



Be Honest on Intent to Return Forms

By Educator Barnes – February 22, 2020

This is my 14th year as an educator, and every single year I have been asked to complete an intent to return form. These forms tend to ask if educators are planning to return to the school the following school year and what they would like their role to be. Each year, I have watched countless colleagues become stressed out over this form. This should not be the case; this is to help plan for the following school year.

This year, I had to complete this form as an administrator. I marked I was returning, but most people at my job (including my principal) know that I will consider other opportunities after the following school year. This does not mean I won't be at my school after the next school year; it means that I am keeping my options open. However, next year will not be one of those years. The other part of administration is viewing intent to return forms of staff. Not one intent to return form surprised me.

This is why I believe people should be honest. I have not left a school where a principal was surprised that I left. I keep to myself, but I am a straight shooter when it comes time to have a conversation. Teachers who are not honest are doing a disservice to themselves.

I remember when I was interested in changing roles in education, and I confided in a principal. That principal put opportunities on my radar. This principal told me that retaining me would be ideal for the school, but the principal also cared about me having an opportunity to pursue a different role even if it was not at the same school. Saying you want to leave, for any reason, should not become ugly. The teachers who lie are only lying to themselves. Most people know the teachers who do not want to be at the school, so why lie about it on a form?

The other reason teachers should be honest is so they will know how the principal feels. Will the principal write the teacher a reference letter? This is important information the teacher needs to know. The next school will need to check references. Honesty may also get some changes in the teacher's favor. My husband and I talked about stay interviews on my podcast this week. These are interviews employers have to retain staff. Many times intent to returns turn into stay interviews because a talented teacher indicates he or she would like to leave. No, it should not take until the second semester for school administration to try and retain, but they are going to try.

At the end of the day, if the teacher really fears retribution, I understand why the teacher would not be honest. If a teacher is scared, then that school is definitely not the right place. If the teacher fear is rooted in letting someone down because he or she wants to leave or wants a change, I assert that fear should not exist. Students need teachers to take care of themselves and make the best choices.

Being honest allows administrators the ability to keep an eye out for other educators to fill potential vacancies. The school must move forward with or without the current teachers. Don't lie on the form, and don't lie to yourself.