                         │
│     ☐  Somewhat disagree                                                      │
│     ☐  Strongly disagree                                                      │
│                                                                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Findings:

- Eleven teachers strongly agreed with the statement, while one teacher somewhat agreed. The teacher that somewhat agreed stated that she would have preferred to have the option to "agree."

- Three teachers commented that the term "support" was too broad and could refer to personal or professional support. Two of the three teachers eventually decided the question referenced professional support, while the other teacher decided the question referenced personal support.

- When asked what was meant by the phrase "a strong support system," most teachers' responses generally included statements referring to having close family and friends they can rely on. However, three actually referenced sources of support within their schools; two teachers considered communication and cooperation with their colleagues, and another thought of support she had received from her school system in her role as a mentor.

Recommendations:

- If appropriate, clarify the question to emphasize that respondents should only reference non-school-based support systems.

- Revisit the intent of the question, and consider whether there is a more direct or appropriate way of phrasing the question. For example, if the intent is to measure teachers' ability to deal with job-related stress, sources of support within their school may well be important to consider, and should not be excluded.

ITEM 9

During this school year, did you or do you …
- ☐ **a) Coach a sport?**
- ☐ **b) Sponsor any student groups, clubs, or organizations?**
- ☐ **c) Serve as a department lead or chair?**
- ☐ **d) Serve as a curriculum specialist?**
- ☐ **e) Serve on a school-wide or district-wide committee or task force?**
- ☐ **f) Serve as a consultant or coach in a particular subject?**
- ☐ **g) Serve as a mentor coordinator?**
- ☐ **h) Have a teacher union leadership position?**
- ☐ **i) Present at a conference?**
- ☐ **j) Participate in any other leadership activity?** *Specify***: _____**

Findings:

Specific Items

- *Part (d):* Only one of the 12 respondents reported that the title of *curriculum specialist* was used at their school. One teacher stated, however, that this term was used at the district level and it was given to the Associate Superintendent. In general teachers had two concepts of the role of a "curriculum specialist":
  - A curriculum writer or developer; or
  - A curriculum content expert or resource person who provides teacher support.

  One teacher indicated that all teachers in her school conduct curriculum mapping, which essentially makes them an expert. She therefore considered herself a curriculum specialist and checked this item in the list. Another teacher who checked this item stated that she served on a curriculum committee for one subject.

  Titles that teachers thought were similar were:
  - *Curriculum Committee Member*. In one district this is a paid summer position and in another district this is a rotating responsibility.
  - *Curriculum and Administration Dean*. This is a district level position.
  - *Curriculum Facilitator*. This is a school level position where the Facilitator visits classrooms and models lessons (one per school).
  - *Academic Coach*
  - *Associate Superintendent*

- *Part (f):* The title of *consultant* is not used in any school system represented by the teachers interviewed. One respondent indicated that she serves as a consultant in her school, because she often provides informal feedback to younger teachers.

- *Part (f):* The title of *coach* is more frequently used. One teacher stated that her school has a literacy coach, and one teacher stated her school has an academic coach. For all other teachers the concept of a coach varied. Teachers' responses are summarized below:
    - The department head or chair is the coach as he/she serves as the content area expert (no one is just a coach) (2 teachers).
    - A coach is someone knowledgeable about content, but this position doesn't formally exist.
    - A tutor--someone who stays after school to work with students.
    - We only have a graduation coach to make sure students don't drop out.
    - We have athletic coaches and coaches for after school activities such as a spelling bee coach.
    - Mentors for new teachers can be sometimes thought of as coaches.

- *Part (g):* Four teachers stated that the term *mentor coordinator* was used in their school and/or district. Other teachers stated that although someone acted in the role of a mentor coordinator, they did not have a title; this was just considered an additional responsibility. Whether or not they used this particular title in their school, all participants seemed to understand what was meant by this phrase.

- *Part (h):* One teacher whose state did not allow teachers to unionize stated she felt this question should have a "not applicable" option.

- *Part (i):* A few teachers wondered whether presenting at large faculty meetings should also be included under this item. They all eventually decided it should not, but one stated that if she were completing the paper survey she would have probably checked this box as it would make her "look good." Two teachers were unsure whether this item included parent-teacher conferences. One of the two decided it did, and checked the box.

- *Part (i):* At least one participant misread this part of the question to mean that she was present at a conference (i.e., that she attended a conference).

- *Part (j):* Some participants checked part (j) and specified other leadership activities they had participated in. In some cases, however, it was unclear that these activities represented the type of leadership intended by the question; for example, one wrote that she was a member of a professional organization, and another said he was a tutor in his school.

Overall

- In general, respondents seemed to want to check as many boxes as possible, and in some cases tried to rationalize checking a box (such as the teacher who considered herself a "consultant" to other teachers.

- Some teachers were unsure of whether this question was restricted to school-level leadership positions or if district and state-wide leadership positions were to be included. Most teachers decided to include all levels of activity.

- When asked what additional activities they felt should be included in the list, teachers mentioned leadership teams and steering committees (such as a prom planning committee), although it appears these activities could be included under parts (b) or (e).

- One teacher did not understand that she should check all activities in the list that applied to her.

Recommendations:

- One general problem with this question is that some of the items relate to titles (such as "curriculum specialist" or "department chair" while other items related to roles (such as a presenter at a conference, or a sponsor of school groups). The intent could perhaps be clarified for respondents by separating these two types of questions into two different items.

- Modify the stem of the item so that teachers are aware they are to "check all that apply."

- If appropriate, consider modifying the stem of the item to reflect that teachers are to consider all school, district, or state-wide positions.

- Provide a description of the role of a curriculum specialist (part (d)) and consultant/coach (part (f)) to ensure that teachers interpret this item consistently.

- Reword part (i) as "Give a presentation at a professional conference".

Appendix A: Interview Protocol for First Phase of Interviews

NCES Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey
Interview Protocol

I. Introduction

"Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. My name is _____, and I work for ICF Macro, an independent company that has been hired by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct this study. We will be asking you to help revise and improve a questionnaire called the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey.

"During this interview I am going to ask you to read and answer a number of questionnaire items, one at a time. As you go through the questions, I would like you to explain what you are thinking out loud, so I can get a sense of your thought process as you answer each item. For example, if you are trying to decide what your answer is, please explain why you are unsure. If you have trouble understanding a question, or are confused by it, please be sure to explain that to us as well.

"The feedback you provide in this interview will be completely anonymous. In our report to the Department of Education, we will not connect anyone's comments with their name. The feedback that we collect will have a direct impact on the design of next year's survey, so please open and honest in your comments.

"Do you have any questions before we begin?"

Before you begin, ask them the screening question for their group just to confirm that they are qualified for the interview:

All

1. *Are you currently a K-12 classroom teacher?*

2. *Have you ever temporarily left the teaching profession?*

3. *What is the name of the school you were teaching in before you temporarily left the profession?*

4. *For how long were you away from the teaching profession?*

5. *What was your last year as a teacher before you temporarily left the profession?*

6. *What were you doing during your break from teaching?*

7. *In what year did you return to the profession?*

8. *Why did you decide to return to teaching?*

II. Questionnaire Items

Go through the appropriate questionnaire items with the participant. As the participant answers each item, record their answer on the sheet. If they hesitate while answering or reading a question at any point, ask them to explain why.

In each case, allow them to complete 1 series (there are 5 series) of questions before asking any follow-up or probe questions, or providing any clues as to the purpose or meaning of the question. The series are as follows:

- Series 1: Items 1 through 4
- Series 2: Items 5 and 6
- Series 3: Items 7 through 12
- Series 4: Items 13 through 16
- Series 5: Item 17

ITEM 1

You were teaching in [_school_] during the 2007-08 school year. Did you return to that school?
     __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 2.
     __ **No** → GO TO Item 3 below.

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Was there anything about this question that was unclear?

ITEM 2

Have there been any changes in your current school, such as a change in name, location, or grades offered?
        __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 5 below.
        __ **No** → GO TO Item 5 below.

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Do you think teachers who have returned to their old school could be expected to know if these changes occurred?

ITEM 3

Are you currently teaching in the SAME STATE as you were during the 2007-08 school year?
        __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 4.
        __ **No** → GO TO Item 4.

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Is there anything about this question that you think could be confusing or misinterpreted?

ITEM 4

Which of the following describes the change from your 2007-08 school to your current school? (For this question, all charter and Bureau of Indian Education [BIE]-funded schools are considered public schools.)

Mark (X) only one box.

__ Moved from a PUBLIC school to another PUBLIC school in the SAME SCHOOL DISTRICT.

__ Moved from a PUBLIC school to another PUBLIC school in a DIFFERENT SCHOOL DISTRICT.

__ Moved from a PUBLIC school to a PRIVATE school.

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Is there anything about this question that you think could be confusing or misinterpreted?

ITEM 5

Indicate the level of importance EACH of the following played in your decision to return to the position of a pre-K-12 teacher.
Mark (X) one box on each line.
The following scale is used for the items below: 1) Not at all important, 2) Slightly important, 3) Somewhat important, 4) Very important, 5) Extremely important

If any of the reasons for returning to teaching do not apply to you mark "1" as not at all important.

I returned to the position of a pre-K-12 teacher:

	1	2	3	4	5
a. Because I had a change in residence or wanted to take a job more convenient to my home.					
b. Because my maternity/paternity leave ended or I no longer needed to stay at home with my children.					
c. Because my health or the health of a loved one no longer required me to be out of teaching.					
d. Because I decided I was not ready to stop teaching.					
e. Because I passed the required test(s).					
f. Because I was offered the grade level or subject area that I wished to teach.					
g. Because I needed the income to meet my financial obligations (e.g., rent, loans, credit card payments).					
h. Because my current school or district offered at least partial forgiveness of my student loans.					
i. Because I needed the health benefits.					
j. Because I wanted the retirement package.					
k. Because I could continue receiving my teacher retirement benefits.					
l. Because I was given a housing incentive by my current school.					
m. Because I wanted a higher standard of living than my household income provided.					
n. Because I wanted job security.					
o. Because I decided to pursue a pre-K-12 teaching position as a career.					
p. Because I completed the coursework I was pursuing.					
q. Because a part-time teaching assignment became available.					
r. Because I liked the school schedule/calendar.					
s. Because I obtained a position in a school with desirable characteristics.					
t. Because I was able to maintain my seniority.					
Other factors					
u. Because of other factors not included in previous items a – t → *please specify:*					

Interviewer Notes

Do you think there are any important reasons for returning to teaching that are not included in this list?

Question d, o: What do you see as the difference between what items d and o are asking?

Question i: Do you think there are other types of benefits that would be important enough to a teacher to make him/her return to teaching?

Question j, k: What do you see as the difference between what items j and k are asking?

Question l: Is it clear what is meant by the term "housing incentive?" Please give me a few examples of what you think a "housing incentive" is?

Question m: What do you understand this statement to be asking?

Question r: What do you understand this statement to be asking? What aspects of the school schedule/calendar do you think are being referenced? Is the wording awkward or confusing?

Question s: Is the term "desirable characteristics" clear? What characteristics do you think of when you see this term?

Question t: Explain what you think the term "seniority" means?

ITEM 6

From the items above, which do you consider the one most important reason in your decision to return to the position of a pre-K-12 teacher?
  Enter the letter from Item 5 above.

  |___| Most important

Did you think your most important reason for returning to teaching was adequately reflected in the table?
Interviewer – please check if the reason given here is consistent with the answer they gave immediately before they began this section. If not, please ask why.

ITEM 7

Since December 31, 2008, have you completed a teacher preparation program leading to your initial teaching certificate?
  __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 8.
  __ **No** → GO TO Item 9 below.

What do you understand by the term "teacher preparation program?"

What do you understand the term "initial teaching certificate" to mean? **[wait for response]**
The intent of this question is to determine if teachers obtained their first teaching certificate since December 31, 2008. Do you think the term "initial teaching certificate" is clear? Is there another term that would be more appropriate?

ITEM 8

Was the teacher preparation program a part of an alternative certification program?
(An alternative certification program is a program that was designed to expedite the transition of non-teachers to a teaching career, for example, a state, district, or university alternative certification program, Teach For America, or National Teacher Project.)
  __ **Yes**
  __ **No**

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Did you have any difficulty determining whether your teacher preparation program was an alternative certification program?

Is the definition of "alternative certification program" sufficiently clear?

ITEM 9

Since December 31, 2008 have you renewed your teaching certificate?

  __ **Yes**
  __ **No**

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Was there anything about this question that was confusing?

ITEM 10
Since December 31, 2008 have you received an endorsement to your certificate?
   __ **Yes**
   __ **No**

Interviewer Notes

Probes
What do you understand by the term "endorsement"? *(It should mean an added field or grade level to an already existing teaching certification)*

ITEM 11
Since December 31, 2008 have you completed a master's degree, educational specialist or professional diploma, doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D), or professional degree (M.D., J.D., D.D.S.)?

   __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 12.
   __ **No** → GO TO Item 13.

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Is there anything about this question that may seem unclear?

ITEM 12

Please specify the field of the master's degree, educational specialist or professional diploma, doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D), or professional degree (M.D., J.D., D.D.S.) that you have completed.

Record one of the assignment field codes and names listed in Table 1 on page 7

|___|

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Did you have any difficulty identifying your field from Table 1?

ITEM 13

This school year (2008-09) have you been assigned as a mentor to other teachers in your school or district?

  __ **Yes** → GO TO Item 14.
  __ **No** → GO TO Item 17.

Interviewer Notes

Probes
What do you understand the phrase "assigned as a mentor" to mean?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                             ITEM 14                                   │
│                                                                       │
│  How many teachers are you mentoring in your school or district this  │
│  year?                                                                │
│                                                                       │
│              |___|                                                    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

<u>Interviewer Notes</u>

<u>Probes</u>
Do you think a mentor would find it difficult to report the exact number of teachers he/she mentors?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                             ITEM 15                                   │
│                                                                       │
│  Were you given any training related to mentoring by your school or   │
│  district prior to becoming a                                         │
│  mentor?                                                              │
│              __ Yes                                                    │
│              __ No                                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

<u>Interviewer Notes</u>

<u>Probes</u>
What do you understand by the term "training"? Do you think this term could be ambiguous?

ITEM 16

To what extent do you feel prepared to be a mentor?
__ **Not at all prepared**
__ **Somewhat prepared**
__ **Well prepared**
__ **Very well prepared**

Interviewer Notes

Probes
Did you have any difficulty identifying your level of preparation on the scale?

ITEM 17

For your main teaching assignment have you:
Mark (X) one box on each line.
(Please answer yes or no to the following):
g. **Received an in-state teaching certificate in this field**
h. **Received an in-state teaching certificate for the grades you teach**
i. **Received a National Board Certification in this field**
j. **Earned a bachelor's or higher degree in this field**
k. **Taken and passed a state exam showing subject competency in this field**
l. **Taken and passed the HOUSSE (High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation) in this field**

Interview Notes

What is your main teaching assignment?

As you answered all the questions in this section did you consistently only reference your **main** teaching assignment?

Did you have any difficulty distinguishing between what was being asked in part (a) and part (b)?

Please explain your understanding of National Board Certification? Do you think that most teachers understand what this is?
Note to interviewer: National Board Certification is advanced professional certification based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). There are 25 different certificates available. The assessment for National Board Certification consists of a multimedia teaching portfolio that is used to evaluate pedagogy and student outcomes, and a three-hour assessment center examination.

Was there anything confusing about part (e)?

Please explain your understanding of HOUSSE? Is this a term with which you think most teachers are familiar?
Note to interviewer: HOUSSE allows current teachers to demonstrate subject matter competency and Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements through a combination of proven teaching experience, professional development, and knowledge in the subject acquired over time through working in the field.

Table 1. Major Fields of Study Codes
General Education

Elementary Education

101   Early childhood or Pre-K, general
102   Elementary grades, general

Secondary Education

103   Middle grades, general
104   Secondary grades, general

Special Education

110   Special education, any

Other Education

131   Administration
132   Counseling and guidance
133   Educational psychology
134   Policy studies
135   School psychology
136   Other non-subject matter specific education

Subject Matter Specific

Arts and Music

141   Art or arts or crafts
142   Art history
143   Dance
144   Drama or theater
145   Music

English and Language Arts

151   Communications
152   Composition
153   English
154   Journalism
155   Language arts
156   Linguistics
157   Literature or literary criticism
158   Reading
159   Speech

English as a Second Language

160   ESL or bilingual education: general
161   ESL or bilingual education: Spanish
162   ESL or bilingual education: other languages

Foreign Languages

171   French
172   German
173   Latin
174   Spanish
175   Other foreign language

Health Education

181   Health education
182   Physical education

Mathematics and Computer Science

190   Mathematics
197   Computer science

Natural Sciences

211   Biology or life sciences
212   Chemistry
213   Earth sciences
214   Engineering
217   Physics
218   Other natural sciences

Social Sciences

221   Anthropology
222   Area or ethnic studies (excluding Native American Studies)
223   Criminal justice
224   Cultural studies
225   Economics
226   Geography
227   Government or civics
228   History
229   International studies
230   Law
231   Native American studies
232   Political science
233   Psychology
234   Sociology
235   Other social sciences

Vocational, Career, or Technical Education

241   Agriculture and natural resources
242   Business management
243   Business support
244   Marketing and distribution
245   Health occupations
246   Construction trades, engineering, or science technologies (including CADD and drafting)
247   Mechanics and repair
249   Manufacturing or precision production (electronics, metalwork, textiles, etc.)
250   Communications and related technologies (including design, graphics or printing; not including computer science)
253   Personal and public services (including culinary arts, cosmetology, child care, social work, protective services, custodial services, and interior design)
254   Family and consumer sciences education
255   Industrial arts or technology education
256   Other vocational, career, or technical education

Miscellaneous

261   Architecture
263   Humanities or liberal studies
264   Library or information science
265   Military science or ROTC
266   Philosophy
267   Religious studies, theology or divinity

Other

268   Other

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Second Phase of Interviews

NCES Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey
Interview Protocol

I. Introduction

"Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. My name is _____, and I work for ICF Macro, an independent company that has been hired by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct this study. We will be asking you to help revise and improve a questionnaire called the Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Survey.

"During this interview I am going to ask you to read and answer a number of questionnaire items, one at a time. As you go through the questions, I would like you to explain what you are thinking out loud, so I can get a sense of your thought process as you answer each item. For example, if you are trying to decide what your answer is, please explain why you are unsure. If you have trouble understanding a question, or are confused by it, please be sure to explain that to us as well.

"The feedback you provide in this interview will be completely anonymous. In our report to the Department of Education, we will not connect anyone's comments with their name. The feedback that we collect will have a direct impact on the design of next year's survey, so please open and honest in your comments.

"Do you have any questions before we begin?"

Before you begin, ask them the screening question(s) for their group just to confirm that they are qualified for the interview:

All
1.   *Are you currently a K-12 classroom teacher? (Yes)*

All participants must answer "Yes" to Q1 to qualify.

Mentor Group
2.   *Are you currently a mentor teacher?*

3.   *Have you ever been a mentor teacher?*

Participant must answer "Yes" to one of these two questions to qualify in this group.

Reduction in Force (RIF) Group
4.   *Have you taught at a school that has been affected by a reduction in force?*

Participant must answer "Yes" to Q4 to qualify in this group.

II. Questionnaire Items

Go through the appropriate questionnaire items with the participant. As the participant answers each item, record their answer on the sheet. If they hesitate while answering or reading a question at any point, ask them to explain why.

In each case, allow them to complete 1 series (there are 4 series) of questions before asking any follow-up or probe questions, or providing any clues as to the purpose or meaning of the question. In this document, a series is identified by a color block. For example, all the questions in Series 1 are blue in this document; all the questions Series 2 are yellow in this document, etc. After the interviewee completes each series (color block), then go back and ask any follow-ups that are necessary for each of the individual items.

ITEM 1

Have you had your contract not renewed as part of a reduction in force?

☐ **Yes** → GO TO Item 3.

☐ **No** → GO TO Item 2.

ITEM 2

Have you taught at a school that has been affected by a reduction in force?
☐ **Yes** → GO TO Item 3.

☐ **No** → GO TO Item 4.

ITEM 3

What was the primary reason for this reduction in force?
☐ **Budget cuts or budget shortfalls**

☐ **Reduced pupil enrollment**

☐ **School and/or district merger**

☐ **Reason unknown**

☐ **Other reason – please specify _____**

Note: Items 1 and 2 are not proposed questions for the survey; they were included to provide context for Item 3. Therefore, we are less interested in participants' feedback on those items.

Interviewer Notes

Probes

If participant skips Item 3 because they have never taught at a school where a RIF took place, still ask him/her the following probes.

Is there anything about Item 3 that could be confusing or unclear?

Based on your understanding, are there any other reasons that reductions in force could take place? What are they?

How likely do you think it could be that a teacher whose contract was not renewed because of a reduction in force (i.e., a teacher who answered "Yes" to Item 1) would not know the reason for the reduction in force at their school?

ITEM 4

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

		Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) My principal supports me in classroom management issues.		☐	☐	☐	☐
b) My principal supports me in my interactions with parents.		☐	☐	☐	☐
c) My principal is readily available to me.		☐	☐	☐	☐
d) My principal listens to my concerns.		☐	☐	☐	☐
e) My principal takes time to visit my classroom.		☐	☐	☐	☐
f) My principal supports my professional development.		☐	☐	☐	☐
g) My principal provides me with useful feedback about my teaching.		☐	☐	☐	☐
h) My principal has respect for teachers.		☐	☐	☐	☐
i) My principal has respect for students.		☐	☐	☐	☐
j) My principal treats teachers fairly.		☐	☐	☐	☐
k) My principal encourages collaboration among teachers.		☐	☐	☐	☐
l) My principal supports student teachers in my school.	☐ There are no student teachers in my school	☐	☐	☐	☐
m) My principal is readily available to student teachers in my school.	☐ There are no student teachers in my school	☐	☐	☐	☐

<u>Interviewer Notes</u>

<u>Probes</u>

Could any of the parts of Item 4 be confusing or unclear? Are there any items that you feel may be ambiguous?

Did you have difficulty answering any of these questions for any reason?

Explain your response to item (e). Why did you select the option you did*? [Note: We are trying to get at what people understand by the term "take time to visit my classroom"*]

How knowledgeable would you be about items (l) and (m) if you were not actually a student teacher? To what extent would you know whether your principal supports student teachers, or is readily available to them?

The purpose of this question is to ask teachers to evaluate their principals based on a variety of factors. Do you think there are any important aspects of a principal's job that are not reflected in this question? Are there any other items that should be added?

ITEM 5
How satisfied are you with the principal at your current school?

☐ **Very satisfied**

☐ **Somewhat satisfied**

☐ **Somewhat dissatisfied**

☐ **Very dissatisfied**

Interviewer Notes

Probes

Is there anything about Item 5 that could be confusing or unclear?

Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

When selecting your answer for this question, what factors did you consider? What were the primary factors that determine whether or not you were satisfied with your principal?

Are you currently a mentor teacher?

- ☐ **Yes** → GO TO Item 8.
- ☐ **No** → GO TO Item 7.

ITEM 7

Have you ever been a mentor teacher?

- ☐ **Yes** → GO TO Item 8.
- ☐ **No** → GO TO Item 12.

ITEM 8

Did you have input in choosing your mentee (s)?

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

Note: Items 6 and 7 are <u>not</u> proposed questions for the survey; they were included to provide context for Item 8. Therefore, we are less interested in participants' feedback on those items.

<u>Interviewer Notes</u>

<u>Probes</u>

If participant skips Item 8 because they have never been a mentor teacher, still ask him/her the following probes.

Is there anything about Item 8 that could be confusing or unclear?

What kind of "input" do you think this question is referring to?

Have you ever taught at a school that had mentor teachers? If so, based on your experience do mentor teachers usually have input in choosing their mentee(s)? If so, what kind of input?

ITEM 9

Did your principal work with you to choose your mentees(s)?
☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Interviewer Notes

Probes

If participant skips Item 9 because they have never been a mentor teacher, still ask him/her the following probes.

Is there anything about Item 9 that could be confusing or unclear?

In your own words, what do you think Item 9 is asking?

(*If participant has taught at a school that had mentor teachers*) Based on your experience, do principals usually work with mentor teachers to choose their mentee(s)? If so, how?

ITEM 10

Has your principal discussed your mentoring relationship with you this school year?

- ☐ **Yes** → GO TO Item 11.

- ☐ **No** → GO TO Item 12.

ITEM 11

How often does your principal discuss your mentoring relationship with you?

- ☐ **At least once a week**

- ☐ **Once or twice a month**

- ☐ **A few times a year**

Interviewer Notes

Probes

If participant skips Items10 and 11 because they have never been a mentor teacher, still ask him/her the following probes.

Is there anything about Item 10 that could be confusing or unclear?

In your own words, what does the phrase "discuss your mentoring relationship with you" mean?

Is there anything about Item 11 that could be confusing or unclear?

 (*If participant has taught at a school that had mentor teachers*) Based on your experience, do principals usually discuss mentoring relationships with mentor teachers? If so, what are these discussions like? How often do they usually take place?

ITEM 12

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Outside my school, I have a strong support system (e.g. family, close friends, neighbors).

- ☐ **Strongly agree**
- ☐ **Somewhat agree**
- ☐ **Somewhat disagree**
- ☐ **Strongly disagree**

Interviewer Notes

Probes

Is there anything about Item 12 that could be confusing or unclear?

Did you have any difficulty answering this question for any reason?

In your own words, what do you think is meant by a "strong support system"?

When selecting your answer for this question, what factors did you consider? What were the primary factors that determine whether or not you think you have a "strong support system"?

ITEM 13

During this school year, did you or do you…
- ☐ **a) Coach a sport?**
- ☐ **b) Sponsor any student groups, clubs, or organizations?**
- ☐ **c) Serve as a department lead or chair?**
- ☐ **d) Serve as a curriculum specialist?**
- ☐ **e) Serve on a school-wide or district-wide committee or task force?**
- ☐ **f) Serve as a consultant or coach in a particular subject?**
- ☐ **g) Serve as a mentor coordinator?**
- ☐ **h) Have a teacher union leadership position?**
- ☐ **i) Present at a conference?**
- ☐ **j) Participate in any other leadership activity?** *Specify*: _____

Interviewer Notes

Probes

Could any of the parts of Item 13 be confusing or unclear?

Are there any other leadership activities that are not included on this list? If so, what?

In your own words, what do you think is meant by Item (d)? Is "curriculum specialist" a term used in your school? If not, what do you think is the equivalent term?

In your own words, what do you think is meant by Item (f)? Is a subject area "consultant" or "coach" a term used in your school? If not, what do you think is the equivalent term?

In your own words, what do you think is meant by Item (g)? Is "mentor coordinator" a term used in your school? If not, what do you think is the equivalent term?