

Report to MSSAA membership on Principal's Survey – 2008-2009

The 2009 MSSAA survey of Principals was conducted online during the month of January. One Hundred Twenty-Two Principals participated. It was created and reviewed by the Professional Services Committee. The findings below represent summaries of the survey responses.

Some general information:

- 68% of the respondents were male.
- Nearly one-third of the respondents were over aged 55
- More than 60% are high school principals
- Two-thirds are suburban school principals
- More than 70% work in schools with more than 600 students
- More than 80% of the schools operate on a fairly traditional schedule with 6 or more blocks per day, sometimes rotating, and not necessarily all the exact same length. Only about 15% operate with a long block model, either semester or year long.

The administrative structure of the schools

Despite most of the schools having a student body of more than 600 students, about 45% of the respondents report having only one (or no) Assistant Principal. Of course, this means that 55% report having 2 or more Assistant Principals, with two being the predominant model (37.7%).

Only two-thirds report having department heads in the building and only one third report having a Director of Special Education.

Nearly all report being the evaluator of teachers, with four-fifths sharing the duties with the Assistant Principal(s).

When asked, "Do you believe you have sufficient professional support personnel to effectively lead your school?" nearly 40% of the respondents responded "No". The exact same percentage responded that they did not have sufficient staff for maintenance and repair.

Preparation for being a Principal

All respondents have at least a master's degree with about 40% having either multiple Masters or additional degrees beyond the Masters.

Nearly 90% of the respondents taught for more than 5 years before entering administration. More than 60% taught for more than 10 years.

By far the most important preparation for becoming a principal was working as an Assistant Principal and working as a teacher. Other leadership positions, professional development opportunities, and participation in community activities were not seen as primarily significant

83% served in the capacity of Assistant Principal immediately prior to their first position as a Principal; most of them serving for 5 years or less as Assistant. Only 40% assumed the Principal's role in the same school.

When asked their perception of the importance of certain experiences as they contributed to securing the first position, by far the most important contributor was the experience gained as an Assistant. Other important contributors included having a successful interview, the formal professional preparation, having had success as a teacher, and having had the former Principal or Superintendent support.

Nearly 70% of the Principals have been Principal of only one school and only 10% have been Principal of three or more schools.

Most of the respondents (68%) have five years or less experience as Principal. Only 10% have more than 10 years experience as Principal.

When asked, "Why did you decide to become a Principal?" the most common reasons included wanting to lead a school toward educational improvement, wanting to take on the challenge, and wanting to have a greater positive impact on young people.

To the same question less than one-third sought a higher salary and fewer than one-sixth sought greater professional prestige.

The Actual Job

85% of the respondents reported working more than 55 hours per week. The time required to do the job is one of the factors that diminishes job satisfaction for more than 60% of the respondents. In this light, the impact on family is similarly seen as diminishing job satisfaction.

That said, the opportunity to lead the school, having the support of the Superintendent, the parents, school committee and the community are the factors which most greatly enhance job satisfaction. The overwhelming majority (80% and more) report great or moderate satisfaction in these areas. Other areas of great or moderate satisfaction include realizing one's expectations, establishing rapport with teachers and students, and leading a school through change.

Most respondents (more than 60%) believed that school based management, parental involvement, and having the authority to expel improves their ability to lead the school.

Fewer, but still a majority of respondents believe that they have sufficient autonomy in the budget process or that their teachers are supportive of changes brought about by Ed Reform Laws.

Fewer than half of the respondents believe that the formal teacher evaluation process is worth the time and effort, that dismissing ineffective teachers is easier under Ed Reform Laws, or that NCLB Laws have improved their ability to lead the school.

Compensation

31% of the respondents earned less than \$100,000. 31% report earning between \$100K and \$110K. 20% report earning between \$110K and \$120K. Only 17% report earning more than \$120K (with fewer than 5% earning more than \$130K).

Most have a multi-year contract with 3 years being the predominant length.

Most have a school year defined as more than 220 days.

Most have at least 21 vacation days with more than half allowed to carry the unused vacation days into the next school year.

More than two-thirds of the respondents report having a contractual clause that allows for compensation at the conclusion of their employment for at least some unused vacation, sick, or personal days.

Only 13% have a contractual provision which requires the school system contribute anything to the Principal's 403b retirement account.

Nearly 80% would select educational administration as their career if they could choose again.