

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Summary of initial takeaways

About

Through funding from the Joyce Foundation and the Minneapolis Foundation, CAREI developed a research-based, practitioner-useful survey of principals that will provide data to elevate principal voices in Minnesota. Every principal and assistant principal in the state (2,323 total) was sent a person-specific email invitation to take the survey between November 11 and December 5, 2021. This is a summary of the initial takeaways; the full report will be available in late February. Moving forward, we hope to administer this survey every other year.

Respondents

779 invitees took the survey (34%). 46% of respondents were from greater Minnesota and 54% were from the metro area. About half (49%) were affiliated with elementary schools and nearly the same number (48%) were affiliated with secondary schools. Most respondents (71%) were Principals and Directors; 26% were Assistant Principals.

Key Takeaways

Principals are optimistic and challenged.

Principals feel they can be successful in their role. They also report that this has been the “most difficult year of their careers.” Among other concerns, they cited the following most often:

- Insufficient and inequitable funding
- Political divisiveness
- Racial inequity
- Unmanageable workload
- Insufficient staffing
- Mental health needs

Principals need more and better professional development (PD).

There is a deep desire for more professional learning, but the pressure felt to be “in the building” is a key barrier. However, the type of PD opportunities matter: the form of PD principals reported engaging in most often (district sponsored meetings and presentations) was also cited as the *least effective*.

Mental health is an overwhelming concern.

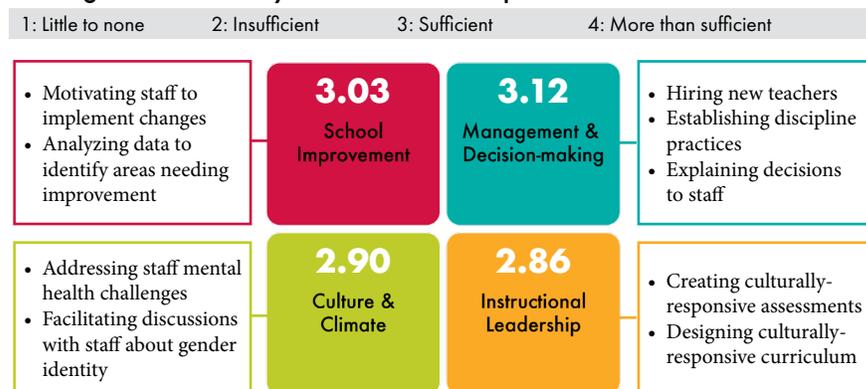
Staff and students’ mental health are primary concerns among principals, and they need genuine help in addressing these issues. Additionally, nearly one in ten respondents cited that they need mental health support for *themselves*.

Selected quotations from respondents

“Administrators are suffering significantly, silently. There’s been a great deal of focus on the teaching staff, who we have tried to protect from so many things, and continue to do so, but we’ve truly been the ones on the front lines--delivering resources, meeting with students and families, navigating delivery methods, and it’s gone unrecognized.”

“Just know that the principal job is far from instructional leadership. It continues to get harder and principals are far removed from the work. It is an important role and we have to reclaim principals time to do that work that truly matters. We also need principal voice at all tables. At times, it feels like principal voice is absent in our district leadership meetings.”

Average confidence by area of leadership



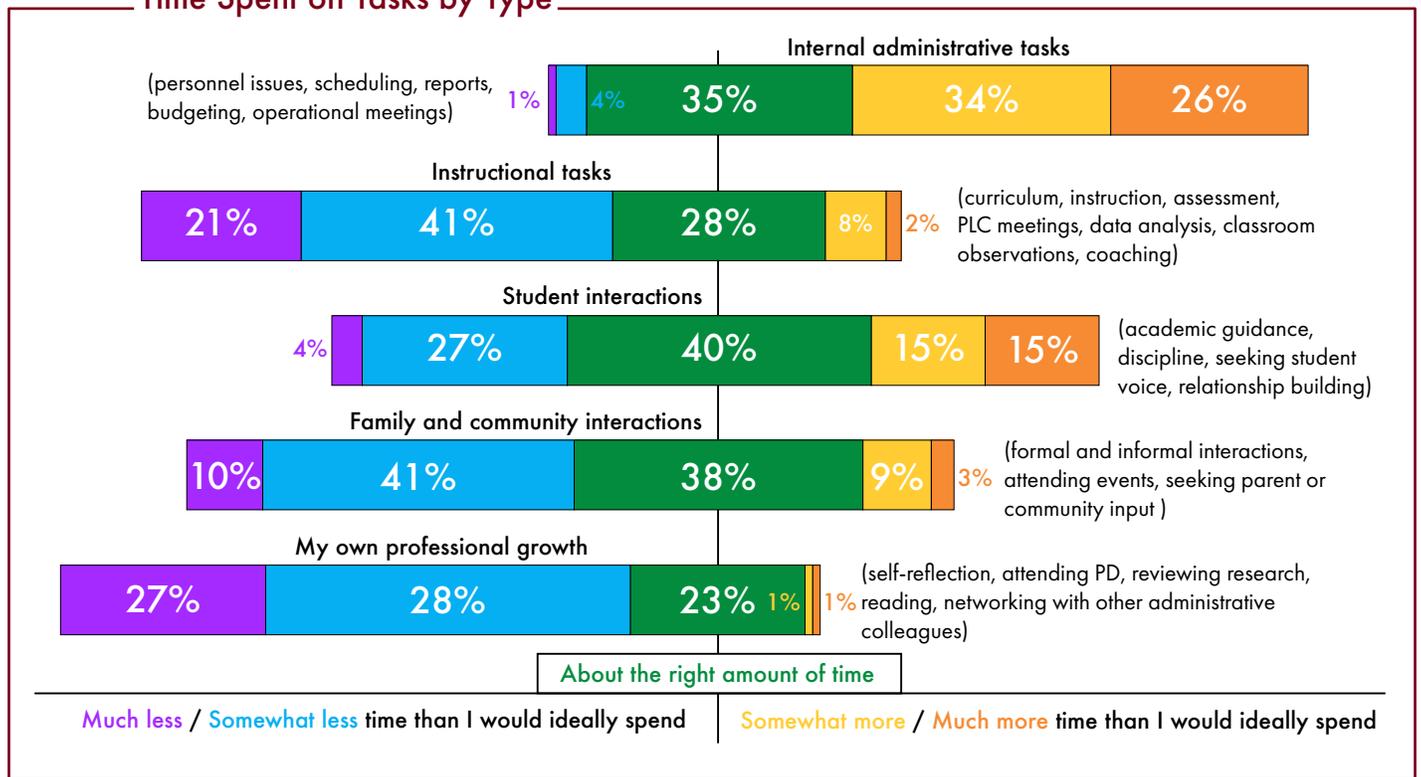
Selected quotation from respondent

“Mental health has been a major barrier pre-pandemic and has increased in volume and scope... resources and supports from the county level and state level in the same time period have decreased, which has left us as administrators doing dual duty managing mental health cases with little to no support from professionals in this area. Anything that can be done to support students mental health would be a significant victory for education.”

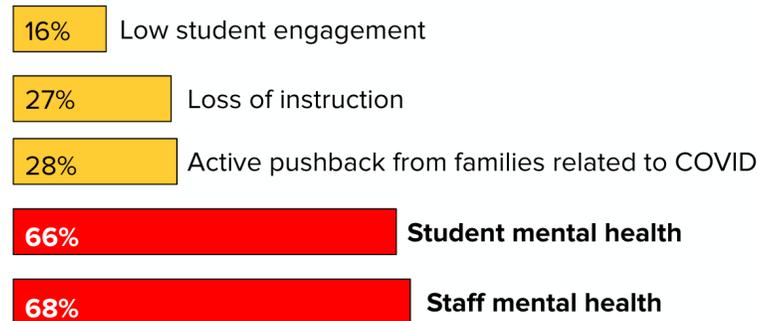
(see reverse for figures related to the pandemic’s effect on student and staff mental health)



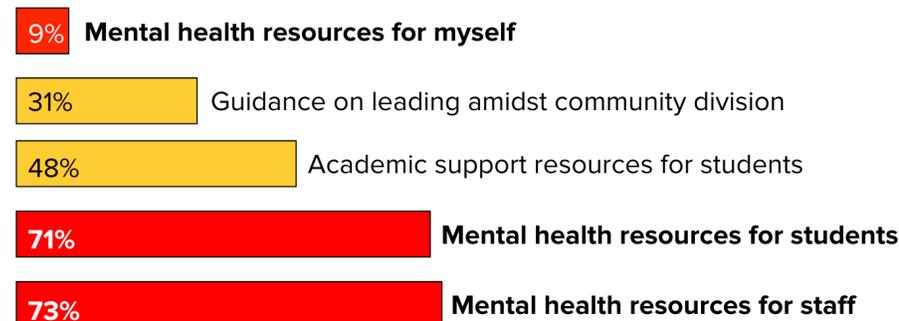
Time Spent on Tasks by Type



What are the most significant ongoing challenges your school is facing related to COVID-19?



What would you identify as the most helpful supports at this stage of the pandemic?



Working conditions

Average reported workload: **57.2 hours / wk**
—fewer than half report this is sustainable.

Compensation:
64% "Agree" or "Somewhat Agree" with "My compensation is appropriate for the work I do."

Healthcare benefits:
76% "Agree" or "Somewhat Agree" with "My healthcare benefits are adequate"

Retirement benefits:
77% "Agree" or "Somewhat Agree" with "My retirement benefits are adequate"

Contact Us

- Katie Pikel, EdD
kpekel@umn.edu
- Sara Kemper, PhD
skemper@umn.edu