

Employee Well-Being in AISD

What Makes Employees Feel Valued and Want to Stay,
2019-2020





Executive Summary

Austin Independent School District (AISD) continues to show its commitment to employee well-being and retention through understanding staff members' feelings about various work-related topics. Staff at AISD Central Office and campus-based staff are invited to respond to two surveys each year in order to provide this feedback. All campus-based staff receive the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) survey, and Central Office staff receive the Central Office Climate (COC) survey.

In the 2019–2020 school year, AISD's customer experience department, CARES (customer-focused, action-oriented, responsive, empathetic, and service-driven), provided input on survey items to better understand AISD staff. Based on this input, three new items were developed to help determine what made employees feel valued in their workplace and to understand reasons that employees wanted to stay or leave their current position in AISD.

In the first new item, employees were asked what made them feel valued as an employee at their campus or in AISD. The next new item asked if they planned to stay in their position in AISD for the following school year, and if yes, why they planned to stay. Thirdly, staff were also asked if they planned to leave AISD in the following school year, and if so, what their reasons were for doing so. Results for the second new item are displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Overall, 93% of employees (n = 5,127) on the TELL Survey indicated that they planned to stay on their campus in the following school year, and on the COC Survey, 96% (n = 516) of employees indicated they planned to stay in AISD.



Source. TELL AISD Survey 2019–2020, AISD Central Office Climate Survey 2019–2020.

This report compares the responses of campus-based staff with AISD Central Office staff to the TELL survey and the COC survey respectively. Percentages for each response, and total number of respondents for each item is also included. Results show both similarities and differences between campus-based and Central Office staff members.

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 5

What makes employees feel valued?.....7

 How do campus and Central Office staff compare?..... 8

Why do employees stay?..... 9

 How do campus and Central Office staff compare?..... 9

What reason did AISD employees give for leaving?..... 10

 How did campus-based and Central Office staff compare?..... 10

Conclusion..... 11

Appendix A: Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Response to the Question “What Makes You Feel Valued as an Employee on Your Campus?” 12

Appendix B: Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Response Option to the Item “What Are the Reasons You Plan to Stay on Your Campus Next Year?”13

Appendix C: Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Response Option to the Item “If you Indicated That You Plan to Leave Your Campus Next Year, Why Are You Planning to Leave Your Campus Next School Year? 14

References.....15

List of Figures

Figure 1. Ninety-three percent of employees on the TELL survey and 96% on the COC survey indicated they wanted to stay in AISD.....	2
Figure 2. Three of the top five most frequently selected responses by campus-based staff about what made them feel valued at work overlapped with those selected by Central Office staff.....	7
Figure 3. Three of the top five most frequently selected reasons for staying in AISD next year by campus-based staff overlapped with those given by Central Office staff.....	9
Figure 4. Four of the top five most frequently selected responses to the item asking respondents why they were planning to leave overlapped between campus-based staff respondents and Central Office staff.....	10

List of Tables

Table 1. New item response options for the 2019–2020 AISD TELL and COC surveys, “What makes you feel valued as an employee on your campus / in AISD?”.....	5
Table 2. New item response options for the 2019–2020 AISD TELL and COC surveys, “What are the reasons you plan to stay on your campus / in AISD next year?”.....	6
Table 3. New item response options for the 2019–2020 AISD TELL and COC surveys, “Why are you planning to leave your campus / AISD next year?”.....	6

Introduction

In an effort to understand more about the well-being of Austin Independent School District (AISD) employees, the AISD CARES team collaborated with the AISD Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) to create new items for the 2019–2020 Austin Independent School District (AISD) Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) and the Central Office Climate (COC) Surveys. As employee well-being is often associated with retention (Renshaw et al., 2015), this effort was also consistent with AISD’s commitment to retaining quality staff members. Three new items were developed to determine what made employees feel valued in their workplace and to understand reasons that employees wanted to stay or leave their current position in AISD. In total, 680 employees responded to the item about feeling valued on the COC Survey, and 6,606 responded to the item on the TELL Survey. The three new items and their response options are included in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Employees were asked on the TELL and COC Surveys in Spring 2020 if they planned to stay in their position in AISD for the following school year, and if yes, why they planned to stay. This item was added to the TELL and COC Surveys in 2019–2020 to gain an understanding about what aspects of AISD employees’ work had an impact on their decision to stay employed in the district. While the style of this item was new in 2019–2020, previous years’ surveys asked employees about their work plans for the next school year. The third new item on the TELL and COC Surveys in Spring 2020 asked employees if they planned to leave AISD in the following school year, and if so, what were their reasons. This item was added in order to gain an understanding about the root causes for employees leaving the district and is in alignment with AISD’s commitment to retaining quality teachers by understanding the reasons employees leave.

Table 1.

New Item response options for the 2019–2020 TELL and COC AISD Surveys, “What makes you feel valued as an employee on your campus/in AISD?” The differences in the response options between the two surveys are in grey.

What makes you feel valued as an employee on your campus? (Select all that apply.)	What makes you feel valued as an employee in AISD? (Select all that apply.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from my leadership • The level of responsibility I am given over my work • The ability to make a positive impact on students • Frequent and clear communication from leadership • Being asked to provide my opinion on decisions • Receiving recognition from leadership • Receiving feedback from leadership • Support for my own professional development and growth • Emphasis on the importance of well-being • The ability to contribute to my school and colleagues • The opportunity to celebrate successes on my campus • I do not feel valued as an employee on my campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from my leadership • The level of responsibility I am given over my work • The ability to make a positive impact on students • Frequent and clear communication from leadership • Being asked to provide my opinion on decisions • Receiving recognition from leadership • Receiving feedback from leadership • Support for my own professional development and growth • Emphasis on the importance of well-being • The ability to contribute to my department and colleagues • The opportunity to celebrate successes in the district • I do not feel valued as an employee in AISD

Table 2.

New item response options for the 2019–2020 **TELL** and **COC** AISD Surveys, “What are the reasons you plan to stay on your campus next school year?” The differences in the response options between the two surveys are in grey.

What are the reasons you plan to stay on your campus next school year? (Select all that apply.)	What are the reasons you plan to stay in AISD next school year? (Select all that apply.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with coworkers • Working environment/culture • Location • Commute • Professional growth opportunities • Working with families/communities • Benefits • Salary • Working with principals/leadership • Commitment to equity • Other • Availability of technology • Content of work/curriculum/resources • Academic reputation/high expectations • Working with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with coworkers • Working environment/culture • Location • Commute • Professional growth opportunities • Working with families/communities • Benefits • Salary • Working with principals/leadership • Commitment to equity • Other • Availability of technology • Content of my work • Reputation / high expectations

Table 3.

New item response options for the 2019–2020 **TELL** and **COC** AISD Surveys, “Why are you planning to leave your campus next year?” The differences in the response options between the two surveys are in grey.

Why are you planning to leave your campus next school year? (Select all that apply.)	Why are you planning to leave AISD / your campus next school year? (Select all that apply.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor work environment • Salary expectation not met • Unsatisfactory workload • Other • Family/personal reasons • Poor benefits package • Lack of promotion opportunities • Outdated / lack of technology • Large class sizes • School changes/closure • Teaching/curriculum change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor work environment • Salary expectation not met • Unsatisfactory workload • Other • Family/personal reasons • Poor benefits package • Lack of promotion opportunities • Outdated / lack of technology • Content of work changed • Location • Commute

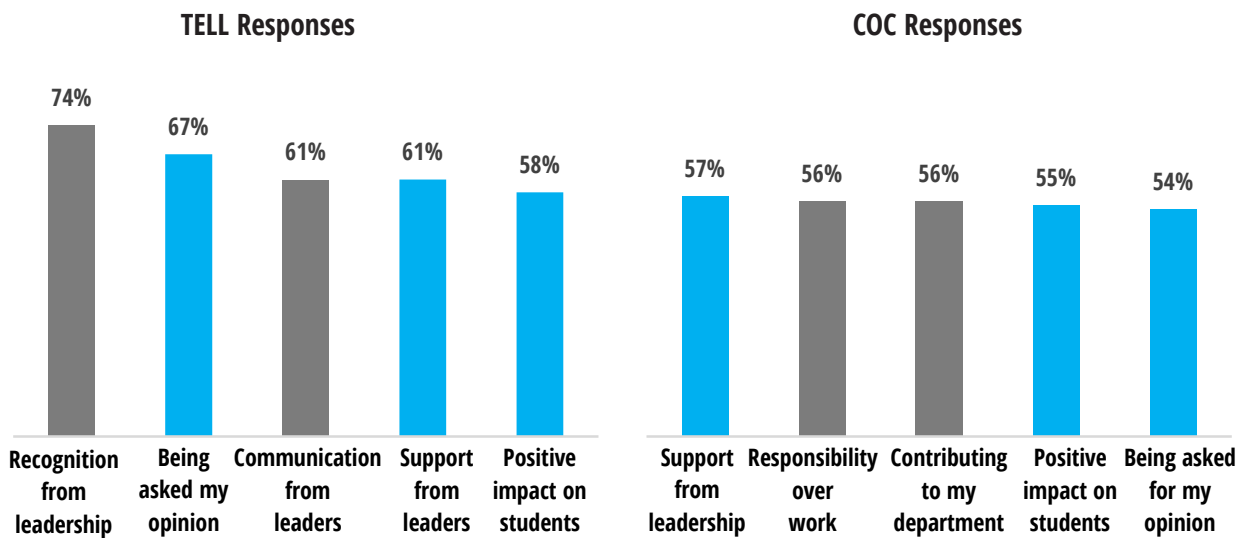
What Makes AISD Employees Feel Valued?

Both Central Office employees and campus-based employees were prompted to answer an item about what makes them feel valued as an employee in AISD (for central office employees) or on their campus (for campus-based employees). Respondents could select as many reasons as applied for feeling valued. However, it was possible that some employees did not feel valued as an employee in AISD or on their campus. To account for this, the response option “I do not feel valued as an employee in AISD / on my campus” was provided for this item. If respondents chose this response, the other options were not displayed.

Three out of the five top reasons for feeling valued overlapped between Central Office staff and campus-based staff, although the percentages of staff members who selected these items differed for campus-based and Central Office staff. The overlapping items selected were (a) support from leadership, (b) the ability to make a positive impact on students, and (c) being asked to provide opinions about decisions. Therefore, it seems that similar factors contributed to AISD employees both on campuses and within the Central Office feeling valued. The percentages of staff members who chose each of the top five most common responses in each group, as well as the response options shared by both groups, are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2.

Three of the top five most frequently selected responses by campus-based staff (n = 6,606) about what made them feel valued at work overlapped with those selected by Central Office staff (n = 680): the ability to make a positive impact on students, support from their leadership, and being asked to provide their opinion on decisions.



Source. TELL AISD Survey 2019–2020, AISD Central Office Climate Survey 2019–2020.

How Do Central Office and Campus-Based Employees Compare?

Leadership support and recognition were important to staff at both the campus and Central Office levels. Those on a campus cited that frequent and clear communication from leadership and receiving recognition from leadership were both very important to making them feel valued on their campus. Those at Central Office selected support from their leadership as their top reason for feeling valued at work, which is similar to the leadership-oriented reasons selected by campus-based staff.

Making a contribution and having a positive impact at work both fall under a similar theme, and therefore could be evidence of similarities between what makes employees feel valued. Within the AISD Central Office, staff selections indicated that the ability to contribute to their department and colleagues largely contributed in turn to their feeling valued within AISD. For campus-based employees, the ability to make a positive impact on students was the number one selection.

Differences were also found between the top five most common factors campus-based staff and Central Office staff gave for feeling valued. Central Office staff's responses, for example, indicated that the "level of responsibility given over my work" was the second most frequently endorsed reason for feeling valued. However, for campus-based staff, this reason did not make the top five. Additionally, the percentages of responses for the top five were more evenly distributed among Central Office staff and fell within a narrower range (from 54% to 57%), compared with the range of percentages for campus-based staff (from 58% to 74%). These two points may provide evidence that some supports for Central Office staff and campus-based staff may need to be differentiated to ensure that employees across the district feel valued at work.

Another difference observed between Central Office employees and campus-based employees was the percentage who reported not feeling valued in their working environment. Those in the AISD Central Office were almost three times (18%) as likely to report not feeling valued as an employee in their workplace than were those based on a campus (6.7%). However, after further investigation of the data, it was found that more than half of the employees in the Central Office who reported not feeling valued in AISD came from a single department or area. When only the responses independent of this particular department were reported, only 8.6% of Central Office employees reported not feeling valued in AISD, thus making the rates of not feeling valued much more comparable between Central Office and campus-based employees. Results for all departments and campuses were or will be reported to designated leadership in those areas to better support staff.

These results can also be viewed by going to the AISD DRE website (<https://www.austinisd.org/dre>), then (a) select "Interactive Reports," then (b) select "Central Office Climate Survey 2019–2020," from the interactive reports list in the upper left-hand corner of the page, and then (c) use the filter tool to view specific divisions and departments.

Survey Item Development

Literature searches were conducted to determine some of the most common factors that contribute to employees feeling valued at work and their reasons for leaving. Some of the most important factors for feeling valued include:

- leader characteristics,
- ability to positively contribute to students, colleagues, or one's department, and
- level of responsibility one has over their work.

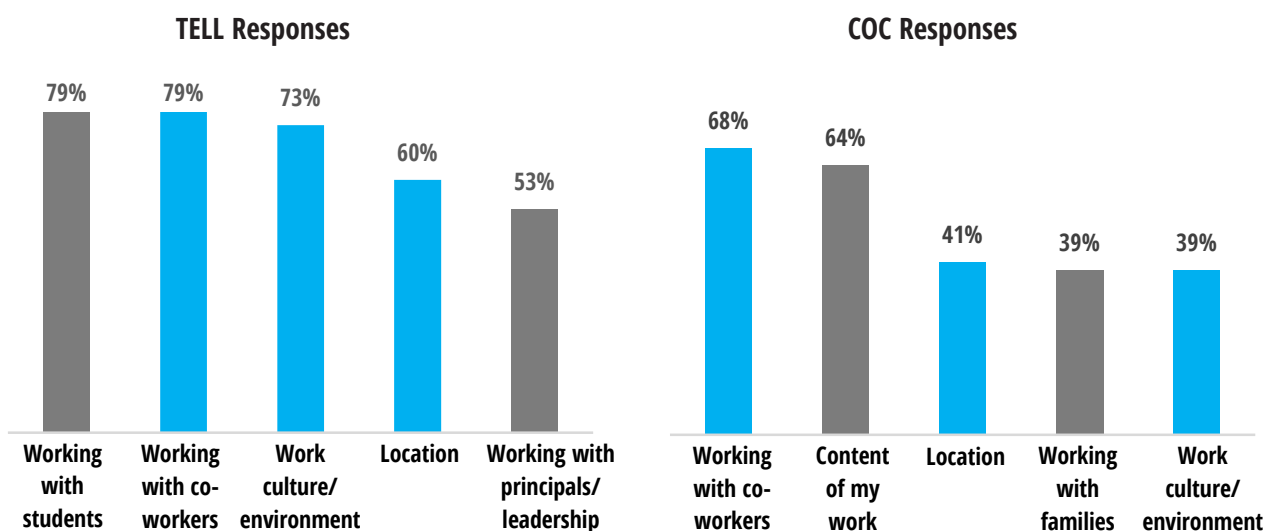
An additional source of response choices for the item asking why employees leave came from an exit survey that every employee who leaves AISD is given. Previous responses to these exit surveys provided some of the choices for this item. Not all staff members fill out this survey, however, so a literature review provided validation for the responses and additional response options.

Why Do Employees Stay in AISD?

Overall, 93% of employees (n = 5,127) who answered this new item on the TELL Survey indicated that they planned to stay on their campus in the following school year. On the COC Survey, 96% (n = 516) of those who answered the same item indicated they planned to stay in AISD in the next school year. Campus-based and Central Office staff in AISD shared three common factors that made them want to stay employed in AISD: (a) working with coworkers, (b) work environment/culture, and (c) location. Percentages of responses to these items for both types of staff members, as well as the areas in which their top five responses overlap, are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

Campus and Central Office staff reported similar reasons for staying in AISD next year. Three of the top five most frequently selected responses chosen by campus-based staff (n = 5,127) and Central Office staff (n = 516) were [working with coworkers](#), [work environment/culture](#), and [location](#).



Source. TELL AISD Survey 2019–2020, AISD Central Office Climate Survey 2019–2020.

How Do Central Office and Campus-Based Employees Compare?

Despite the fact that three out of the top five reasons given for staying in AISD by campus-based and Central Office staff overlapped, the actual percentages differed. Additionally, responses differed between campus and Central Office staff on other factors contributing to their expressed desire to stay. Campus-based staff indicated “working with students” and “working with principals/leadership” as reasons for staying employed with the district. Central Office staff, however, selected “content of my work” and “working with families/communities” to round out their top five reasons for staying employed with the district.

Since Central Office staff were much less likely than campus-based staff to work directly with students, “working with students” was not an option on the COC Survey. Instead, they could select the response “working with families/communities.” Since this similar response choice was in the top five most frequently selected response in both groups, it may reflect a fourth overlap in the most common reasons for staying.

For both groups, “other” was the least likely response option to be selected as one of the reasons for staying. Employees only selected this option if their reason was not listed in the response set. It could be concluded that the options listed for this item were appropriate and relevant. Overall, it seemed that some of the same factors contributed to campus-based as well as Central Office staff wanting to stay in AISD.

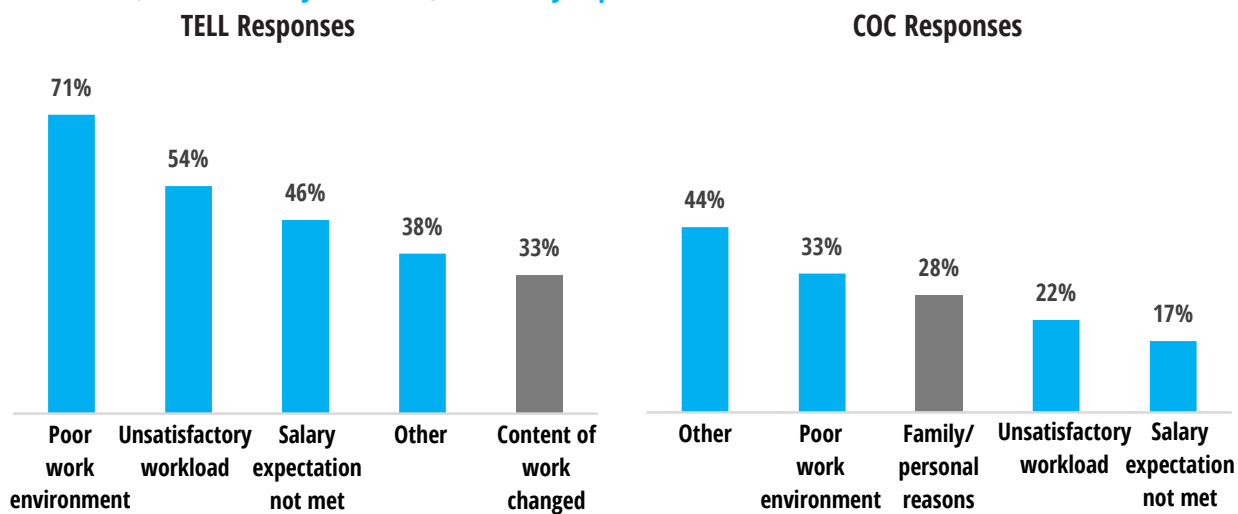
What Reasons Did AISD Employees Give for Leaving the District?

The percentages of respondents who indicated they wanted to leave their positions in AISD were low: 7% (n = 375) of campus-based staff and 4% (n = 24) of Central Office staff. Because of the low number of employees stating their desire to leave, the response counts were much lower for this question than for the previous two. As for the previous items, comparisons were conducted for the top five most-endorsed response options from the TELL and COC Surveys.

Central Office staff and campus-based staff in AISD shared four out of the top five most common reasons for leaving AISD: “other,” “poor work environment,” “unsatisfactory workload,” and “salary expectation not met”(Figure 4). However, this may not conclusively indicate similarities between the two types of staff. For each response, differences were found between the percentages for campus-based staff and for Central Office staff.

Figure 4.

Four of the top five most frequently selected responses to the item asking respondents why they were planning to leave overlapped between campus-based staff respondents (n = 375), and Central Office staff (n = 24): **other**, **poor work environment**, **unsatisfactory workload**, and **salary expectations not met**.



Source. TELL AISD Survey 2019–2020, AISD Central Office Climate Survey 2019–2020.

How Did Central Office and Campus-Based Employees Compare in Their Responses?

Some differences existed between the two groups’ responses to this survey item. Twenty-eight percent of campus-based employees selected “family, personal reasons” as one of their top five reasons for leaving, while only 17% of Central Office employees selected “family, personal reasons” as one of their reasons for leaving. For Central Office staff, the selection “content of work changed” was fifth in the top five reasons for leaving. This could not be compared with responses by campus-based staff because this response choice did not appear on the survey for campus-based employees. Differences between the response choices for the two types of surveys were minimal; a list of the two surveys and their respective differences can be found in the appendix.

Additionally, the top reason for leaving selected by Central Office staff (75%) was “poor work environment,” while only 33% of campus-based staff selected this reason. The top reason for campus-based staff was unknown because the response “other” (chosen by 44%) only indicates that their reason was not listed in the response choices. It may be helpful to include a write-in prompt for employees who select “other” in future exit surveys.

Information was also gained from the least frequently selected reasons people wanted to leave. In the TELL Survey, “outdated / lack of technology” and “poor benefits package” were least likely to be selected as reasons for wanting leave. However, in the Central Office Survey, the reasons least likely to be chosen for wanting to leave were “outdated / lack of technology” and “commute.” Therefore, agreement is apparent for at least one of the reasons least likely to influence an employee’s decision to leave.

Conclusion

The results of this analysis of three new items on the COC and TELL Surveys revealed some similarities and differences between campus-based and Central Office employees. On the item about feeling valued at work, both types of staff selected responses within the themes of leadership and making a contribution / positive impact as two of their top three selections. However, the percentage of employees not feeling valued was also higher for Central Office than campus-based employees.

Similarities were found between both areas of employment in their responses to the items about why they chose stay and why they chose to leave AISD, but differences were found in the percentages for each response. Four out of the top five reasons for leaving for both Central Office and campus-based employees overlapped. These were “other,” “poor work environment,” “unsatisfactory workload,” and “salary expectation not met.” However, the high frequency with which both groups selected “other” indicated that the list of possible reasons was not comprehensive enough. In future surveys, the reasons given when “other” is a response should be analyzed to learn additional potential reasons employees have for choosing to leave.

Lastly, the percentage of employees who expressed a desire to leave their position in AISD was low for both types of worksite. This effort to learn factors contributing to AISD employees’ well-being and their motivation for choosing to stay in AISD underscores the district’s interest in retaining staff. The collaboration between the AISD CARES team and the DRE in creating measures and adding them to the annual staff surveys was a successful step toward this goal. Further analysis of future survey data will continue to improve understanding of what makes employees feel valued and want to stay in AISD. Campus administrators and Central Office staff directors may access this information to greater understand employees’ needs for fulfilling employment in AISD.

Appendix A

Table A1

Percentage of Respondents on the TELL Survey Who Selected Each Response to the Question “What Makes You Feel Valued as an Employee on Your Campus?” (n = 6,606)

Response options	%
The ability to make a positive impact on students	74.40%
Support from my leadership	67.86%
Frequent and clear communication from leadership	61.25%
Being asked to provide my opinion on decisions	60.66%
Receiving recognition from leadership	58.40%
Receiving feedback from leadership	58.02%
The level of responsibility I am given over my work	55.98%
*The ability to contribute to my school and colleagues	55.12%
Support for my own professional development and growth	53.42%
Emphasis on the importance of well-being	51.26%
*The opportunity to celebrate successes on my campus	48.70%
*I do not feel valued as an employee on my campus	6.65%

*Response unique to or modified for this survey

Table A2

Percentage of Respondents on the COC Survey Who Selected Each Response to the Question “What Makes You Feel Valued as an Employee in AISD?” (n = 680)

Response options	%
Support from my leadership	57.35%
The level of responsibility I am given over my work	56.47%
*The ability to contribute to my department and colleagues	56.32%
The ability to make a positive impact on students	54.71%
Being asked to provide my opinion on decisions	53.97%
Support for my own professional development and growth	47.50%
Frequent and clear communication from leadership	47.21%
Receiving feedback from leadership	45.44%
Receiving recognition from leadership	43.53%
Emphasis on the importance of well-being	36.91%
*The opportunity to celebrate successes in the district	30.15%
*I do not feel valued as an employee in AISD	18.09%

*Response unique to or modified for this survey

Appendix B

Table B1

Percentage of Respondents on the TELL Survey Who Selected Each Response Option to the Item “What Are the Reasons You Plan to Stay on Your Campus Next Year?” (n = 5,127)

Response option	%
*Working with students	79.44%
Working with coworkers	78.76%
Working environment / school culture	72.65%
Location	59.78%
Working with principals/leadership	53.23%
Working with families/community	48.76%
Commute	46.65%
*Academic reputation / high student expectations	38.99%
Commitment to equity	35.89%
Professional growth opportunities	31.48%
Content/curriculum/resources	30.90%
Benefits	26.19%
Salary	19.95%
Availability of technology	18.31%
Other	3.61%

*Response unique to or modified for this survey

Table B2

Percentage of Respondents on the COC Survey Who Selected Each Response Option to the Item “What Are the Reasons You Plan to Stay in AISD Next Year?” (n = 516)

Response option	%
Working with coworkers	68.09%
Content of my work	63.62%
Location	41.44%
Working with families/communities	38.72%
Working environment/culture	38.52%
Benefits	38.33%
Salary	36.38%
Commute	31.71%
Commitment to equity	31.32%
Working with principals/leadership	30.74%
Professional growth opportunities	29.38%
*Reputation / high expectations	24.51%
Availability of technology	16.54%
Other	11.67%

*Response unique to or modified for this survey

Appendix C

Table C1

Percentage of Respondents on the TELL Survey Who Selected Each Response Option to the Item “If you Indicated That You Plan to Leave Your Campus Next Year, Why Are You Planning to Leave Your Campus Next School Year? (Select All That Apply.) (n = 375)

Response option	%
Other	44%
Poor work environment	32.80%
Family/personal reasons	27.73%
Unsatisfactory workload	21.60%
Salary expectation not met	16.80%
*Large class sizes	12.53%
*School changes/closure	11.46%
Lack of promotion opportunities	11.46%
*Teaching/curriculum change	6.66%
Poor benefits package	5.60%
Outdated / lack of technology	4.53%

*Response unique to or modified for this survey

Table C2

Percentage of Respondents on the COC Survey Who Selected Each Response Option to the Item “If you Indicated That You Plan to Leave Your Campus Next Year, Why Are You Planning to Leave Your Campus Next School Year? (Select All That Apply.) (n = 24)

Response option	%
Poor work environment	70.83%
Unsatisfactory workload	54.16%
Salary expectation not met	45.83%
Other	37.50%
*Content of work changed	33.33%
Family/personal reasons	16.66%
Poor benefits package	16.66%
Lack of promotion opportunities	16.66%
Location	12.50%
Commute	8.33%
Outdated / lack of technology	8.33%

*Response unique to or modified for this survey

Reference

Renshaw, T. L., Long, A. C., & Cook, C. R. (2015). Assessing teachers' positive psychological functioning at work: Development and validation of the Teacher Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 30(2), 289.



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