

# THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

## Report of Initial Findings

March 2022

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Center for  
Applied Research and  
Educational Improvement

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# Elevating Principal Voices in Minnesota

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.



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# History and Intent



**TheJoyceFoundation**

- Co-created a research-based, practitioner-useful survey of principals that will provide data to elevate principal voices
- Reviewed literature and existing instruments
- Convened a smaller **Working Group** to closely guide the development of the survey
- Established a broader **Advisory Council** to respond to the work of the Working Group and provide broader perspectives without as much time requirement
- Piloted and administered the survey

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# Survey Administration

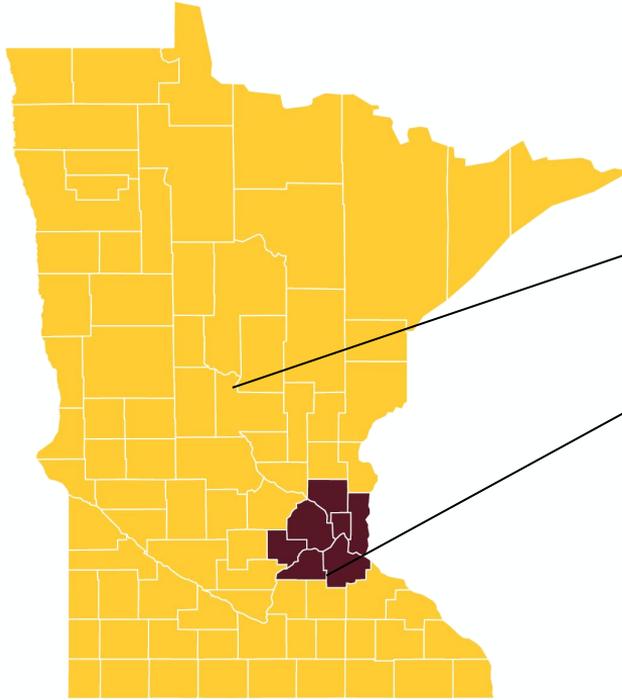
- Every principal and AP in MN sent a person-specific email
- Survey window: November 11, 2021 through December 5, 2021
- Intending to administer survey every other year
- Initial summary report will be available in late February



# 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

# Who Responded



**34%** response rate (779/2,323)

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

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

# Who Responded

District: 92%  
Charter: 7%

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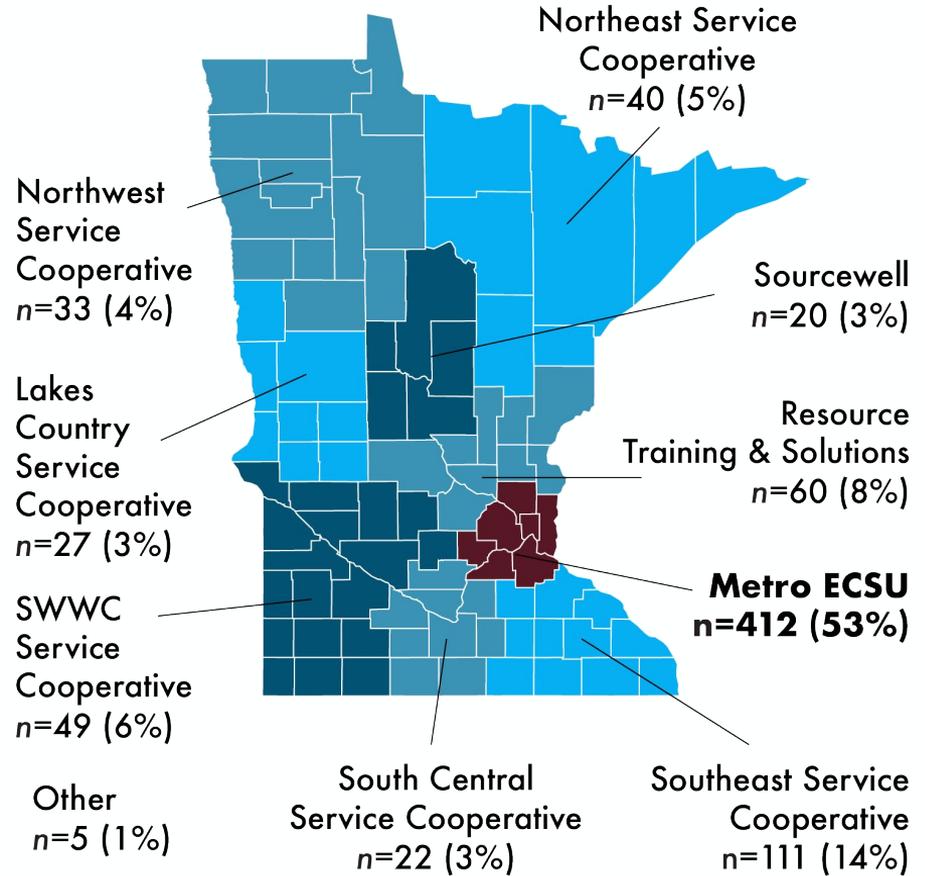
Elementary: 49%  
Secondary: 48%

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Principals / directors: 71%  
Assistant Principals: 26%

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Female: 49%  
Male: 50%



# Career Information

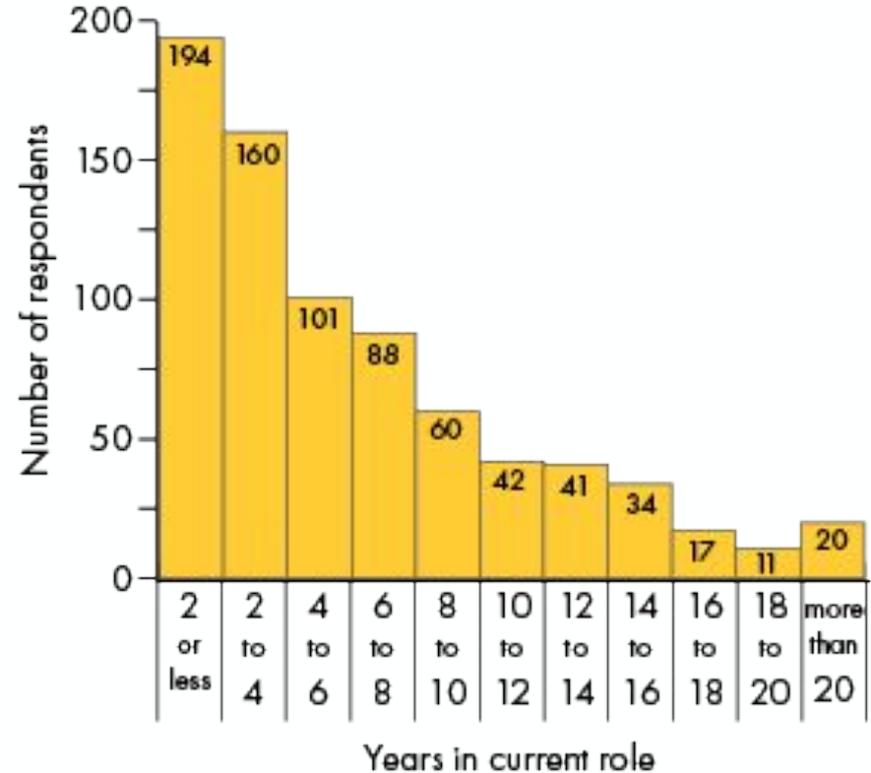
Most common pathway:

Teacher > Assistant Principal > Principal

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How long have you been in your role?

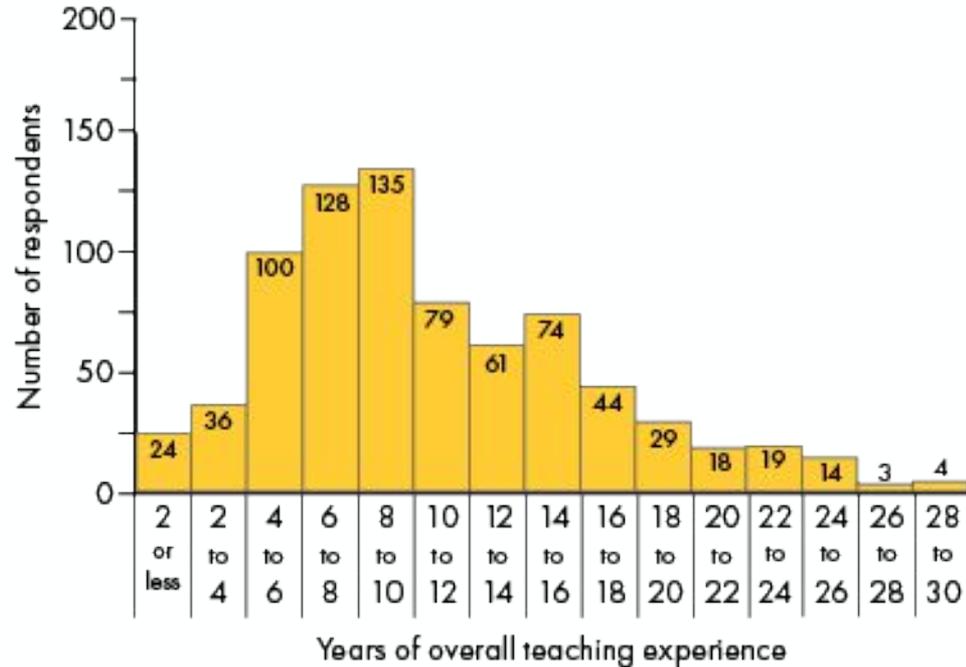
- Principals
  - Greater Minnesota: **7.1 years**; Metro Area: **7.4 years**
- Assistant Principals
  - Greater Minnesota: **5.9 years**; Metro Area: **5.7 years**



# Career Information

## Years of overall teaching experience

- Overall: **11.1 years**
- Greater MN: **12.2 years**
- Metro Area: **10.3 years**
- Elementary: **11.9 years**
- Secondary: **10.4 years**



# Level of Preparation in MN Principal Competencies in Initial Licensure

## Self-reported as “most prepared”

1. Applying the code of ethics for school administrators
2. Understanding the role of education in a democratic society
3. Understanding educational policy and regulations
4. Sharing leadership with teachers and staff
5. Analyzing problems to identify causes and solutions

# Level of Preparation in MN Principal Competencies in Initial Licensure

## Self-reported as “least prepared”

1. Ensuring equitable student access to learning opportunities
2. Addressing emergency and crisis situations
3. Recruiting and retaining staff
4. Supporting instruction that is culturally responsive
5. Leveraging students’ cultural backgrounds as assets for teaching and learning

# Preparation: Experiences missing from coursework

1. Culturally responsive teaching
2. Family and community engagement best practices
3. Special education due process
4. Staff recruitment and retention best practices
5. Teacher development and evaluation best practices



# Preparation: Experiences missing from Internship

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



# What factors influenced your decision to work where you work?

1. Opportunity for impact: 67%
  2. Location: 33%
  3. School mission or vision: 24%
  4. Compensation: 20%
- Leadership structure: 20%
- Staff culture: 20%



# 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%

# Job Satisfaction

"I can be successful as a leader at this school"



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



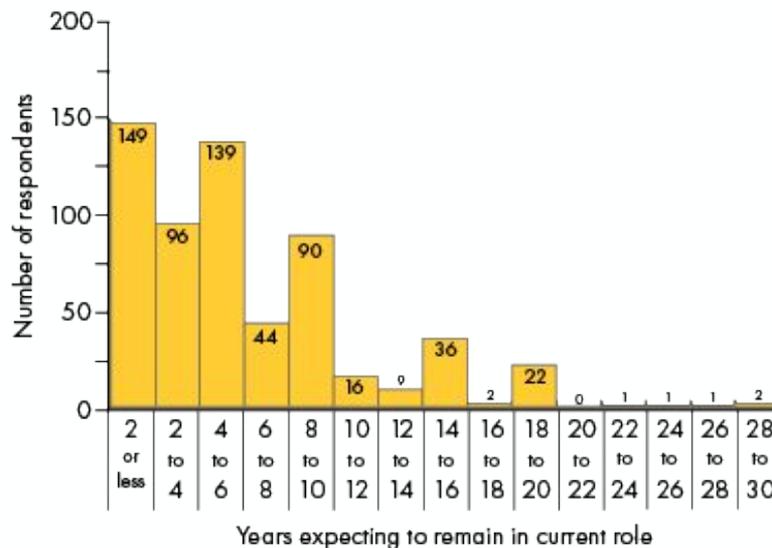
# Job Continuation

## How long do you plan to remain in your role?

- **Overall: 6.5 years**
- Greater MN: 6.7
- Metro: 6.3
- Principals / Directors 6.8
- Assistant Principals: 5.5

## What factors influence your decision to continue in your position?

- Opportunity for impact: 54%
- Staff culture: 43%
- Leadership structure: 23%
- Compensation: 22%
- Decision-making autonomy: 17%
- Future career opportunities: 17%



- 40% of respondents (245) expect to remain in current role for less than 4 years



As a Black male Principal, I have the benefit of trying to eliminate biases among white scholars and showing students of color the range of possibilities they can achieve by being in the role. But, I also came close many times to leaving the position because being a Racially Isolated Administrator has been tough in Minnesota. We all know the principalship presents its own challenges—add race complexities, a pandemic, and social justice inequities. It becomes extremely tough. **We/I need support.**

# 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
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# Professional Development

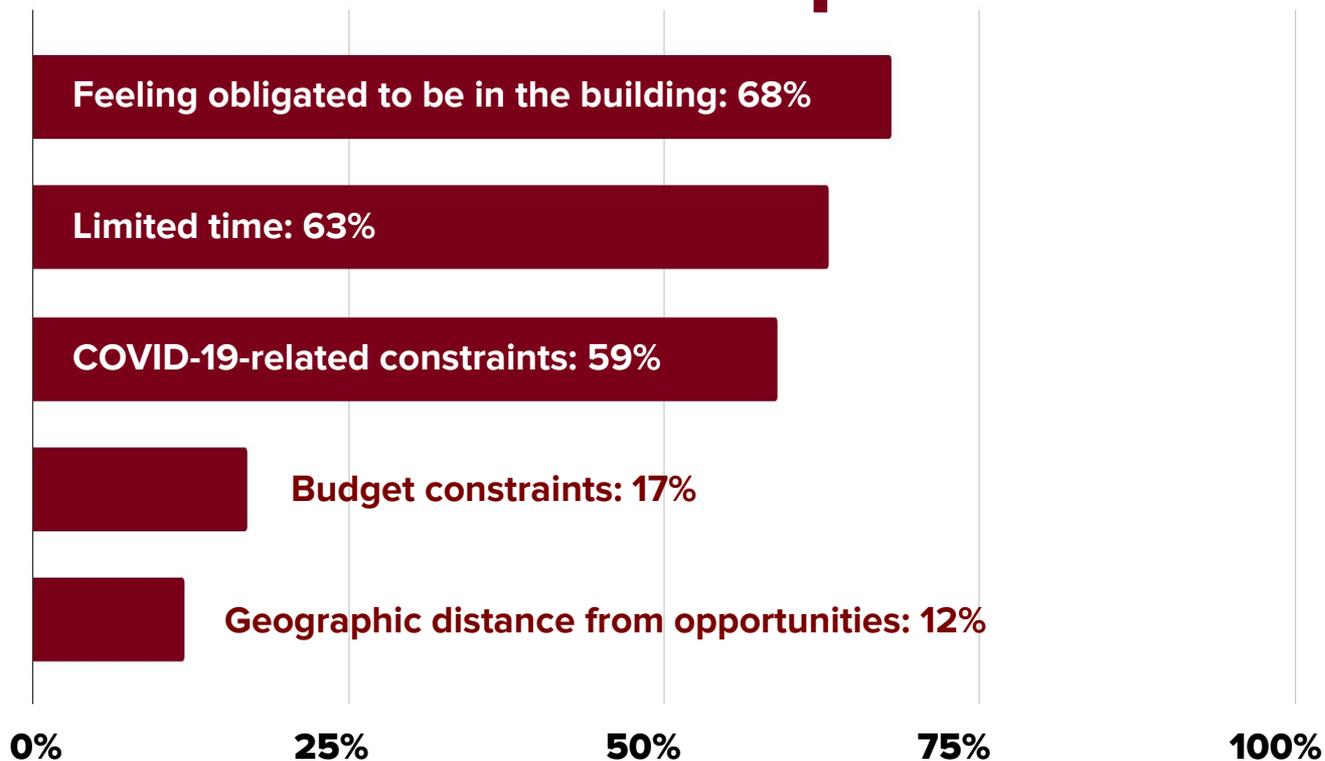
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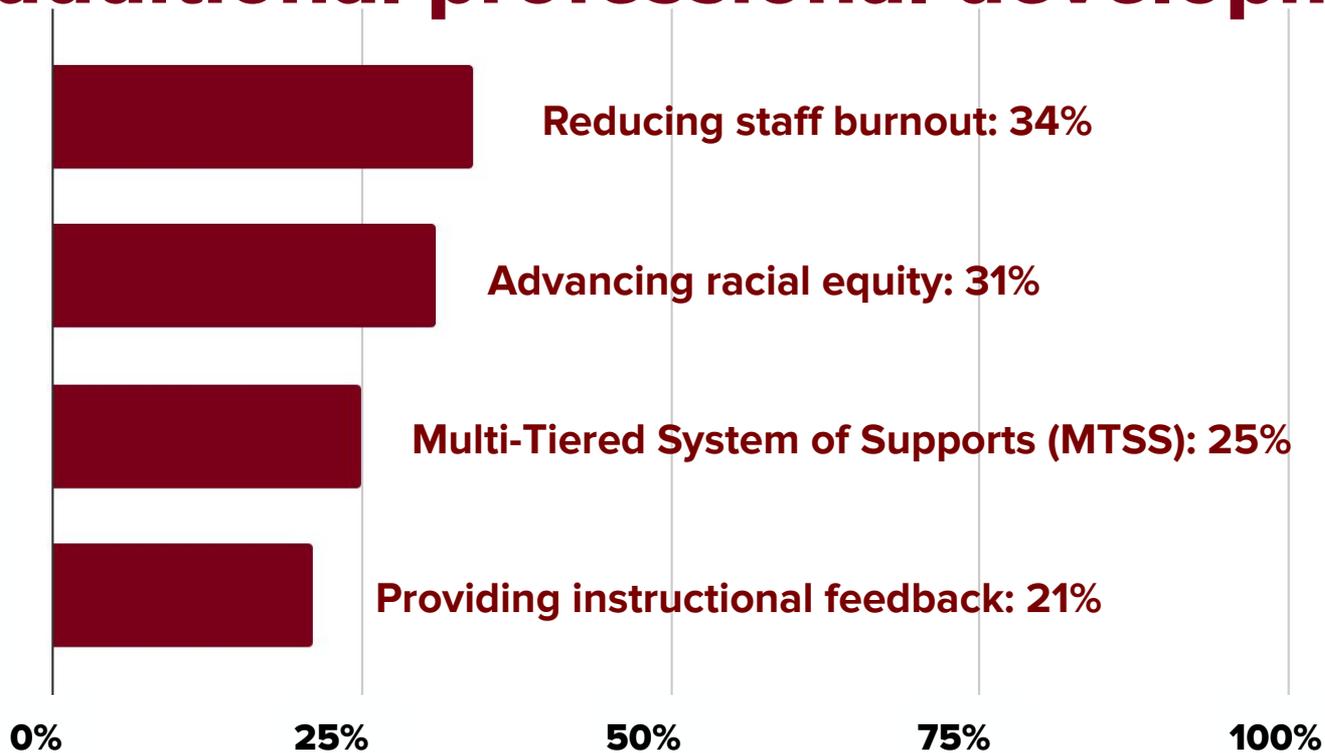
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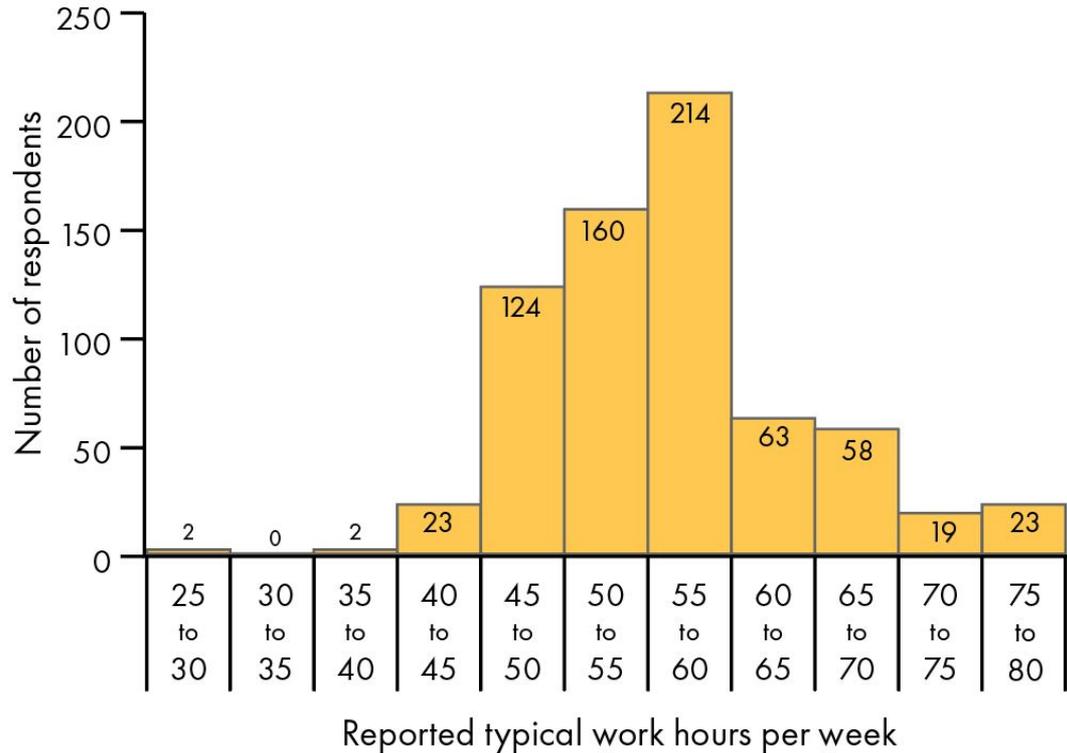
# Top Barriers to Participating in Professional Development



# In which areas would you benefit from additional professional development?



# Workload



- Average reported workload: **57.2 hours per week**
- Fewer than half report this is sustainable.

# Compensation and Benefits

- “My **compensation** is appropriate for the work I do”
  - 64% reported they “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree”
- “My **healthcare** benefits are adequate”
  - 76% reported they “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree”
- “My **retirement** benefits are adequate”
  - 77% reported they “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree”

# 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



# Working Conditions

- **80%** 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.
- Overall, **90%** of respondents somewhat agreed or agreed that they can be successful as a leader at their school.

# Principal Leadership Responsibility Areas

School  
Improvement

Management &  
Decision-making

Culture &  
Climate

Instructional  
Leadership

# Principal Leadership Responsibility Areas



## School Improvement

- Collaborating with staff to implement a school improvement plan
- Analyzing data to identify areas needing improvement
- Motivating a majority of my staff to implement changes
- Applying research-based approaches to school improvement planning
- Implementing & Monitoring changes to our practice over time

# Principal Leadership Responsibility Areas



## Management & Decision-making

- Engaging multiple stakeholders (students, families, staff) in decision-making
- Establishing discipline practices
- Hiring teachers
- Budgeting
- Communicating decisions

# Principal Leadership Responsibility Areas

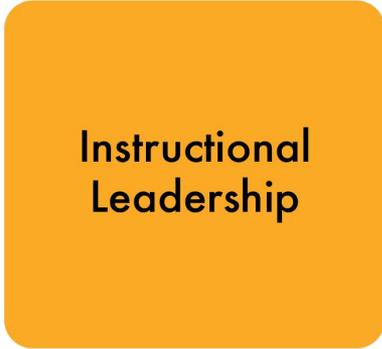
- Addressing mental health issues
- Analyzing perception data about school climate
- Ensuring sense of belonging at school
- Conflict resolution
- Facilitating difficult conversations (e.g. race, sexuality, gender identity)



Culture &  
Climate

# Principal Leadership Responsibility Areas

- Establishing a robust Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- Designing and facilitating professional development
- Ensuring culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and assessments
- Coaching and evaluating teachers
- Gathering and analyzing student data



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**



# Tasks of Most Confidence

Management &  
Decision-making

Hiring new teachers

Management &  
Decision-making

Establishing discipline practices

Instructional  
Leadership

Evaluating teachers

Management &  
Decision-making

Explaining administrative decisions to staff

Management &  
Decision-making

Engaging staff in school-level decision-making

# Tasks of Least Confidence

Instructional  
Leadership

Creating culturally-responsive assessments

Instructional  
Leadership

Designing culturally-responsive curriculum

Culture &  
Climate

Addressing staff mental health challenges

Instructional  
Leadership

Supporting culturally-responsive pedagogy

Culture &  
Climate

Facilitating discussions with staff about gender identity

# Needed Supports

The top two supports respondents identified for **all five of the tasks in which they expressed the least confidence** were:

- Increasing my knowledge or skills
- Tools or frameworks

Instructional Leadership	Creating culturally-responsive assessments
Instructional Leadership	Designing culturally-responsive curriculum
Culture & Climate	Addressing staff mental health challenges
Instructional Leadership	Supporting culturally-responsive pedagogy
Culture & Climate	Facilitating discussions with staff about gender identity

# Culturally-Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) Practices

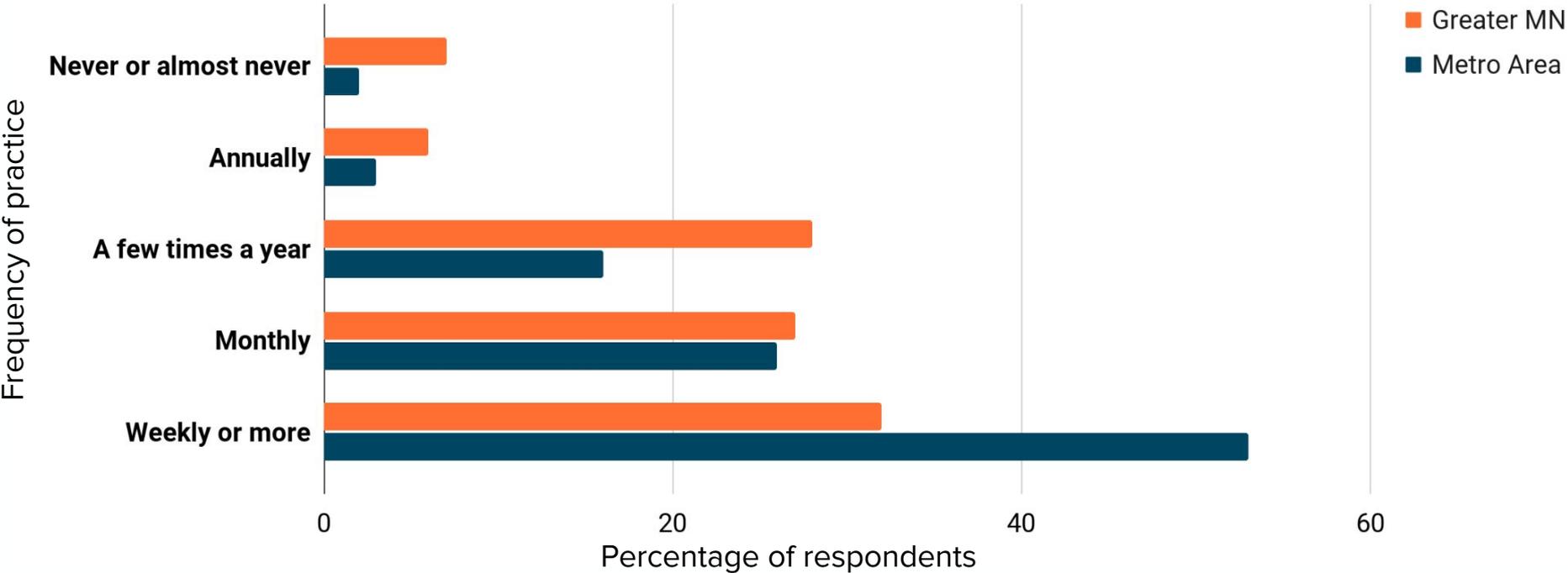
CRSL Practices on the part of a school leader can be largely grouped into four areas:

- Critical Self Reflection
- Development of Culturally Responsive Teachers
- Promoting a Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment
- Engaging Students, Parents, and Community

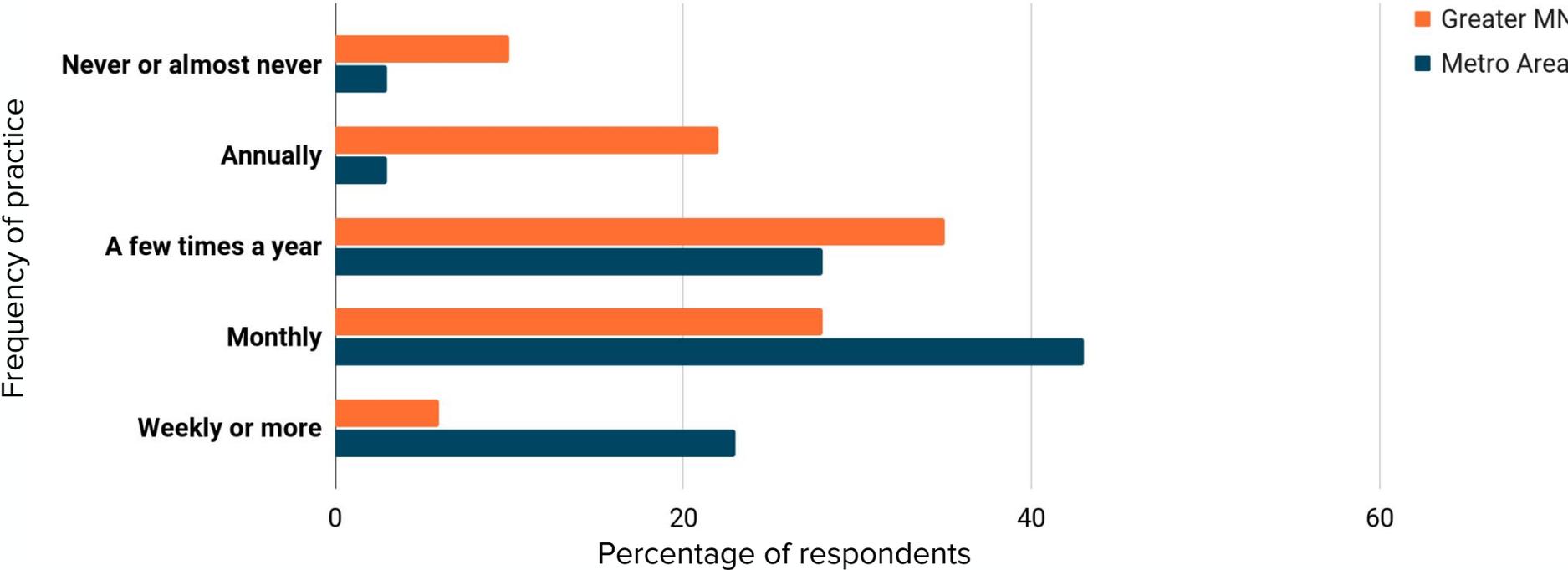
Overview of CRSL: [z.umn.edu/CRSL](https://z.umn.edu/CRSL)

Source: Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis, 2016

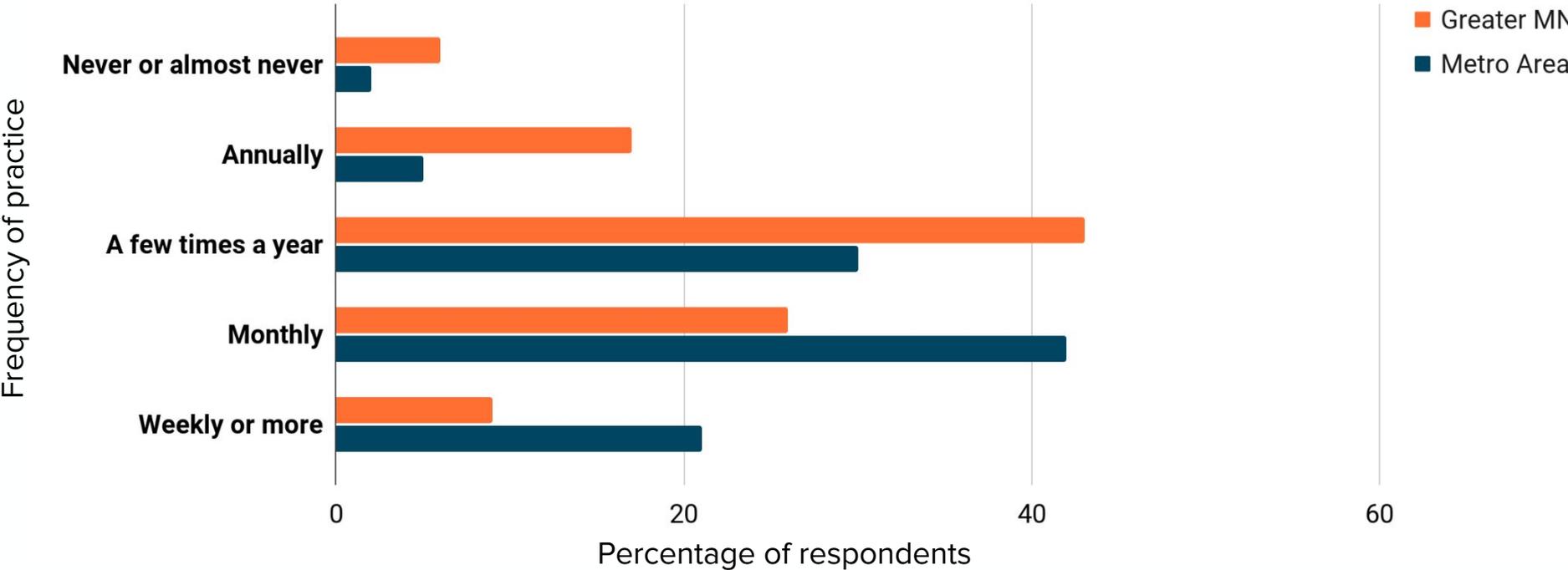
# Critical self-reflection about my own identity, frame of reference, and biases



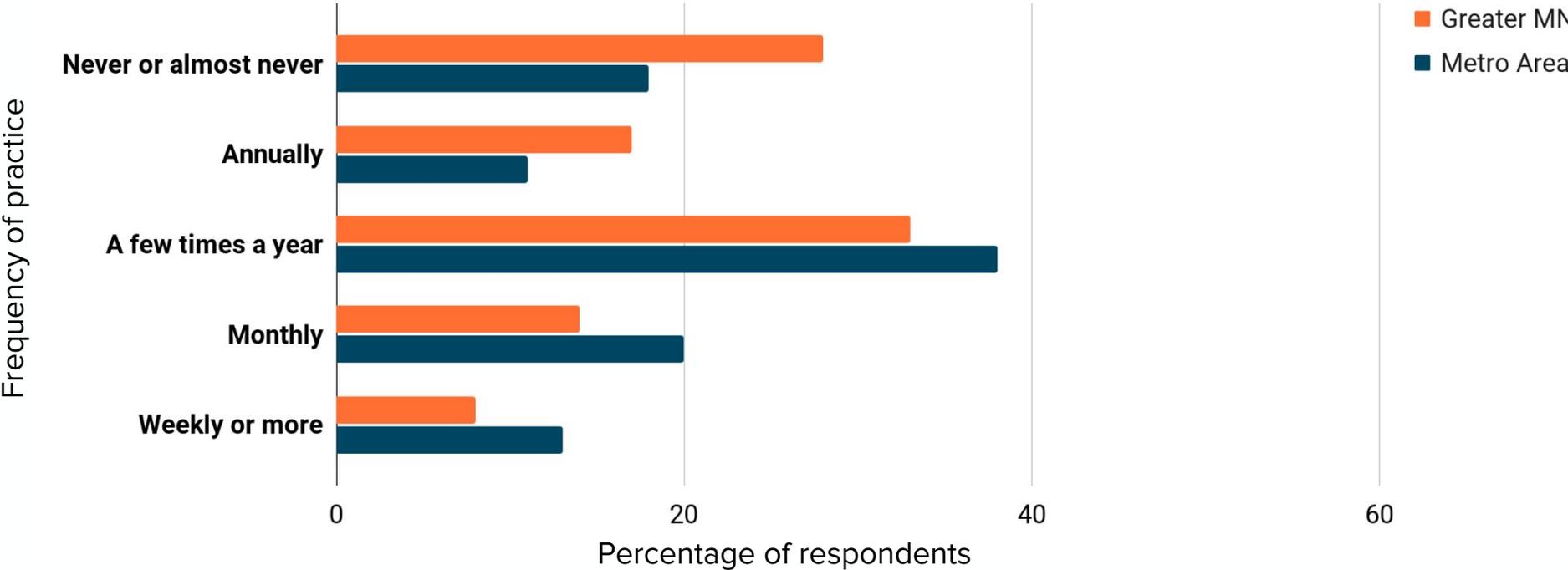
# Development of culturally responsive teachers



# Analysis of student data to identify disparities in academic/disciplinary outcomes



# Inclusion of families of marginalized students in school-level decisions



# State and District Accountability

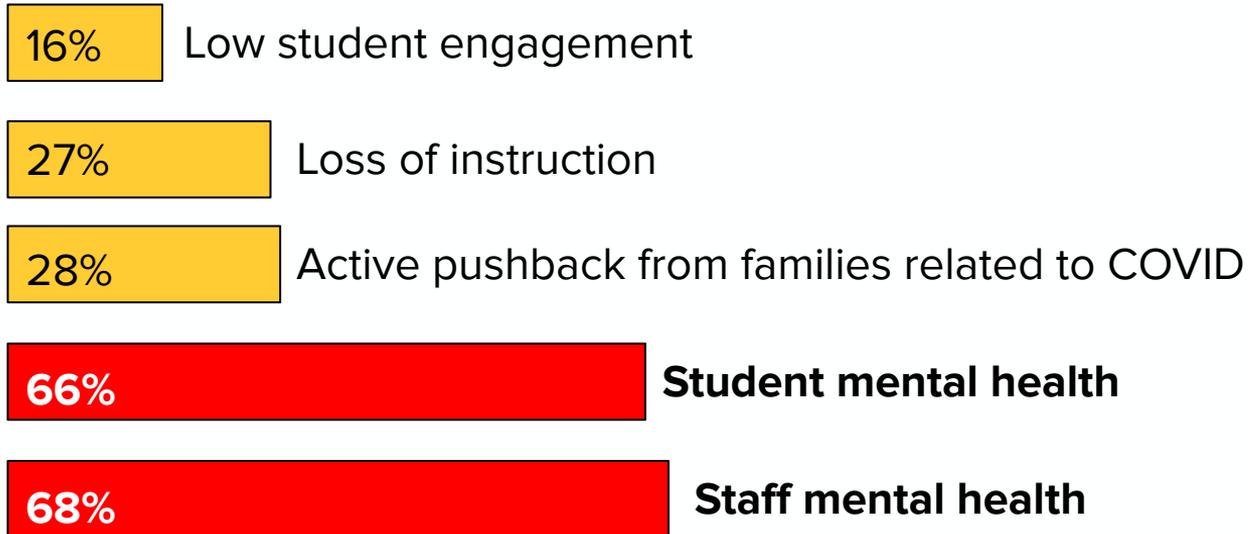
- **State** accountability measures used to evaluate my school's performance are reasonable
  - 41% of respondents said they “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree”
- **District** accountability measures used to evaluate my school's performance are reasonable
  - **75%** of respondents said they “Agree” or “Somewhat Agree”

# Policy Influence

- 70% of respondents said “I want to have greater influence over state policy.”
- 78% of respondents said “I want to have greater influence over district policy.”
- Only 42% said “I know of several ways I can influence state policy.”
- Barriers cited:
  - Lack of time: 61% (382)
  - Lack of understanding of policy-making processes: 27% (167)

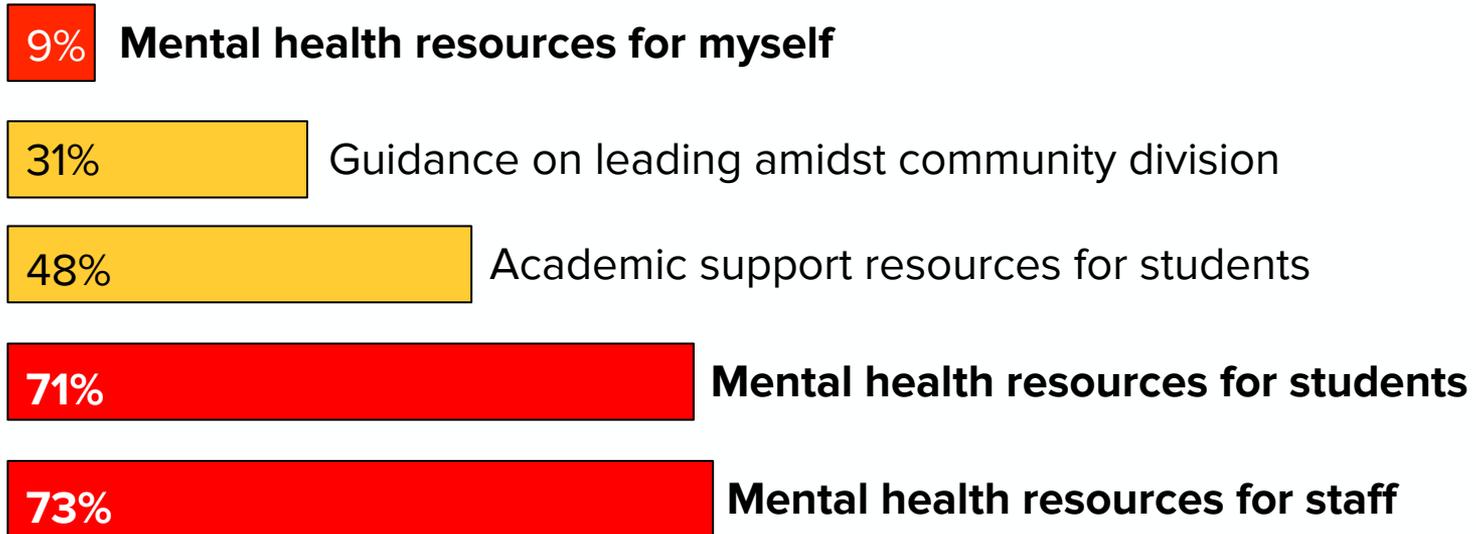
# COVID-19 and School Transformation

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



# COVID-19 and School Transformation

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





Mental health has been a major barrier pre-pandemic and has increased in volume and scope... Our 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.**

# COVID-19 and School Transformation

“Lasting transformation of teaching and learning at my school is possible.”



“The disruption brought about by COVID-19 has fundamentally transformed our school in positive ways.”



# COVID-19 and Lasting Change

**From pre-pandemic to post-pandemic, in which areas if any do you anticipate your school will experience lasting change?**

- Use of technology 78% (491)
- Learning modalities (i.e., distance learning or hybrid) 48% (305)
- Communication with families 46% (288)
- Providing non-academic services (e.g., mental health) 45% (287)
- Relationship-building with students 44% (279)



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.

# Discussion

- After an initial look at this data, are there any **questions** you are left with or **insights** you may have?
- What would you hope we dig deeper into in our upcoming focus groups?

# Next Steps

1. Continue to share information with a wide variety of groups
2. Full Report out in mid-March
3. Focus groups with principals
4. Shorter Policy/Practice recommendation briefs to follow





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