

## **PART C. JUSTIFICATION OF SURVEY ITEMS**

The BTLS will be one web-based questionnaire instrument, with multiple paths within the instrument for different types of respondents. A contractor will preload data from SASS 08 and TFS 09 in order to guide respondents to the appropriate path. In some cases where those data are unknown (i.e. nonrespondents from TFS 09), respondents will be asked additional questions in order to guide them to the appropriate path. Respondents will be guided to various paths depending on their current status. Respondents fall into one of eight statuses depending on their response to the TFS 09. In TFS 09, each new teacher will be classified as a:

**Current teacher** = Stayer or Mover in 2008-09 relative to previous school year (2007-08);

**Former teacher** = Leaver in 2008-09 (working outside education; working in education but not as a K-12 classroom teacher; or not working) relative to previous school year (2007-08); or,

**Nonresponse** = Did not respond to TFS 09, but first new BTLS item determines if current or former teacher in TFS 09 retrospectively.

The eight paths for the BTLS are built off these three response categories for TFS 09 as shown below:

| 07-08 SASS | 08-09 TFS                        | BTLS    | Respondent Type |
|------------|----------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| Current    | Current                          | Current | CCC             |
| Current    | Current                          | Former  | CCF             |
| Current    | Former                           | Current | CFC             |
| Current    | Former                           | Former  | CFF             |
| Current    | Non-Response, determined current | Current | CNcC            |
| Current    | Non-Response, determined current | Former  | CNcF            |
| Current    | Non-Response, determined former  | Current | CNfC            |
| Current    | Non-Response, determined former  | Former  | CNfF            |

Item justification is organized around each of the topics in the BTLS and respondent status. Groups of items are briefly described below in terms of the broad education issues in need of measurement.

### **BEGINNING TEACHER LONGITUDINAL STUDY**

#### **1. QUESTIONNAIRE PATH FOR CURRENT TEACHERS (Either teachers who have remained in the teaching profession all three years or returning teachers)**

The items described below will only appear for current teachers. These may be teachers who were teaching in 2007-08, 2008-09, and are still teaching in 2009-10; or teachers

who left teaching in 2008-09 but returned to teaching in 2009-10. From the categories above, this would include CCC, CFC, CNcC, and CNfC.

### **I. Assignments at Your Current School**

This topic filters out teachers who are not currently teaching and guides them down the appropriate path. It asks current teachers about their teaching assignment in 2008-09 (only if they did not respond to the TFS 09) and for 2009-10, whether they teach full-time or part-time, the grades that they teach, their main teaching assignment, the way in which their classes are organized, and their Highly Qualified Teacher status.

This section ensures that the items are being answered by the appropriate population. It also identifies the teacher's current position and work status, permitting researchers to subset the sample, as desired, based on their research questions and to determine whether teachers have changed their work status, position, or main teaching assignment from the previous school year.

Movement of teachers in and out of main assignment areas is one form of teacher mobility that may or may not be desired by a particular school district or school. Recent research indicates that shortages in various teaching areas, such as special education, are exacerbated by teachers who move out of those teaching fields and into other fields (Boe, Cook, and Sunderland, 2008).

### **II. Information about Mentoring**

There are two topics on mentoring. One asks if the teacher has a mentor and how it is helpful. The other asks teachers if they are a mentor and, if so, about their experience as a mentor teacher.

The questions on teachers receiving mentoring are designed to allow researchers more insight into the types of induction support teachers are receiving, and their perceptions on its effectiveness. Studies have shown that mentoring programs are important in retaining teachers. For example, the results from a study by Smith and Ingersoll (2004) indicate that induction and mentoring programs within a teacher's first year of teaching do deter teachers from switching schools and leaving teaching altogether. They also found that teachers who had received more types of support, including having a mentor in their same field, were more likely to remain in teaching. On the other hand, a randomized experiment that was conducted in approximately 400 elementary schools in 17 states during the 2005-06 school year did not detect any differences in the impact of an intensive, structured induction program on teacher attrition (Glazerman, et al. 2008). While the study found no differences in attrition rates approximately a year after the beginning of the program, a longer-term or longitudinal study would be needed to establish whether the induction program might make a difference in the following years.

Because the content of the mentoring and induction programs varies widely, the inconsistent results of different studies may be due to differences in how mentoring is measured or because

only certain types of programs are included in any given study. Howard Nelson and Michael Strong, a union researcher and an academic, respectively, who study mentoring, expressed frustration in the TFS expert meeting in December 2007 about the lack of detail in mentoring questions. They indicated that it is difficult to estimate whether mentoring programs impact teacher retention because most datasets with any data on mentoring do not contain detailed enough information about the content of the mentoring program.

Research on the impact of mentoring programs on mentors indicates that mentors also benefit from their role (Davies, et al. 1999; Grisham, Ferguson, and Brink 2004; Scheetz, et al. 2005). Mentors learn about current trends in education (Scheetz, et al. 2005), develop strong bonds with their peers (Davies, et al. 1999; Scheetz, et al. 2005), improve their teaching skills (Davies, et al. 1999; Lin, 2007), and become more self-confident and self-reflective (Davies, et al. 1999; Lin, 2007).

### **III. Current School: Conditions and Experiences**

Teachers are asked if there has been any change in the school since 2008-09, and they are asked to rate their overall satisfaction with being a teacher during the current school year.

All teachers are asked about their satisfaction with their current teaching position relative to last year's position to determine whether their satisfaction with various characteristics of their school has increased, decreased, or remained the same. Job dissatisfaction is the most important reason for teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001; Stockard and Lehman, 2004).

### **IV. General Employment Information**

Teachers are asked about their income from their school system and other sources, and whether or not they are currently receiving a pension from a teacher retirement system.

The importance of teachers' salaries in retaining talented teachers and fostering job satisfaction is a continuing area of interest for education researchers. While the impact of salary on teacher retention may be filtered through the teacher's perception of their working conditions, it is an important factor influencing teachers' decisions to move to another school or district or leave the profession (Rinke 2008).

### **V. Highly Qualified Teacher**

Determining highly qualified teacher status each year will help researchers identify those teachers who leave or are eventually pushed out of teaching because they are not highly qualified. It will also help identify those who are qualified teachers, but leave teaching to pursue a different career. Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) found that more-qualified teachers have higher attrition and mobility rates than those that were not as qualified.

### **VI. Satisfaction**

This question will determine whether teacher satisfaction has increased, decreased, or remained the same over time. Job dissatisfaction is the most important reason for teacher

turnover (Ingersoll 2001; Stockard and Lehman 2004).

## **2. QUESTIONNAIRE PATH FOR CURRENT TEACHERS (Teachers who have remained a teacher all three years)**

The items described below will only appear for current teachers who were teaching in 2007-08, 2008-09, and are still teaching in 2009-10. From the categories above, this would include CCC and CNcC.

### **I. Information about Changes from Last School Year to This School Year**

This section asks teachers if they are teaching in the same school as the previous year and, if not, asks them to provide information about their new school. It asks teachers who moved to describe their move from last year's school to their current school. They are asked to rate various reasons that may have affected their decision to move to another school. Finally, they choose the most important reason for moving and whether or not there had been a change in the principal or school head in their school since the previous school year.

This section permits the researcher to identify the new school to which the teacher has moved and potentially to merge additional information from the CCD or Private School Survey for that school. Researchers can also determine whether movers have crossed school sectors (i.e., public and private school sectors) or remained within the same district.

In addition, all teachers are asked about their satisfaction with their current teaching position relative to last year's position to determine whether their satisfaction with various characteristics of their school or job has increased, decreased, or remained the same. Job dissatisfaction is the most important reason for teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2001; Stockard and Lehman, 2004).

### **II. Contract Renewal**

For teachers who are no longer teaching in the same school as in 2008-09, this question allows researchers to establish whether a teacher left the school voluntarily or not. It allows researchers to estimate how much attrition is due to teachers not being able to meet the "highly qualified" requirement in the NCLB law. Furthermore, this question (combined with the year/month began teaching question) allows researchers to examine whether new teachers are more susceptible to reductions in labor force or district organizational changes because of their lack of seniority (Elfers, Plecki, and Knapp, 2006) and are more likely to leave the teaching profession or change schools than teachers with more experience. The question is particularly pertinent for new teachers who may face layoffs or "reductions in force" at a higher rate than their more experienced colleagues.

### **III. Principal/School Head Status**

Job dissatisfaction is the most important reason for teacher turnover, and the most important causes of job dissatisfaction are a lack of supportive and effective school administrators, student discipline problems, low salaries, and a lack of decision-making power in the school (Ingersoll,

2001; Stockard and Lehman, 2004). By determining if there has been a change in administration of the school, and combining this with the items in the “school factors” section of the reasons for leaving item, researchers will be able to capture whether changes in the school have an impact on teacher turnover.

### **3. QUESTIONNAIRE PATH FOR RETURNING TEACHERS (Teachers who have returned to teaching after not teaching in 2008-09)**

The items described below will appear only for returning teachers. These will be teachers who left teaching in 2008-09 but returned to teaching in 2009-10. From the categories above, this would include CFC and CNfC.

#### **I. Information about Changes from the SASS School Year to This School Year**

This section asks teachers if they are teaching in the same school as the SASS year and, if not, asks them to provide information about the new school. They are asked to rate various reasons that may have affected their decision to return to teaching and to choose the most important reason for returning. If they have returned to the SASS year school, then they are asked whether or not there has been a change in the principal or school head in their school since the SASS school year.

Previous research indicates that younger women exit teaching sooner than men and older women, but also have the highest return rate following their first career interruption (Murnane, Singer, and Willett 1988). This pattern suggests that marriage and childrearing are important factors shaping the early career patterns of female teachers. These items will enable researchers to determine if this is a continuing trend or if it was a previous generational effect.

### **4. QUESTIONNAIRE PATH FOR FORMER TEACHERS (Both teachers who left teaching this year and for those who left teaching last year)**

The items described below will only appear for former teachers. These may be teachers who left teaching after the 2007-08 school year or teachers who left teaching after the 2008-09 school year. From the categories above, this would include CFF, CCF, CNcF, and CNfF.

#### **I. Employment Status**

These questions filter out teachers who are still teaching and guide them down the appropriate path. The remaining respondents are classified as former teachers and are asked basic employment questions such as their occupation, duties, employer type, income, and whether they had received any early retirement incentives. Teachers who did not respond to TFS 09 are additionally asked if they taught in 2008-09 and if so, where.

What occupations or activities former teachers pursue is an important element in understanding teacher attrition (Boe, Cook, and Sunderland, 2008). For instance, retiring

teachers impact the teacher supply pool, because they have a reduced likelihood of returning to teaching (Grissmer and Kirby, 1997; Harris and Adams, 2007). Some school districts may encourage retirement by using early retirement incentives; this reduces the number of highly paid teachers and lowers their educational budgets (Grissmer and Kirby, 1997).

It is crucial to know for what types of jobs teachers leave the teaching profession and if they remain in the pre-K-12 education field. These questions will document whether former teachers eventually move to become principals or hold other positions within the pre-K-12 education field, and whether those positions are in the public or private sector.

## **II. Applying For a Teaching Position**

This question allows researchers to examine whether former teachers are trying to return to the teaching field, and if not, what are the reasons. This part of the “reserve pool” created by teachers who have left the profession and later return to teaching has been given far less attention than the attrition and entrance of new teachers. Focusing on attrition without adequately accounting for former teachers who return can overstate the loss of teachers to the supply pool.

### **5. QUESTIONNAIRE PATH FOR FIRST-YEAR FORMER TEACHERS (Teachers for whom this is their first year out)**

The items described below will only appear for former teachers who were teaching in 2008-09 but are not teaching in 2009-10. From the categories above, this would include CCF and CNcF.

#### **I. Information on Leaving the Teaching Profession**

These questions ask former teachers the reason why they are no longer teaching. They are asked to rate various reasons that may have affected their decision to leave the teaching profession. Then they choose the most important reason for leaving teaching. They are also asked whether or not they applied for a teaching position the year after they left and, if not, what factors influenced their decision not to apply. Finally, the section asks teachers if they would consider returning to teaching and if so, when.

Understanding why teachers leave the profession can lead to policy changes that encourage the retention of talented teachers. Working conditions have been found to influence a teacher’s job satisfaction, which in turn plays a major role in the decision to stay in or leave a school or a district (Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, and Luczak, 2005). Job dissatisfaction is the most important reason for teacher turnover, and the most important causes of job dissatisfaction are a lack of supportive and effective school administrators, student discipline problems (Ingersoll, 2001; Stockard and Lehman, 2004), and low salaries (Ingersoll, 2001).

#### **II. Contract Renewal**

These questions allow researchers to establish whether a teacher left teaching voluntarily or not. It allows researchers to estimate how much attrition is due to teachers not being able to meet the

“highly qualified” requirement in the NCLB law. Furthermore, this question allows researchers to examine whether new teachers because of their lack of seniority are more susceptible to reductions in labor force or district organizational changes (Elfers, Plecki, and Knapp, 2006) or are more likely to leave the teaching profession or change schools than teachers with more experience.

## **6. QUESTIONNAIRE PATH FOR SECOND-YEAR FORMER TEACHERS (Teachers for whom this is their second year out of teaching)**

The items described below will only appear for former teachers who were not teaching in 2008-09 and are not teaching in 2009-10. From the categories above, this would include CFF and CNfF.

### **Information on Leaving the Teaching Profession**

These questions ask teachers if they would consider returning to teaching and if so, when. This “reserve pool” created by teachers who have left the profession and later return to teaching has been given far less attention than the attrition and entrance of new teachers. Focusing on attrition without adequately accounting for former teachers who return can overstate the loss of teachers in the supply pool.

## **7. ITEMS IN ALL PATHS**

The following items are asked of all respondents regardless of their status.

### **I. Information about Certification**

These questions ask teachers if they have completed an alternative certification program (if they entered teaching through one), the specific criteria for completing the alternative education program, and their rating of the effectiveness of that program.

The results from a study by Smith and Ingersoll (2004) indicate that induction programs do deter teachers from switching schools and leaving teaching all together. More comprehensive programs also increased the likelihood that teachers would stay at the school. It is well known that alternative certification programs vary widely in their content and length (Humphrey and Wechsler 2007). The items on alternative certification programs are designed to identify key differences among the programs and the perceived effectiveness of the program, given that research in this area indicates that this route encompasses a diverse grouping of programs (Humphrey and Wechsler 2007). These questions will allow researchers to examine whether teachers who have entered teaching through an alternative certification program differ in their attrition rates from teachers who received their training in more traditional programs.

### **II. Background Information**

These questions ask teachers about their citizenship status, the household income, their current marital status, change in marital status, and the number of dependents they support.

The background information collected here provides needed context about the respondent that could shed light on their decision to leave the teaching profession and on their perceptions of their former school. Research indicates that young women exit teaching sooner than men and older women, but also have the highest return rate following their first career interruption (Murnane, Singer, and Willett, 1988). This pattern suggests that marriage and childrearing are important factors shaping the early career patterns of female teachers.

### ***Citizenship***

Citizenship status is an important addition to TFS, since using foreign teachers is one way school districts resolve issues with teacher shortages (Hutchison and Jazzar, 2007). Determining citizenship may also answer questions to the unique challenges international teachers face in working in cross-cultural environments and how they may hinder these individuals' ability to become effective teachers (Hutchison and Jazzar, 2007; Hutchison, 2006).

### ***Own/Rent Residence***

While salary is an important component in understanding the attrition and migration of teachers, its impact is mitigated by other factors, such as teachers' personal financial burden. By collecting teachers' living situations and painting a bigger picture of the teachers' expenses, researchers will be able to conclude how important salary actually is in teacher turnover. Also, it might be easier for teachers who rent to move than for teachers who own their home.

### ***Household Income***

This question will also allow researchers to collect information on the teacher's financial burden. This question along with teacher salary could be used to understand how much supplemental income the teacher is receiving. Researchers will then be able to determine how important salary actually is in teacher retention.

### ***Marital status***

Respondents are asked about their current status. Research indicates that young women exit teaching sooner than men and older women, but also have the highest return rate following their first career interruption (Murnane, Singer, and Willett, 1988). This pattern suggests that marriage and childrearing are important factors shaping the early career patterns of female teachers. However, these data are from the early 1980s and remains to be seen whether changes in marital status still impact female teaches mobility the same way.

### ***Dependents***

This question was also designed to measure teachers' financial burden. In combination with salary and household income, researchers will be able to understand the personal burden on teachers and how it might relate to teacher attrition and retention.



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