Overview

This booklet summarizes the findings of a research survey. The following results include principals’ work intensification, how it manifests, the contributing factors, and the related challenges and possibilities.

The Respondents

2419 invited
35.6% response rate

541 elementary principals
123 secondary principals
23 middle school principals
12 K-12 principals
5 system principals
**Gender**
- Female: 64.2%
- Male: 35.0%
- Prefer not to answer: 0.7%
- Non-binary: 0.1%

**Age**
- < 30: 0.0%
- 30-34: 0.3%
- 35-39: 1.1%
- 40-44: 10.2%
- 45-49: 28.2%
- 50-54: 38.2%
- 55-59: 17.4%
- 60-64: 3.5%
- >65: 1.1%

**Highest Level of Education Achieved**
- Bachelor's Degree: 36.4%
- Master's Degree: 55.6%
- Doctorate: 2.0%
- Professional Degree: 3.7%
- Other: 2.4%

**School Location**
- A village, hamlet, or rural area (fewer than 3,000 people): 13.5%
- A small town (3,000 to about 15,000 people): 11.0%
- A town (15,000 to about 100,000 people): 17.7%
- A city (100,000 to about 1,000,000 people): 39.2%
- A large city (Over 1,000,000 people): 17.1%
- Other: 1.5%

**Years of Experience as a Principal**
- Less than 5 years: 31.4%
- 6-10 years: 34.9%
- 11-15 years: 23.5%
- 16-20 years: 8.6%
- More than 20 years: 1.6%

Average = 8.7 years

33 school boards
### How Principals Spend Their Time

#### Average Hours Spent per Week on Work-Related Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student discipline/ attendance</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student well-being</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative directives</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with parents</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff well-being</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District school board/office committees</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom walk-throughs</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building maintenance</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational health/safety</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking hallways, playground, etc.</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal school management</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School personnel</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; instructional leadership</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-related activities</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget (central &amp; funding raised by school)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s own professional development</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many principals would like to spend **LESS** time on student discipline and attendance (57.7%).

They would also like to decrease the number of hours spent on activities related to managerial and administrative matters such as:

- Administrative Directives (53.1%)
- Internal School Management (43.8%)
- School Board Committees (29.6%)
- Building Maintenance (28.0%)

Principals also felt that the following activities should have **MORE** time dedicated to them:

- Classroom Walk-Throughs (75.2%)
- Curriculum & Instructional Leadership (74.5%)
- Principal’s Own Professional Development (74.0%)
How Principals Spend Their Time

57.3 avg. # of hrs worked per week

97.5% % of principals working more than 40 hrs per week

Hours Spent on Communication Tasks & if Less, More, or the Same Amount Should be Spent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Communication</th>
<th>LESS</th>
<th>SAME</th>
<th>SAME</th>
<th>SAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal (impromptu) meetings</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>SAME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal (pre-scheduled) meetings</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>SAME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone (cell or landline)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>SAME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messaging</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>SAME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>SAME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other modes of communication</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>SAME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newsletter</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>SAME</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political Climate

The **TOP 10** areas where principals’ work has been VERY or EXTREMELY impacted by the political climate surrounding public education in the past 2 years:

- Growing mental health issues among students, teachers, and parents (94.5%)
- A system of anxiety in education (86.0%)
- Impact of the changing government (82.2%)
- Finite resources available to meet demanding constituents (68.9%)
- A culture of complaints and litigation in educational system (63.8%)
- Advances in Information Communication Technology (59.3%)
- Consumer mentality among parents (57.3%)
- Operational and building management demands (53.6%)
- Other (50.0%)
Work-Related Challenges & Possibilities

Principals AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED with the following statements:

Highest in agreement

- I know how to get my job done
- My work requires me to always be available or “on call”
- I encounter increased demands from competing priorities from different stakeholders
- My work puts me in emotionally draining situations
- My job makes a difference in the school community
- My school is a good place to work
- My work requires extensive memory recall
- I get behind on my work
- Increased parental demands of how I go about doing my work
- I can make my own decisions about how I do my work
- The pace of my work is too fast
- I feel pressured to work long hours
- Increased threats of litigation affect the way I do my work
- I often have time to complete all my work tasks
- I have the appropriate resources to do my job

Lowest in agreement

- I have compassion for people at my work
- The demands of everyday work life have an impact on me
- I often feel overwhelmed by my work responsibilities
- My work negatively impacts my relationship with my family & friends
- Increased parental engagement has influenced how I go about doing my work
- I do not find current professional activities helpful for my work
- I have given up trying to make big improvements or changes in my professional life
- I do not fit very well with the communities my school serves
- I feel pressured to work long hours
- Increased threats of litigation affect the way I do my work
- I often have time to complete all my work tasks
- I have the appropriate resources to do my job

The extent to which principals agreed with the following statements:

- I have compassion for people at my work (97.4% agree or strongly agree)
- The demands of everyday work life have an impact on me (94.2% agree or strongly agree)
- I often feel overwhelmed by my work responsibilities (56.7% agree or strongly agree)
- My work negatively impacts my relationship with my family & friends (47.4% agree or strongly agree)
- I do not find current professional activities helpful for my work (46.9% agree or strongly agree)
- The role of principalship is what I expected (43.5% agree or strongly agree)
- I have given up trying to make big improvements or changes in my professional life (55.7% agree or strongly agree)
- I do not fit very well with the communities my school serves (73.8% agree or strongly agree)
- I do not enjoy being in a new situation that requires me to change old familiar ways of doing things (74.7% agree or strongly agree)
### Policy & External Influence

Principals reflected on which of the following provincial policies impacted their work **A LOT**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Impact Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reg. 274/12: Hiring Practices</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Schools Act - Bill 212 (Progressive Discipline and School Safety)</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill 13 - Anti-Bullying</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety Act (incl. Bill 168 changes)</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Well-Being Strategy</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill 115 - Putting Students First Act</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Day Kindergarten - Full Day Early Learning Statute Amendment Act</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Education Strategy/ First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) Policy Framework</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Racism Act</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluctuating Enrollment/ School Closures (ARC)</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents in Partnership: Parent Engagement Policy</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies related to Truth and Reconciliation</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Professionalism (PPM 159)</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations

For Ministry of Education

- align the number of policies and initiatives principals are responsible for to address the time-consuming nature of regulations, follow-up reports, and documentation
- recognize context matters and allow principals more localized discretion and decision-making
- make provincially standardized templates, sample documents, and routine tasks to alleviate principals’ paperwork and administrative tasks

For District School Boards

- streamline work processes by consolidating standardized templates, forms, samples, and routine tasks into an interactive portal/database to alleviate principals’ paperwork and administrative tasks

For Professional Associations

- advocate and lobby for members to have more staffing arrangements (e.g., co-principalship, VPs, administrative assistants, dedicated school management positions, and district resource people), and increased health and well-being benefits (e.g., counselling, physiotherapy, etc.), resource allocations, and administrative time.
- enhance its process for disseminating and sharing information with its members

For Principals

- create opportunities for collaboration
- engage in peer support and learning on effective practices
- create or revisit your existing well-being plan to determine if it includes all components of your well-being
This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Principal Investigators:

Dr. Katina Pollock
University of Western Ontario
katina.pollock@uwo.ca
Twitter: @DrKatinaPollock

Dr. Fei Wang
University of British Columbia
fei.wang@ubc.ca
Twitter: @DrFeiWang

For the full research report, visit:

To cite this booklet:
University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.