

Leading Leaders: Helping Principals Grow

Association of Metropolitan School Districts
November 3, 2023



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



Our Team



Dr. Katie Pikel
Executive Director of Educational Leadership
University of Minnesota



Dr. Peter Olson-Skog
Superintendent
District 197

Access This Presentation



Engaging our Preconceptions

Step 1) Make a t-Chart

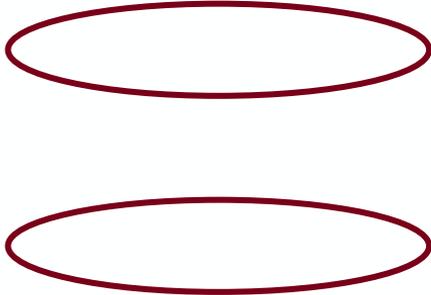
Engaging our Preconceptions

Step 2) On the left side, use single words or short phrases to describe what your principals do.

Tasks/Responsibilities	

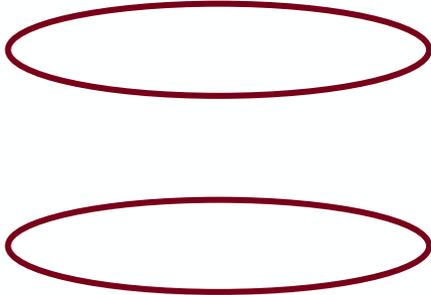
Engaging our Preconceptions

Step 3) Of the things principals do/tasks you listed, **circle those you think are most important.**

Tasks/Responsibilities	
	

Engaging our Preconceptions

Step 4) On the right side, **list potential barriers** for principals to do the things that are most important

Tasks/Responsibilities	Potential Barriers
	

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

*The state of the 'Principalship'
in Minnesota*

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Through funding from the Joyce Foundation and the Minneapolis Foundation, CAREI developed a statewide survey of principals to elevate their voices in Minnesota while informing multiple stakeholders including (but not limited to) policymakers, school boards, principal licensure and professional development programs, and organizations like MESPA and MASSP that support Minnesota principals.

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Survey Administration

- Every principal and AP, and Charter Leader in MN sent a person-specific email
- 2023 Survey launches November 1
- Report of findings of 2021 survey at z.umn.edu/MNPS22

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College of Education and Human Development
Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement

HOME ABOUT US SERVICES DISTRICT ASSEMBLY RESOURCES PEOPLE

Minnesota Principals Survey (MhPS)

34% response rate (797/2,333)

In the late fall of 2021, principals across the state participated in the inaugural Minnesota Principals Survey (MhPS). The goal of the survey, generously funded by The Minneapolis and Joyce Foundations, is to elevate principal voice. Today we are thrilled to share the extensive findings of that survey in this full report: z.umn.edu/mnps22. (The full report includes an executive summary—to access only the executive summary, visit z.umn.edu/mnps22es.)

Encouragingly, school leaders reported high general job satisfaction with 83% of respondents somewhat agreeing or agreeing that they were generally satisfied with being a leader in their school. Contributing most to this satisfaction were relationships with students and staff, and seeing students grow—socially, emotionally, and academically. Finally, 59% of leaders reported that they felt their work is valued by the staff at their school. Principals also reported that they have faced a number of challenges, and could use additional support, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental health resources rose to the top of the list of needed supports.

Executive Summary
1 Page Summary
Full Summary

What Principals Tell Us They Need



2021 Survey Topics

- Career Information
- Job Satisfaction
- Preparation and Licensure
- Professional Development
- Working Conditions
- Influence
- Educational Ecosystem
- **COVID-19 and School Transformation**
- Culturally Responsive School Leadership
- Leadership Self Efficacy and Needed Supports
 - School Improvement
 - Management and Decision-making
 - Culture and Climate
 - Instructional Leadership

2023 Survey Topics

- Career Information
- Job Satisfaction
- Preparation and Licensure
- Professional Development
- Working Conditions
- Influence
- Educational Ecosystem
- **Mental Health & Wellbeing**
- **2023 Legislative Changes**
- Culturally Responsive School Leadership
- Leadership Self Efficacy and Needed Supports
 - School Improvement
 - Management and Decision-making
 - Culture and Climate
 - Instructional Leadership

Respondents - 2021

District: 92%
Charter: 7%

Elementary: 49%
Secondary: 48%

Principals / Directors: 71%
Assistant Principals: 26%

Female: 49%
Male: 50%

BIPOC: 13%
White: 87%

34% response rate (779/2,323)

Greater Minnesota: **46% (362)**

Metro Area: **54% (412)**



Next Step: Follow- Up Focus Groups - 2022

Participants

- Twin Cities leaders (2 groups)
- Greater Minnesota leaders (2 groups)
- Elementary leaders (1 group)
- Secondary leaders (1 group)
- Leaders identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) (1 group)
- Leaders identifying as Female (1 group)
- Early-career leaders (1 group)

Topics

- **Professional development**
- **Instructional leadership**
- **Culturally Responsive School Leadership**
- **Staff and student mental health**
- **Community-Engaged Leadership***
- State accountability
- Supervisor support
- Group-specific questions

Working Conditions

- **79%** of respondents feel their primary role is to be an instructional leader...
- However, only **61%** of respondents report their supervisor ensures they have the time to do so.
- Only **46%** of respondents agreed that their current workload is sustainable

Experiences missing from Preparation Programs and Internship

1. Facilitating conversations about equity
2. Addressing staff culture challenges
3. Developing and evaluating non-teaching staff
4. Scheduling experience
5. Engaging families and community members
6. Addressing student discipline challenges
7. Developing and evaluating teachers

Job Satisfaction

Percent of respondents who, when thinking about their work experience over the past three months, “Agreed” or “Somewhat agreed” with...

“I am generally satisfied with being a leader at this school.”

- Overall: 83%
- Greater Minnesota: 81%
- Metro Area: 84%
- Elementary 85%
- Secondary 80%

Top elements that most contribute to satisfaction at work:

1. Relationships with students: **68%**
2. Relationships with staff: **60%**
3. Seeing students grow socially and emotionally: 48%
4. Seeing students grow academically: 37%

Professional Development

Type of PD Engaged In Most Often

1. Presentations at scheduled school / district meetings
2. Networking with other educational leaders
3. Other workshops or trainings
4. State or local conferences
5. MESPA provided opportunities
6. Other cohort-based learning experience
7. MASSP provided opportunities
8. Formal coaching
9. Formal mentoring
10. National conferences
11. Minnesota Principals Academy
12. Doctoral coursework

Rank of Usefulness of PD Experiences

1. Minnesota Principals Academy
2. Networking with other educational leaders
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Professional Development

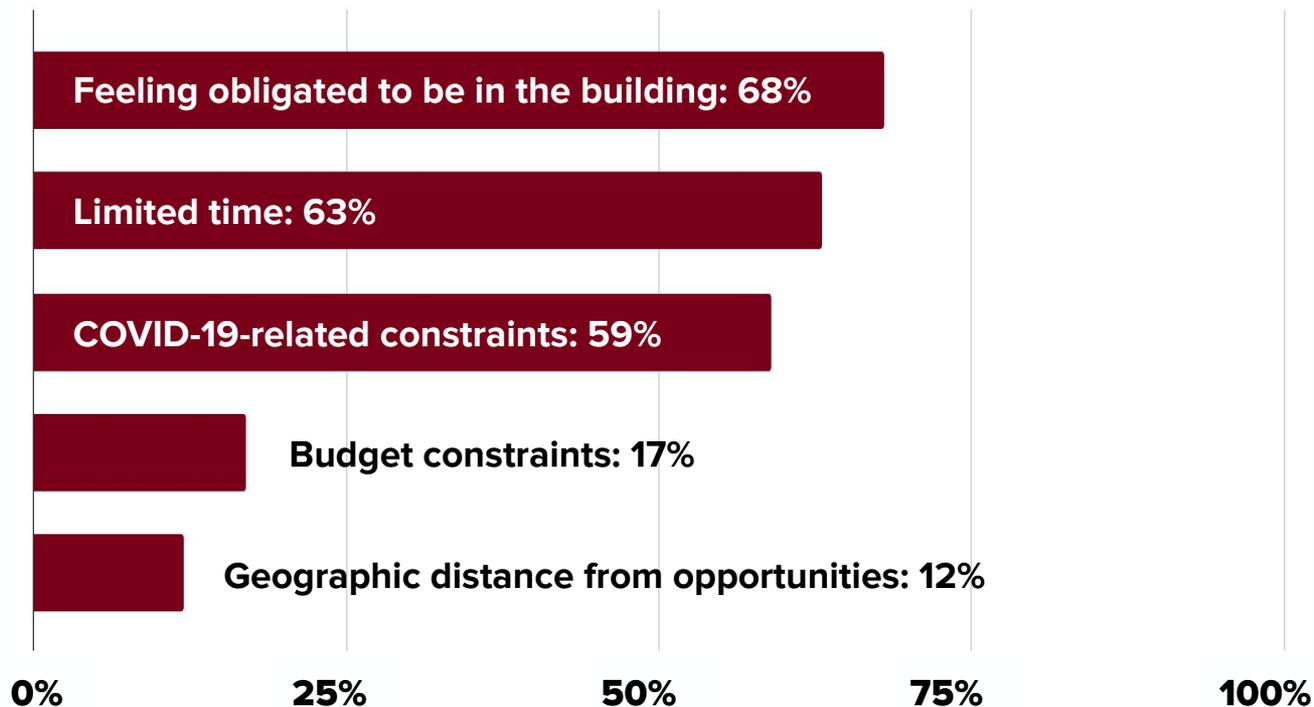
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12. Presentations at scheduled school or district meetings

Top Barriers to Participating in Professional Development



Time Spent on Tasks by Type

- **Internal administrative tasks:** personnel issues, scheduling, reports, budgeting, operational meetings
- **Instructional tasks:** curriculum, instruction, assessment, PLC meetings, data analysis, classroom observations, coaching
- **Student interactions:** academic guidance, discipline, seeking student voice, relationship building
- **Family and community interactions:** formal and informal interactions, attending events, seeking parent or community input
- **My own professional growth:** self-reflection, attending PD, reviewing research, reading, networking with other administrative colleagues

Response options

Much less time than I would like

Somewhat less time than I would like

About the right amount of time

Somewhat more time than I would like

Much more time than I would like

Internal administrative tasks



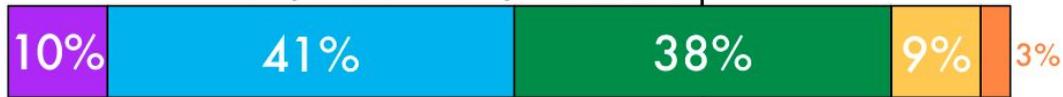
Instructional tasks



Student interactions



Family and community interactions



My own professional growth



About the right amount of time

Much less / Somewhat less time than I would ideally spend

Somewhat more / Much more time than I would ideally spend

Principal Leadership Responsibility Areas

School
Improvement

Management &
Decision-making

Culture &
Climate

Instructional
Leadership

Average Level of Confidence by Area of Leadership

Response Options

1: Little to none

2: Insufficient

3: Sufficient

4: More than sufficient

3.03

School
Improvement

Management &
Decision-making

3.12

2.90

Culture &
Climate

Instructional
Leadership

2.86



Principals are in the middle. We get pressure from staff and families to meet their needs. We get pressure from [district] staff to implement with little opportunity for input. It can be overwhelming to have such pressure from both directions with limited support. Where I work, things are not very transparent and the vision is clear but not implemented very well. We admire the challenges we face with limited direction to move forward to overcome those challenges. We rest on the past history of the district.

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Recommendations

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Practice & Policy Briefs

MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION - HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 2023

Authors
Katie Pekel
Sara Kemper

Center for
Applied Research and
Educational Improvement

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover

INTRODUCTION

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota conducted the first biennial Minnesota Principals Survey (MnPS) in November and December 2021 to “reinvigorate principal voices” in Minnesota education policy and better understand the working conditions, concerns, and needs of Minnesota school leaders. Overall, nearly 800 principals, assistant principals, and charter school directors working in public schools across the state responded to the survey, the results of which can be accessed at <https://carei.umn.edu/mnps>.

To better understand school leaders’ experiences and solicit their ideas, we conducted a series of focus groups with 49 Minnesota principals in November 2022. The purpose of the Policy and Practice Briefs series is to summarize our findings and recommendations from the survey and follow-up focus groups in five focus areas: **professional development, instructional leadership, culturally responsive school leadership, community engaged leadership, and staff and student mental health**. This executive summary highlights key findings and selected recommendations in each of these areas, as well as overarching recommendations across the series, which can be accessed in full at [z.umn.edu/MnPS-PPS](https://carei.umn.edu/mnps-pps).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As indicated on the 2021 MnPS, the type of PD participated in most frequently by principals—presentations at scheduled school or district meetings (70% of respondents)—was rated least useful. Oppositely, two of the types of PD school leaders participated in least frequently—the Minnesota Principals Academy (MPA) (7% of respondents) and doctoral coursework (5% of respondents)—were rated among the most useful. We asked focus group participants why they thought some forms of PD were more useful than others, and what might help them to better access high-quality PD.

Key Focus Group Findings

- Participants shared that PD experiences such as MPA, doctoral coursework, and other forms of networking were especially useful because they involved **sustained learning with peers**, and often included access to **relevant research** findings that addressed their specific challenges.
- In order to leave school to attend PD, principals emphasized the need for a **reliable backup plan** so others could fulfill principals’ essential responsibilities as well as **personal comfort** with delegating.

Selected Recommendations

- **For Policymakers.** Ensure the 125 clock hours for principal licensure are meaningful, and address content areas in which principals indicate low self-efficacy (e.g., Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Instructional Leadership).
- **For System Leaders.** Invest in developmental approaches to principal learning that are ongoing and collective in nature (e.g., PLCs, collaboratively engaging in problems of practice) versus traditional “sit and get” PD.
- **For Building Leaders.** Be proactive in developing a delegation structure that allows you to be out of the building and secure your supervisor’s buy-in.
- **For Principal Preparation and PD Providers.** Ensure that professional learning programs leverage high-impact strategies such as one-on-one support, learning communities, and job-embedded learning.

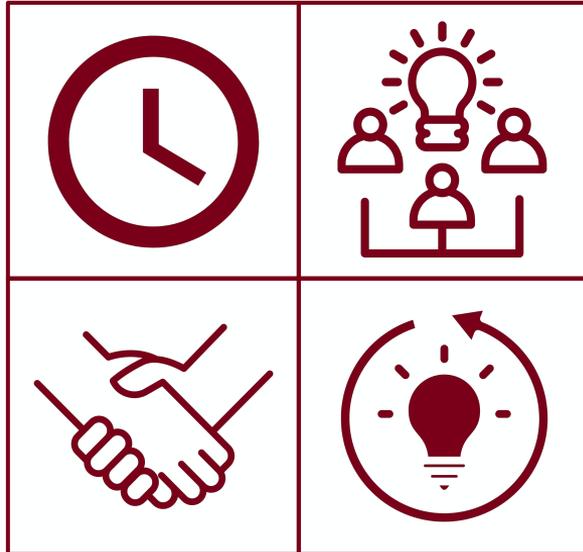
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

A majority of Minnesota school leaders (62%) told us on the 2021 MnPS that they spend less time than they would like on instructional tasks (like curriculum, instruction, assessment, and PLC meetings), and a similar proportion (60%) reported spending more time than they would like on internal administrative tasks (like personnel issues, scheduling, and reports). Furthermore, seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents also told us that they felt their primary role was



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Across all of these, principals tell us 4Ts need to be addressed:



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Time

Principals told us they spent more time than they would like on administrative tasks and less time than instructional leadership and family and community engagement; that there is not enough time for their own professional growth or engagement in policy influence and that that daily 'urgent' tasks (e.g., finding substitute teachers, responding to mental health crises) take time away from more strategic tasks like teacher coaching and curricular alignment.



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Trust

Principals wanted their supervisors to trust and support them—to ‘have their backs’ when needing to make an unpopular decision or lead an uncomfortable conversation.



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Transformation

More than half of principals report their workloads are not sustainable. Investments in high-quality, sustained professional development, fundamental restructuring of the use of time and resources, and sustained support will all need to take place. Our recommendations center the transformations that could take place in order to ensure the role of school leader is truly transformational.

Two Overarching Recommendations

MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION + HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

June 2023

Authors

Katie Pekel
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Synthesizing 779 responses to a 70-question, comprehensive survey about the principalship along with the feedback of 49 leaders in 9 focus groups into a brief set of recommendations is not simple; however, a lengthy list would not be useful, either. Therefore, our overarching recommendations each address four critical needs communicated through the survey and focus groups by principals: Time, Training, Trust, and Transformation—the four T's.

Time. Over and over again, principals conveyed time as an issue. In the survey, they told us they spent more time than they would like on administrative tasks and less time than they would like on instructional leadership and family and community engagement. They told us there is not enough time for their own professional growth or engagement in policy influence. In focus groups, they reiterated that daily 'urgent' tasks (e.g., finding substitute teachers, responding to mental health crises) take time away from more strategic tasks like teacher coaching and curricular alignment.

Training. Overwhelmingly, principals told us they needed more and better training. On one hand, leaders felt their licensure programs had prepared them well to carry out the management and decision-making aspects of their jobs. On the other hand, respondents lacked confidence in instructional leadership—the aspect of their job that nearly 80% said was their primary role—specifically as it relates to culturally responsive instructional practices. They cite feeling obligated to be in their buildings, limited time, and a lack of access to high quality, research based professional development as obstacles to their own growth and improvement as leaders.

Trust. Principals report high levels of job satisfaction and that they feel their work is valued by the staff at their school; however, they also expressed trepidation about leading amidst community division and facilitating conversations about gender identity and race. Principals wanted their supervisors to trust and support them—to 'have their backs' when needing to make an unpopular decision or lead an uncomfortable conversation.

Transformation. The role of the principal is immense, and more than

half of principals tell us that their workloads are not sustainable. While 90% of leaders tell us they feel that they can be successful leading their schools, to support their sustainability may require transforming key aspects of the principalship. Investments in high-quality, sustained professional development, fundamental restructuring of the use of time and resources, and sustained support will all need to take place. Our recommendations center the transformations that could take place in order to ensure the role of school leader is truly transformational.

RECOMMENDATION 1: DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO INITIAL TRAINING, INTERNSHIP, AND ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Both the MN Principal Survey data and the follow-up focus groups highlight a need for a developmental approach to principals' initial training and internship experiences and to their ongoing professional development. The vast majority of those entering the principalship have certification and experience in education. However, those experiences and their credentials are varied, giving some more experience in literacy and others more experience in mental health. We argue that candidates' prior credentialing and experiences should be accounted for in the crafting of their initial training programs, thus allowing for an approach that meets their content and developmental needs. This approach can and should be carried through into the internship experience, which we feel should be significantly broadened as well as into the ongoing professional development experiences of licensed administrators.

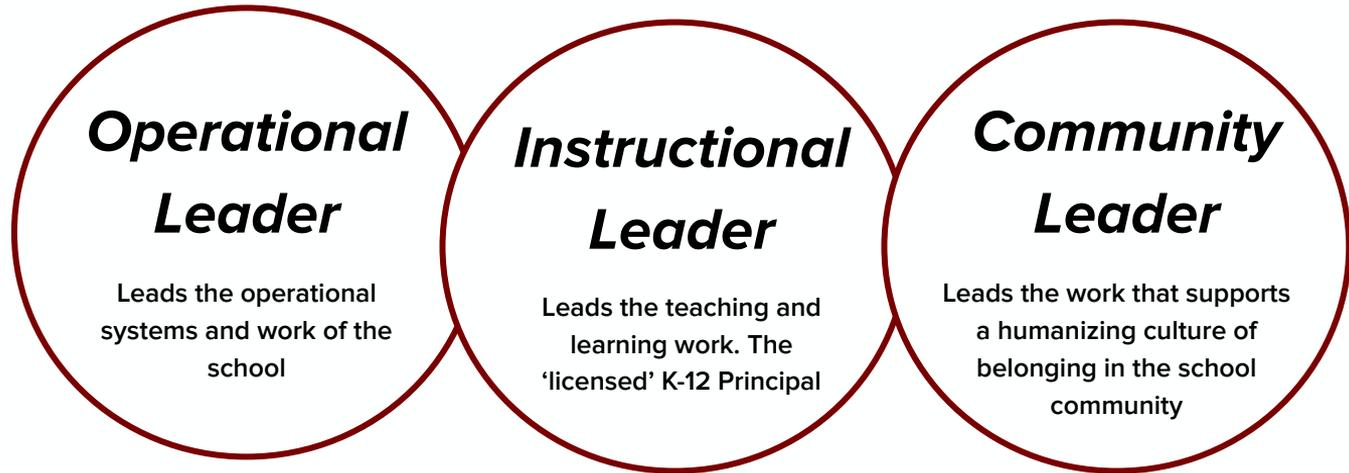
Initial Training. Our survey data demonstrates that leaders feel their initial preparation programs solidly prepared them in areas that largely fall into the category of management and decision making while they report feeling less prepared in areas like instructional and culturally responsive school leadership. Licensed Minnesota principals are highly credentialed with a minimum of 60 credits beyond their bachelor's degree and a demonstration of entry level competency in 86 competencies per Minnesota Administrative Rule 3512.0510. However, 58% of principals reported 'culturally



Developmental Approach to Initial Training, Internship, and Ongoing Professional Development



A Different School Leadership Model



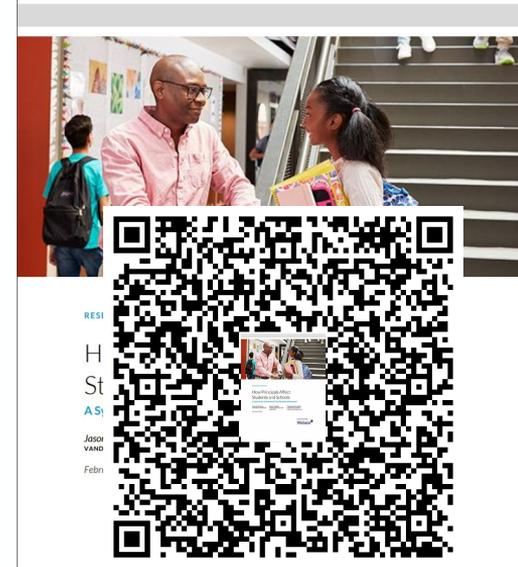


Do Principals Really Matter?

Exploring the research behind this leadership role

Impact of the principal

“Across six rigorous studies estimating principals’ effects using panel data, principals’ contributions to student achievement were nearly as large as the average effects of teachers identified in similar studies. Principals’ effects, however, are larger in scope because they are averaged over all students in a school, rather than a classroom.”



Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). How principals affect students and schools. *Wallace Foundation*

Studies demonstrate that schools with more effective principals have:

- Lower student absenteeism and chronic absenteeism.
- Higher teacher job satisfaction.
- Reduced teacher turnover, particularly of effective teachers.
- Better academic achievement among students

Replacing a below average elementary principal with an above average principal would result in an additional 2.9 months of math learning and 2.7 months of reading learning for students

Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). How principals affect students and schools. *Wallace Foundation*



So then, what do we know about
how to help principals further
develop as **instructional leaders?**

Dr. Olson Skog and Dr. LaDue's work

BY THE NUMBERS...

4

DISTRICTS

Mid-sized, suburban, purposive and convenience sampling

14

PRINCIPALS

At least one elementary and one secondary, diversity of age, gender and experience

7

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

5 superintendents, 1 principal supervisor, 1 DO staff who shared supervision

We found...

A lot of
agreement
between
principals and
their supervisors
on what
principals need

We found...

A lot of **agreement** between principals and their supervisors on what principals need

Some interesting **differences**, too

We found...

A lot of **agreement** between principals and their supervisors on what principals need

Some interesting **differences**, too

Many **practical suggestions**

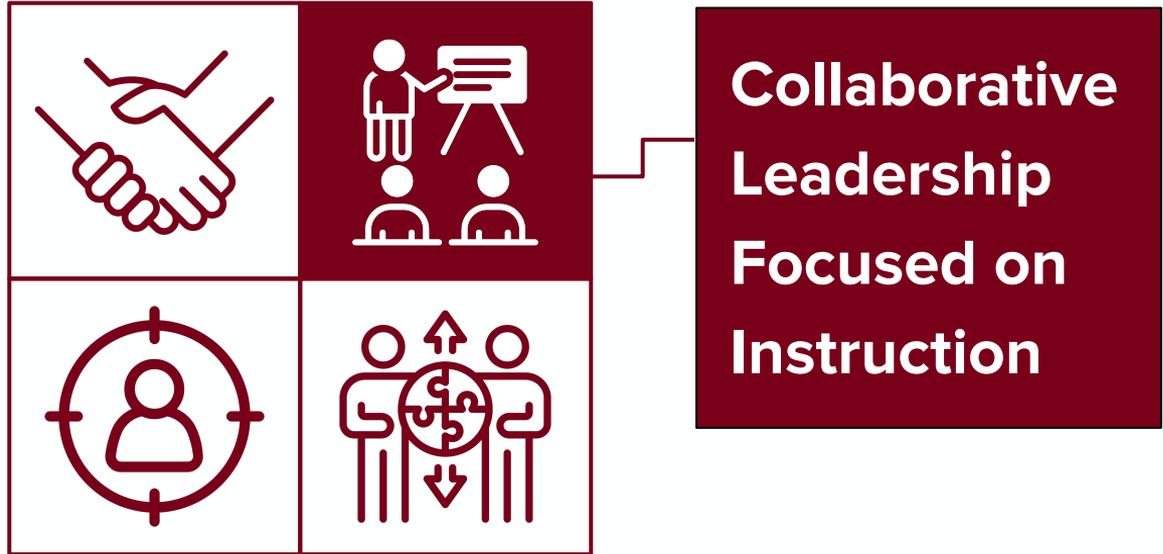
THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Their ideas fit (loosely) into **4 categories** of superintendent (or designee) leadership:

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY



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THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY



Leadership Grounded in Trust

★ = *Heavier emphasis*

P = Principals

S = Supervisors

P	S	
★	◆	Trust
★	◆	Deep Personal Knowledge as Individuals
◆	◆	Deep Professional Knowledge as Individuals
★	◆	Vulnerability/Authenticity
★	◆	Caring
★	◆	Predictability/Consistency

Actions that ground leadership in trust

Personal Connections

- Regular, individual meetings
- Observe them in action
- Questions that are both personal and professional

Model

- Vulnerability
- Predictability
- Knowing your impact



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“

*“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion
that I am the decisive element.*

*It’s my personal approach that creates the climate.
It’s my daily mood that makes the weather.”*

- Haim Ginott

”

Collaborative Instructional Leadership

★ = *Heavier emphasis*

P = Principals

S = Supervisors

P	S	
★	◆	Co-creation
★	◆	Co-reflection
◆	★	Clear Expectations
◆	◆	Common Language and Definitions
◆	◆	Coherent systems and frameworks

Actions to collaborate on instructional leadership

Learn together, then co-create

- Vision
- Definition
- Standards & Expectations



Adaptive Leadership

 = *Heavier emphasis*

P = Principals

S = Supervisors

P	S	
		Creating culture of learning
		Coaching
		Feedback
		Empowerment
		Shared Leadership
		Modeling

Adaptive Leadership Actions

Needs-based learning

- Separate evaluation and feedback
- Co-create rubrics

Engage principal voice in decision making

- Two-way conversations
- Create strengths-based district leadership opportunities at the district level

Adaptive
Personalized
Leadership



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Systems Leadership Actions

System Coherence Definition

- Why, Loose/Tight, Roles

Leadership Development

- Frameworks beyond Instructional Leadership (eg. CRSL)

District Office Support

- Alignment
- Differentiation (e.g., Elementary Compared to Secondary)



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Activity: Talk with a partner or two (Zoomers will be put into breakout groups)

What is an action you might take based on these findings?

What questions do you have?

5:00
Stop

So now what?

As a state: principals have told us they **need better support** and **better tools**. To provide that, **our focus needs to include a system of professional development** for principal supervisors as well.

Something you might consider

Minnesota Principals Support Academy

Fall 2023

More info: z.umn.edu/MN-PSA



Department of
Organizational Leadership,
Policy, and Development

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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QUESTIONS

