



The K-8 Principal in 2008

A 10-Year Study

*Eighth in a Series of Research
Studies Launched in 1928*



1930 1950 1970 1990 2010

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Studies Launched in 1928*



National Association of Elementary School Principals
Serving America's Elementary and Middle School Administrators



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The mission of the **National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)** is to lead in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children. NAESP is the strongest unified voice for pre-K-8 leaders across the U.S. and around the world. NAESP was founded in 1921 by a visionary group of principals who sought to advance the profession. Today, NAESP provides the professional support system and the critical information that you need 24/7!



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Foreword

The K-8 Principal in 2008: A 10-Year Study is the eighth in a series of research studies conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals since 1928—and the first study conducted since the beginning of the 21st Century. To commemorate this milestone, our author revisited many of our previous studies to compare their findings with those of the 2008 survey. These comparisons can be found throughout the publication and provide some interesting documentation on the changing nature of the principalship. The 10-year study is, however, about the present. It offers a wealth of information about the current education climate, the challenges principals face, the students they serve, and the conditions under which they work. It can also assist us in making certain predictions about the future. The leadership and staff of NAESP rely on the data from each successive survey to guide us in strengthening our advocacy and outreach, delivering services, and providing professional development opportunities to address the most pressing needs of our members.

Over the past decade, schools have operated in a climate increasingly focused on accountability, perhaps best exemplified by the much-debated No Child Left Behind legislation. Respondents to the 2008 survey provide thoughtful assessments of three key aspects of NCLB: They are positive about the *intent* of the law in focusing our attention on the needs of underserved students; they are concerned, however, that *implementation* that relies on standardized testing in a few subject areas places undue stress on teachers and thwarts their best efforts to provide students with a rich and varied curriculum; and they question the *impact* NCLB has had on raising the achievement of the very students it was designed to assist.

Respondents' prioritization of professional development needs offers insight into the challenges they face, including differentiating instruction, improving staff and student performance, maintaining positive school climate, understanding and applying technology, and managing change. Program-related concerns reflect the increasing diversity of the children they serve. These concerns include provision of services for at-risk students, assessment, an increase in students with emotional problems, inclusion of special education students, and serving a growing population of English Language Learners and culturally diverse students.

Conditions of employment are a source of additional pressure for principals. The 2008 survey data indicate that principals spend an average of 56 hours a week at school or in school-related activities, an increase of 2 hours since 1998 and 6 hours since 1988. While their average salaries have increased, so has the length of their work year, and few have an opportunity to earn merit pay. The 2008 data also indicate an alarming decrease in the number of principals who have tenure—particularly among the least-experienced principals—and tenure typically does not guarantee ongoing employment as a principal. Two-thirds of the respondents indicate that student performance is taken into account in their evaluations.

The 2008 data show a substantial increase in the number of female principals, a growing trend first noted in 1998. Unfortunately, there has been a slight decrease in the number of minority principals—particularly disturbing in light of the increased diversity of our student population and the resulting need to provide these children with strong role models. The age at which individuals are becoming principals for the first time has also risen since the 1998 survey, perhaps reflecting the additional experience required for this complex position. However, this trend also indicates that the need to replace retiring principals, first predicted in 1998, will continue over the next decade, making it imperative that universities and education organizations focus their efforts on recruiting, training, and mentoring aspiring principals.

The study also reports a sense of optimism and professional fulfillment among principals, despite the many challenges they face. Most respondents indicate that their morale is high, and they continue to experience satisfaction in their work. Most say that if they were offered the choice of becoming principals today, they would do so again. This is the best news our survey can report. The leadership and staff of NAESP are proud to serve these dedicated school leaders and remain committed to our mission of supporting their efforts on behalf of children.

Gail Connelly
Executive Director

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to many people who contributed their time and expertise to this important project. Especially critical to the success of this *2008 Study of the Elementary School Principalship* were the principals who completed the lengthy survey questionnaire and who shared their views on a wide range of topics.

Even in the midst of her jam-packed schedule, Gail Connelly, Executive Director of NAESP, remembered that the time had again come to add to the legacy of information about the elementary school principalship that had its inception 80 years ago. Without her support—and that of NAESP—this project would not have been possible.

Merrie Hahn, Assistant Executive Director of the NAESP Leadership Academy and a veteran of the 1998 project, kept this complex project on track. In addition, her knowledge of both the long history of the 10-Year Study and the current needs of NAESP was a valued resource.

James Doud, past-president of NAESP and author of two previous 10-Year Studies, provided a thoughtful perspective on ways in which the 2008 survey instrument could best reflect the changing environment of public schools and the elementary school principalship.

Planning for this edition of the 10-Year Study was helped immeasurably by members of the NAESP Standards Advisory committee who reviewed the 1998 version of the survey instrument and then engaged in a thought-provoking discussion about key issues that should be addressed in 2008:

- Martha J. Albers, Principal, Hilbert Elementary School, Sherwood, WI
- Mary Booker, Principal, Francis Scott Key Elementary School, Baltimore, MD
- Gretchen Donndelinger, Administrator and Program Professor, Fischler School of Education and Human Services, NOVA Southeastern University, Carlsbad, CA
- Angelina M. Finnegan, Principal, Rockaway Meadow Elementary School, Parsippany, NJ
- Katherine Grondin, Principal, Sherwood Heights School, Auburn, ME
- Lucretia Jackson, Principal, Maury Elementary School, Alexandria, VA
- Sharon Knudson, Principal, Jessup Elementary School, Cheyenne, WY
- Carol Miller, Principal, McFerran School, Louisville, KY
- Bernadette Nevarez, West Mesa Cluster Leader, Albuquerque Public Schools, Albuquerque, NM
- Mary Kay Sommers, past-President, NAESP Board of Directors and Principal, Shepardson Elementary School, Fort Collins, CO
- Todd Williford, Principal, Sallie Zetterower Elementary School, Statesboro, GA
- Byron Yankey, Principal, Frontier Elementary School, Boise, ID

Finally, several people at Educational Research Service should be acknowledged for their assistance with various phases of the project: Chris Licciardi, Issues Analyst; Cheryl Bratten, Editor; and Tracy Pastian, Associate Editor.

Nancy Protheroe
 Director of Special Research Projects
 Educational Research Service

Preface

This 10-year study of the elementary school principalship is the eighth of its kind published by NAESP. The association's understanding of the importance of both current and trend data on the elementary school principalship and the people serving in this position—and its commitment to collecting this information—provides a valuable resource. The data contained in the study can help support efforts to highlight the importance of the principal to providing a high-quality education for all students, provide information for groups and institutions of higher education developing preparation programs, and assist NAESP with planning future initiatives and services.

Writing in the 1988 report, Jim Doud, a past president of NAESP and author of two of the 10-year reports, talks about the nature of the studies:

Together they provide both a running account of the factors that affect the status of the K-8 principal and a perspective on the societal changes that have shaped American education during the past 60 years and that continue to be of interest to principals. (1988, p. xiii)

In the Foreword to the 1968 report, the Department of Elementary School Principals talks about that report's findings as well as those that preceded it: They "all reflect the growing status, improving preparation, and promising opportunities of those who now guide the destinies of nearly 30 million children" (1968, p. 4). Bill Pharis, a past-Executive Director of NAESP, and Sally Zakariya agree and write in the 1978 report that, "The studies reflect not only the changing status of the elementary school principal, but also the changing concerns of those who occupy the position" (1979, p. xiii).

Questions included on each of the surveys represent an attempt to generate a comprehensive picture of the characteristics of elementary school principals; their attitudes about schools, the principalship, and their preparation for the position; and the assessment of problems facing their schools. This effort to get a comprehensive picture must also recognize the need for a balance between asking questions that generate trend data—thus, for example, respondents are asked each time about their level of education—and those that speak to issues of the day. For example, the 1968 study included questions about the then-contentious issue of teacher collective bargaining. The 2008 survey asked principals for their opinions about the impact of NCLB.

“Collectively, the [10-year] studies provide an important historical overview of changing educational and societal conditions. Individually, they provide insights into the issues pertinent to their time.

[This] study continues that rich history. The insights it provides have implications not only for those who are currently elementary school principals, but also for those who are involved in preparing the next generation of principals, for the school districts that employ them, and for the policy makers whose decisions affect their work.” (Doud & Keller, 1998, p. xii)

Another hallmark of the 10-year study from its inception in 1928 has been an intentional effort to describe the results of the surveys in ways that would be useful for a wide variety of purposes. The data junkies among us take pleasure in delving into numbers. They look at tables of numbers and ask “what does this mean?” And the information from any of the 10-year studies could be simply that—dozens and dozens of tables of numbers. But from the first, NAESP—then the Department of Elementary School Principals—recognized the importance of providing descriptive text along with the tables to highlight potentially useful information and thus increasing the likelihood that a variety of users could benefit from it.

Some of these highlights focus on the current year's data—for example, what are the opinions about NCLB that principals express in this study? Other times, they take a look at potentially significant data trends. For example, how do principals today describe their morale compared to principals from 10, or even 20, years ago? Such highlights, accompanied by tables of data for those who wanted to do their own more detailed study, have been used by NAESP in program planning and by others such as universities planning graduate preparation programs for future principals.

In his foreword to the 1998 study, then-Executive Director Sam Sava talked about the importance of the 10-year study to NAESP's efforts to meet the needs of the profession:

The K-8 Principal in 1998 is the seventh in a series of research studies that began in 1928. . . . During my tenure, I have consulted this publication often in directing the energy and fiscal resources of our association and in developing professional training materials or programs for our nation's principals. It has helped me to better understand the emerging issues facing principals today.

In this report, we add to this knowledge base that now spans 80 years. The 10-year reports have often compared newly collected data to that analyzed for the previous 10-year study. However, since this report is the first of the 21st century, it seemed to be a good time to devote more attention to the history of our profession. Thus, trend data for some items look back further than 10 years. In addition, some highlights titled *A Retrospective Look* have been included. Some of these highlights sound as though they could have been written today, while others definitely speak of education in a different time. But together with other text and data in this 2008 report, they provide a rich perspective on the evolution of the elementary school principalship and of elementary education.



A Retrospective Look—Our Association

In the summer of 1920, there began at the University of Chicago a movement to organize the elementary school principals of the country into one national organization. The committee formed for this purpose consisted of elementary school principals from many states. By February 1921, the committee had organized a program and held its first meeting with the Department of Superintendence at Atlantic City. A small association was formed looking forward to the general summer meeting at Des Moines. At the Des Moines meeting a constitution was adopted, officers chosen, and the organization became a department of the National Education Association.

It is of particular interest to the Committee on Standards and Training for the Elementary School Principalship [authors of the 1928 report] that the Department from its inception had as a major purpose the elevation of the scholarship and administrative ability of elementary school principals. (Committee on Standards and Training for the Elementary School Principalship, 1928, pp. 155)

About the 10-Year Study

Authors of the 1948 report suggest that “one purpose of the 1928 yearbook was to suggest that the elementary school principalship is a ‘strategic position’” (1948, p. 69). The first study of the elementary school principalship was conducted in 1928, the second in 1948, and then in 1958. This decision to do the study every 10 years, instead of allowing a 20-year gap, came about “since the principalship has moved rapidly into professionalism” (1958, NEA Research Division, p. vii).

To provide some context, it is interesting to note that NAESP was a department of the National Education Association in 1928. This relationship continued until increased NEA support for teacher collective bargaining caused administrator groups, viewed as sitting on the opposite side of the bargaining table from teachers, to form independent associations such as NAESP, the National

Association of Secondary School Principals, and the American Association of School Administrators. Thus, the first four 10-year studies were conducted by the Department of Elementary School Principals. Research support was provided even then by the Educational Research Service, which was a department of the NEA Research Division.

Planning for each of the 10-year studies begins with detailed discussions about the questions that should be asked. Two guidelines drove development of the content for the new version. First, some questions are repeated in each of the surveys, with the responses yielding valuable trend data about principals, the principalship, and schools. Second, each survey intentionally included items that focused on factors with a significant impact on schools at that time. For example, this year's survey included questions about principals' assessment of the types of impact NCLB has had on their schools.

For the 2008 study, the principals recognized in the acknowledgements talked both about the big issues and about the nuances of wording each question. For, when a study is done only once every 10 years, it's important to do it "right." Simply looking at some of the questions asked in previous 10-year studies provides some sense of the changing context of education, as well as often-dramatic shifts in what was considered important—and appropriate—to ask. For example, here are some topics addressed on previous surveys:

- What effect is collective bargaining in public education having on public opinion?
- Are you single, married, widowed, or divorced?
- Do you belong to a church?
- What is your salary and how much do you need for "living essentials" each year? (No overall mean salary was reported until 1958; instead, salaries for male and female principals were reported separately.)

- How are you registered—Democrat, Republican, Independent, or other?
- How would you describe your office facilities? Responses provided ranged from *tiptop in space and equipment; could not ask for more* (14%) to *have no real office for a principal* (4%).

Surveys are sent to a random sample of elementary school principals, and in 2008—for the first time—these principals responded online. Appreciation is due to each of the elementary school principals who took time during their busy days to provide responses that together form a comprehensive picture of elementary education, the principalship, and the people who hold these positions.

Chapter 1:

The Typical Elementary School Principal Today

Each of the 10-year study reports has provided a brief overview—a picture—of elementary school principals. Bill Pharis and Sally Zakariya, authors of the 1978 study talk about such profiles and about elementary school principals:

Principals are not average people. They occupy positions of leadership and respect, positions they have earned on the basis of advanced academic degrees and years of professional experience. By almost any measure one might use, principals would have to be considered high achievers. Although principals are by no means average themselves, it is nevertheless interesting to try to construct the profile of an average or typical principal. (1979, p. 1)

According to the data collected in this 2008 study of the elementary school principal, the typical principal is female, White, and 50 years old. She could retire in 9 years if she stays in the present system and intends to do so.

She characterizes her authority to make decisions concerning her school as high and also feels the authority given to her by the school board and superintendent is in balance with her responsibilities. In addition, she feels she has much or some influence over decisions impacting elementary education. Her feelings as to whether an increase in decision-making authority had been delegated to her school site in recent years are mixed. Her school has a school site council, and she views its impact on the quality of education in her school as positive.

Over the past few years, the extent to which she uses assessment data for instructional planning has increased substantially, along with her involvement in helping teachers use effective instructional practice, and her efforts to develop the school as a professional learning community. She spends much of her time in contact with staff, especially in her supervisory role.

She considers herself to have primary responsibility for supervision and evaluation of staff as well as for selection of teachers, but is likely to share responsibility for instructional improvement with others in the school. She feels her relationships with students and teachers—as well as others outside the school such as central office staff members—are good.

Appointed to her first principalship when she was 40 years old, she has been a principal for about 10 years and principal in her current school for 6 years. She has taught at the elementary level, and, in total, has 25 years of experience in education. She has a master's degree and graduated from an NCATE-approved program. In terms of helping her do her job well, she feels that on-the-job experiences as a principal have been most helpful to her, followed by her teaching experience.

Today's typical principal has taught at the elementary level and has been a principal for about 10 years.

This principal, though, still feels she has much to learn, with *developing a professional learning community* a topic in which she is very interested. She is most likely to participate in district-provided opportunities to address her development needs. She also belongs to a state association of school administrators and NAESP.

The principalship is her sole responsibility, a change from times when principals were also expected to teach. However, an assistant principal is not assigned to her building, and her district also has no plans to assign principalship responsibilities—some administrative and others instructional—to two people so that the job might be more “doable.” Her school enrolls 450 students. She considers the school's parents to be highly supportive and moderately involved with the school's programs.



A Retrospective Look—1928

[Our case studies of outstanding elementary school principals] indicate something of value of personal qualities in the principalship. The most important personal qualities shown by these case studies are: an interest in children, friendliness, modulated voices, friendly handling of children, sincerity, tactfulness, belief in the principal's work, willingness to sacrifice personal convenience, an open mind toward new professional developments, an interest in the community, and a sense of the relative phases of the principal's work.

The committee recognizes certain intangible personal qualities as being of major significance in the success of an elementary school principal. The person in charge of elementary school children must remember that he is a teacher of children and that his personality is a potent influence in the educational process. The emphasis on these personal qualities does not minimize, however, the importance of professional preparation, scholarship and experience. (Committee on Standards and Training for the Elementary School Principalship, 1948, pp. 146-147)

The typical principal has an employment contract with her district that addresses salary and fringe benefit provisions as well as district expectations. In addition, she has a written job description that is standard for all principals in her district. Tenure is not available to her. She is evaluated annually, and student performance results are taken into account in her evaluation. Goal setting is part of the evaluation process, and she is held accountable for progress toward meeting

these goals. Portfolio assessment is not an option for her as part of the evaluation process.

Major concerns facing her school include providing a *continuum of services for students who are at risk, student assessment, and instructional practice*. Although her sense of job security has not decreased in the last few years, she does feel that accountability issues such as *failure of her school to meet state standards* could impact it.

She has mixed feelings concerning the impact of NCLB, citing *use of assessment data to drive instruction, the increased focus on instruction, attention to needs of all students, and better understanding of content area standards* as benefits. But she feels that some negative impacts have included *stress on staff due to accountability pressures, school morale, and impact time on nontested subject areas*.

She is likely to have a 12-month contract and works, on average, 56 hours per week. Her annual salary is \$84,506, and incentive pay is not available to her.

Her morale is high and, if she were starting out all over again, she would choose to be an elementary school principal. However, she is concerned about the ability of public education to attract quality people to the principalship, citing a salary not commensurate with responsibilities, time demands of the job, an ever-increasing work load, and stress as factors that could discourage good candidates.

The typical principal feels that NCLB has had both positive and negative effects.

Some Similarities and Differences Over Time

Many of the data highlights included in this 10-year report compare and contrast findings from the 2008 study with previous ones. However, it is also interesting and informative to have a brief overview of some of these highlights. Here, we'll take a look at just the last 50 years. For example, in 1958, 17% of the respondents reported that they were *teaching principals* who had to split their time between administrative duties and the classroom. By 1988, only 1% of the respondents described their titles this way.

In 1958, 87% of the *supervising (nonteaching) principals* reported the lack of an assistant principal. In 2008, two-thirds of the respondents still reported that they had no assistant principal in their buildings.

What are some other comparisons between the work life of elementary school principals in 1958 and 2008? An interesting one looks at the time needed to do the job. In 1958, supervising principals reported an average work day of 9.2 hours, with an additional 4.9 hours devoted to the job on evenings and weekends—for an average work week during the school year of about 51 hours. Principals responding to the 2008 survey reported longer work days (9.8 hours), and their evening and weekend time has increased to 6.9 hours, for a total work week of about 56 hours.

Compensation is obviously an important topic, both for principals and the association representing their interests. In the 1958 survey, principals were asked to report their 1956-1957 annual school salary, whether they had employment in addition to the principalship (nearly two-thirds of the male principals but only a tenth of the females said *yes*), and the number of persons who were *fully dependent on them for financial support* (median for males was 3.1, with females reporting a median of 0). Not surprisingly, the only question of the three included on the 2008 salary asked about school salary. The mean 1956-1957 salary was \$6,600, and the mean for 2007-2008 was \$84,506. Adjusted for inflation, the 1956-1957 salary would be \$50,569 in 2008 dollars. Thus, principals' salaries have increased substantially in terms of earning power over the 50-year period, although perhaps not if increases in the length of their work years and hours per day are taken into account.

Over a 50-year period, elementary principals' salaries—adjusted for inflation—have increased substantially.

The average age of the reporting principals has also increased, 46 years old in 1958 as compared to 50 in 2008. Principals have become more highly educated, with less than 1% of the respondents in 2008 reporting they hold only a bachelor's degree as contrasted with 16% in 1958. An interesting finding—21% of the 1958 respondents said they had *no education related to elementary school administration* before becoming an elementary school principal.

Finally, in both 1968 and 2008, principals were asked "Suppose you were starting out all over again, would you want to become an elementary school principal?" About 9 of every 10 responding principals in both years answered *yes*. However, on a more sober note, almost two-thirds of the respondents to the 2008 survey expressed concern about the *ability of public education to continue to attract quality people to the elementary school principalship*. Reasons given included salary levels, long hours, increasing responsibilities, and work-related stress.

Chapter 2:

NCLB and Your School

Since the first 10-year study was conducted in 1928, principals have needed to adapt to often-dramatic changes in factors impacting their schools. Some of these factors are student-related, with schools responsible for an increasingly diverse student population. Today, this population includes many students—such as those learning English—who need special supports to succeed. Layer on top of that challenge public expectations of what students should be expected to learn. The focus of these expectations has shifted over the years, with NCLB-related requirements putting student and school outcomes—as measured by state assessments—on center stage.

Many educators expressed concern about aspects of NCLB, both during its original authorization and as the often-bumpy road of implementation moved forward. Some critics of public schools put this concern in a less than favorable light, suggesting that school leaders were simply unwilling to be held accountable for student outcomes. But this simplistic view assumes that principals see NCLB as no more than a “big stick” with no possible benefits for students and schools. This 10-year study offered a perfect opportunity to ask principals for their opinions.



Question: What is your assessment of the impact of NCLB on the following aspects of your school?

Principals were asked to provide an assessment (*Positive, Little to No, or Negative*) of the impact of NCLB on some aspects of their school. Responses clearly demonstrate their assessment of NCLB as having both positive and negative effects on students, schools, and school staff.

Principals gave NCLB mixed grades in regard to its impact on schools and children.

Of the 18 areas listed, 4 received high percentages of *positive* ratings:

- Use of assessment data to drive instruction (75.3%)
- Focus on instruction (71.7%)
- Attention to needs of all students (63.8%)
- Understanding of content area standards (63.3%)

Of the 18 areas listed, 3 received high percentages of *negative* ratings:

- Stress on staff due to accountability pressures (65.0%)
- School morale (60.2%)
- Impact on nontested subject areas (59.4%)

In general, respondents who had been a principal for 15 years or more were less positive about the impact of NCLB. For example, while 80.0% of principals with less than 5 years of experience as a principal gave NCLB a positive rating in terms of its impact on *focus on instruction*, only 56.3% of the principals with 15 or more years of

experience expressed this opinion. More of them (28.2%) felt that NCLB has had *little or no impact on instruction*. However, over half of this more-experienced group still gave the four elements rated high by respondents in general *positive* ratings, and 64.3% of them rated *use of assessment data to drive instruction* as *positive*. In addition, there were items on which experienced and less-experienced respondents' opinions were more closely matched. As an example, only 1 in 5 of the principals from both groups felt that *resources available for school programs* had been positively impacted by NCLB.

Differences are also present between the male and female principals, with the females more likely to express positive opinions about several aspects of NCLB. (See Table 1.)

Aspects of NCLB Receiving High "Positive Impact" Ratings

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • Use of assessment data to drive instruction | 75.3% |
| • Increased focus on instruction | 71.7 |
| • Attention to needs of all students | 63.8 |
| • Understanding of content area standards | 63.3 |

Aspects of NCLB Receiving High "Negative" Impact Ratings

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • Stress on staff due to accountability pressures | 65.0% |
| • School morale | 60.2 |
| • Impact on nontested subject areas | 59.4 |

Table 1. Assessment of the Impact of NCLB on Aspects of the School						
	Years as a Principal				Male	Female
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Use of assessment data to drive instruction						
Positive	75.3%	82.7%	76.2%	64.3%	64.8%	81.0%
Little to No	18.4	12.3	18.9	24.3	26.7	13.5
Negative	6.4	4.9	4.9	11.4	8.6	5.5
Focus on instruction						
Positive	71.7	80.0	76.2	56.3	61.9	77.3
Little to No	20.5	15.0	18.0	28.2	25.7	17.2
Negative	7.8	5.0	5.7	15.5	12.4	5.5
Attention to needs of all students						
Positive	63.8	71.3	66.4	51.4	54.8	69.3
Little to No	19.5	13.8	20.5	24.3	25.0	16.0
Negative	16.7	15.0	13.1	24.3	20.2	14.7
Understanding of content area standards						
Positive	63.3	65.4	66.1	56.3	54.8	68.3
Little to No	33.9	33.3	32.2	36.6	40.4	29.9
Negative	2.8	1.2	1.7	7.0	4.8	1.8
Impact on students in general						
Positive	48.6	50.6	50.0	43.7	38.1	54.3
Little to No	33.8	32.1	36.9	31.0	37.1	32.3
Negative	17.6	17.3	13.1	25.4	24.8	13.4
Central office support for school's mission						
Positive	40.8	47.5	44.3	31.0	34.6	44.5
Little to No	48.6	41.3	46.7	54.9	50.0	47.6
Negative	10.6	11.3	9.0	14.1	15.4	7.9
Impact on students with disabilities						
Positive	35.0	43.2	36.1	25.7	31.7	37.2
Little to No	28.3	23.5	27.0	31.4	27.9	26.8
Negative	36.7	33.3	36.9	42.9	40.4	36.0
Quality of teachers						
Positive	31.0	40.7	30.3	22.5	19.0	38.4
Little to No	60.2	51.9	61.5	66.2	69.5	54.3
Negative	8.8	7.4	8.2	11.3	11.4	7.3
Impact on English Language Learners						
Positive	28.7	37.0	28.9	20.0	26.2	31.1
Little to No	37.6	30.9	38.0	42.9	40.8	34.1
Negative	33.7	32.1	33.1	37.1	33.0	34.8

	Years as a Principal				Male	Female
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Impact on principal						
Positive	28.3%	33.8%	26.2%	22.5%	16.2%	34.4%
Little to No	22.3	20.0	21.3	26.8	23.8	22.1
Negative	49.5	46.3	52.5	50.7	60.0	43.6
Stress on staff due to accountability pressures						
Positive	26.1	33.3	25.4	18.6	18.3	31.1
Little to No	8.8	8.6	9.8	8.6	9.6	8.5
Negative	65.0	58.0	64.8	72.9	72.1	60.4
Ability of school to address the needs of the whole child						
Positive	21.3	22.5	23.8	16.9	14.3	25.2
Little to No	35.1	33.8	35.2	35.2	39.0	31.9
Negative	43.6	43.8	41.0	47.9	46.7	42.9
Availability of supplemental educational programs						
Positive	19.6	22.2	18.2	18.6	16.2	21.6
Little to No	58.7	54.3	61.2	57.1	60.0	57.4
Negative	21.7	23.5	20.7	24.3	23.8	21.0
Ability of schools to attract/retain good teachers						
Positive	19.0	25.9	17.2	14.1	10.5	24.4
Little to No	59.5	60.5	60.7	56.3	61.9	58.5
Negative	21.5	13.6	22.1	29.6	27.6	17.1
Resources available for school's programs						
Positive	17.7	21.0	15.7	19.7	13.3	20.2
Little to No	48.9	37.0	54.5	49.3	51.4	46.6
Negative	33.3	42.0	29.8	31.0	35.2	33.1
Parent/community support of schools						
Positive	15.5	21.0	12.3	15.5	6.7	20.1
Little to No	64.8	63.0	68.0	59.2	67.6	64.0
Negative	19.7	16.0	19.7	25.4	25.7	15.9
School morale						
Positive	11.3	16.0	9.0	9.9	2.9	15.9
Little to No	28.5	25.9	34.4	21.1	31.4	26.8
Negative	60.2	58.0	56.6	69.0	65.7	57.3
Impact on nontested subject areas						
Positive	7.5	11.3	6.6	4.2	4.8	8.6
Little to No	33.1	32.5	34.7	32.4	31.4	34.6
Negative	59.4	56.3	58.7	63.4	63.8	56.8

Obviously, all these factors ultimately affect students, and the results highlight the importance of soliciting educators' opinions as part of discussions about reauthorization and/or modification of the law. When asked specifically about students, more than 3 of every 5 responding principals (63.8%) said that NCLB has had a positive impact concerning *attention to needs of all students*. However, mixed opinions surface when related questions are asked. For example, principals provided these assessments:

- Impact on students in general: Positive—48.6%; Negative—17.6%
- Impact on students with disabilities: Positive—35.0%; Negative—36.7%
- Impact on English Language Learners: Positive—28.7%; Negative—33.7%

Finally, only 1 in 5 respondents (21.3%) gave NCLB a *positive* assessment in regard to *ability of the school to address the needs of the whole child*, while 2 in 5 principals characterized its impact as *negative* (43.6%). This assessment is consistent with oft-expressed concerns that the intense focus on testing and accountability limits the time and attention schools can direct toward students' nonacademic needs.

Many of the principals consider their state's standards more rigorous than those used by other states.



Question: In your opinion, how does your state's assessment system for elementary students compare to those of other states?

A high percentage of the responding principals—about 3 in 10—do not feel they have enough information about the assessment systems used in other states to compare these with their own. This was especially the case for the less-experienced principals. However, of the principals who did make a comparison, there was a strong feeling that their own state’s standards made it more difficult to meet elementary school-level standards. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Opinion About State’s Assessment System for Elementary Education Compared to Other States				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• More difficult to meet standards	46.8%	40.7%	50.0%	52.1%
• Less difficult to meet standards	2.5	3.7	2.5	0.0
• About the same	19.7	13.6	20.5	22.5
• Don’t know enough about other states	31.0	42.0	27.0	25.4



Question: How do you feel about your state’s approach to assessing Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)?

Substantially more principals—about 2 in every 5—characterize their opinion of their state’s approach to assessing AYP as *negative* than as *positive* or even *neutral*. However, 1 in 4 of respondents in general, and slightly more of the less experienced principals—are *positive* about their state’s approach. (See Table 3.)

About 2 of every 5 responding principals have a negative opinion of their state’s approach to AYP.

Table 3. Opinion About Own State's Approach to Assessing AYP				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Positive	24.6%	33.3%	22.1%	19.7%
• Neutral	31.0	29.6	28.7	33.8
• Negative	44.4	37.0	49.2	46.5

Summary

Overall, the principals provided a balanced assessment of the impact of NCLB. In their view, it has had a positive effect on use of assessment data to drive instruction, the increased focus on instruction, attention paid to the needs of all students, and an increased understanding of content standards by teachers and others. In contrast, the impact on staff due to accountability pressures, school morale, and effect on nontested subject areas was considered to be negative.

When asked about their own state's assessment system for elementary education compared to those used by other states, many of the principals felt they didn't know enough about the others to provide an opinion. Of those who did, the consensus was that it was more difficult to meet standards in their own state. While leaning toward a negative opinion about the approach their own states take to AYP, there were also substantial numbers who said they were positive or neutral about it.

Chapter 3:

Responsibilities and Authority

In the 1998 report, authors Jim Doud and Ed Keller talked about both the contexts within which schools operated and the accompanying changes in school governance structures over a 20-year period:

The effective schools research of the 1970s and 1980s established that the instructional leadership of the principal was essential to the efficient and effective operation of the school, and research during the last decade has reinforced those findings. During the 1990s, emphasis continued to be placed on school efficiency, but the focus shifted more directly toward accountability for student performance, especially as measured on standardized achievement tests. To that end, many school districts have decentralized the decision-making process so that the individual principal and school staff are more directly responsible for the instructional decisions that affect their school.

Today, teachers and parents participate more directly in the decision-making process. The impact of this increased participation and the extent to which it has actually changed the perceptions of principals about their job were issues of particular interest in the 1998 survey. (1998, p. 1)

Such issues are still of interest in 2008, and perhaps especially so due to changes—specifically the provision of more direction from district offices to schools as a result of efforts to meet state and NCLB-related standards—that have happened over the decade since the 1998 study.



A Retrospective Look—1928

A study of certain administrative powers exercised in a school system brings out the cooperative and complementary relationship existing between the principal and superintendent....Superintendents are coming to consider each school and the community around it as an “operating unit.” Principals are being held accountable for the adjustment of their schools to the needs of this unit. (Committee on Standards and Training for the Elementary School Principalship, 1948, p. 143)



A Retrospective Look—1988

One of the consistent findings in the Effective Schools research has been the degree to which the quality of a school’s program is tied to the level of the principal’s authority to make decisions governing the school’s programs and operations. Having been given a high level of authority, the wise principal recognizes the capabilities and strengths of others and finds meaningful and appropriate ways to involve them in the decision-making process. (Doud, 1988, p. 103)



Question: How would you describe the level of authority that principals in your district have to make decisions concerning their own schools?

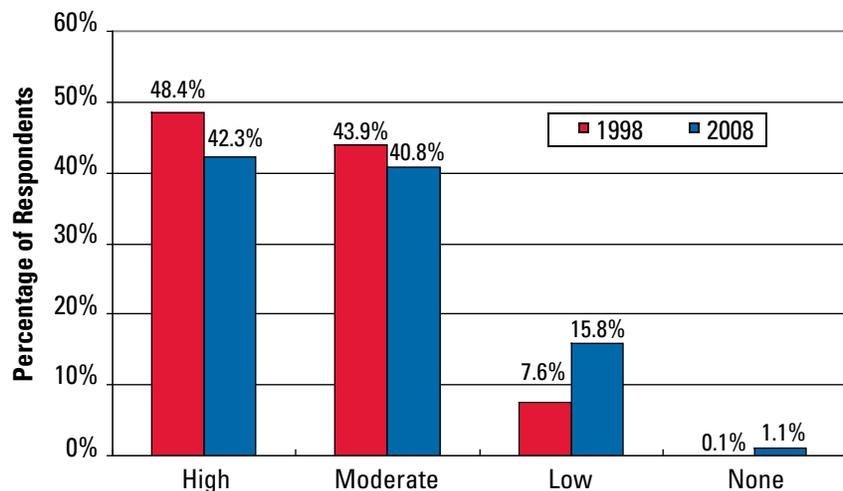
Although 4 of every 5 of the principals characterize their level of authority regarding their own schools as *high* (42.3%) or *moderate* (40.8%), there has been a slight shift away from such opinions over the 10 years from 1998 to 2008 (see Figure 1).

The lowest levels of satisfaction were expressed by principals working in medium-sized urban districts (29.0% *low* or *none* as contrasted with 10.3% of principals working in small towns). A more striking difference was demonstrated between the subgroup of principals that felt the authority given them by the school board and central office was *in balance* with their responsibilities (only 4.4% responded *low* or *none*), and the principals who did *not* feel they were given sufficient authority. (See the next question for additional information.) Almost half of this group (48.8%) characterized their level of authority to be *low* or *none*, with only 6.3% rating it *high* as contrasted with 56.2% of *in balance* group. (See Table 4.)

Principals generally characterize their levels of decision-making authority as "high" or "moderate."

Table 4. Principals' Perceived Authority to Make Decisions Concerning Their Schools						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Authority Given to Run Your School in Balance With Responsibility	
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	Yes	No
• High	42.3%	49.4%	40.2%	38.0%	56.2%	6.3%
• Moderate	40.8	33.3	45.9	40.8	39.4	45.0
• Low	15.8	17.3	13.1	18.3	4.4	45.0
• None	1.1	0.0	0.8	2.8	0.0	3.8

Figure 1. Perceived Authority to Make Decisions Concerning Their Schools, 1998 and 2008



Question: In general, is the authority to run your school given to you by the school board and central administration in balance with the degree to which they hold you responsible when things go wrong?

Slightly more than 7 of every 10 (71.7%) of the responding principals agreed with the statement: *The authority to run your schools given to you by the school board and central administration is in balance with the degree to which they hold you responsible when things go wrong.* This number was virtually unchanged from 10 years ago (72.2% in 1998), and considering the high-stakes changes NCLB has brought to many principals over the time period, this is, perhaps, surprising.

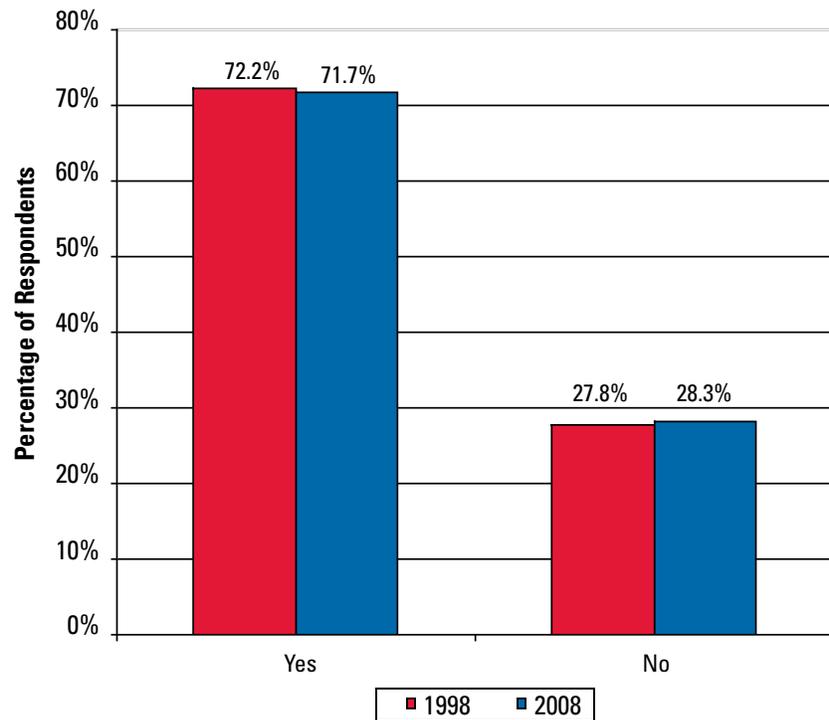
Both male and female principals were in fairly close agreement on this item (male: 74.3% answered *yes*; female: 71.3%). However, there were differences from the perspective of years on the job. The more-experienced principals were less likely to agree that there is a balance than those with less experience (less than 5 years experience: 77.8% answered *yes*; 15 or more years: 63.4%). In addition, younger respondents were more positive than older ones (40 or less: 87.8% *yes*; 41-50: 75.6%; older than 50: 66.7%). (Note: There is an interaction between age and experience, with average age increasing substantially through the 3 experience subgroups: Less than 5 years experience: mean age of 44 years; 5-14 years experience: 51 years; 15 years or more experience: 57 years.) (See Table 5.)

There was also variation among principals working in different types of communities. Principals working in urban areas were less likely (large urban: 57.1% *yes*; medium urban: 54.8%) than those in nonurban settings to feel there is a balance between authority and responsibility (suburban: 75.3%; small town: 82.4%; rural: 71.0%).

As they did in 1998, principals responding in 2008 believe the amount of authority they have to run their schools is in balance with the degree to which they are held responsible when things go wrong.

Table 5. Principals' Perceived Balance of Authority With Responsibility						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
• Yes	71.7%	77.8%	71.3%	63.4%	74.3%	71.3%
• No	28.3	22.2	28.7	36.6	25.7	28.7

Figure 2. Principals' Perceived Balance of Authority With Responsibility, 1998 and 2008





A Retrospective Look—1958 and 1968

Authors of the 1968 study expressed concern that principals had lost ground in terms of their perceived impact on development of school district policies, with the percentage of respondents indicating they were *invited to present views directly to the board of education or through the superintendent of schools* dropping from 66% to 27%.

	<u>1958</u>	<u>1968</u>
• I am not consulted.	5%	10%
• I am asked to comment upon policies developed by the central office.	11	15
• I am asked to comment upon policies developed by the central office and get some encouragement to propose new policies.	18	45
• I am not only encouraged to suggest new policies but am invited to present my views directly to the board of education or through the superintendent of schools.	66	27

Source: Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, 1968, p. 55.



Question: How much influence do you think you have on school district decisions that affect elementary schools and elementary education?

Overall, 74.3% of the principals said they believed they had *much* (27.8%) or *some influence* (46.5%) on school district decisions that affect elementary schools and elementary education. While this perspective is positive, it still represents a decrease from 1998 (*much influence*: 35.0%; *some influence*: 50.9%), perhaps in response to the higher degree of central office control over curriculum and instruction

Three of every four principals say they have “much” or “some” influence over decisions affecting elementary education.

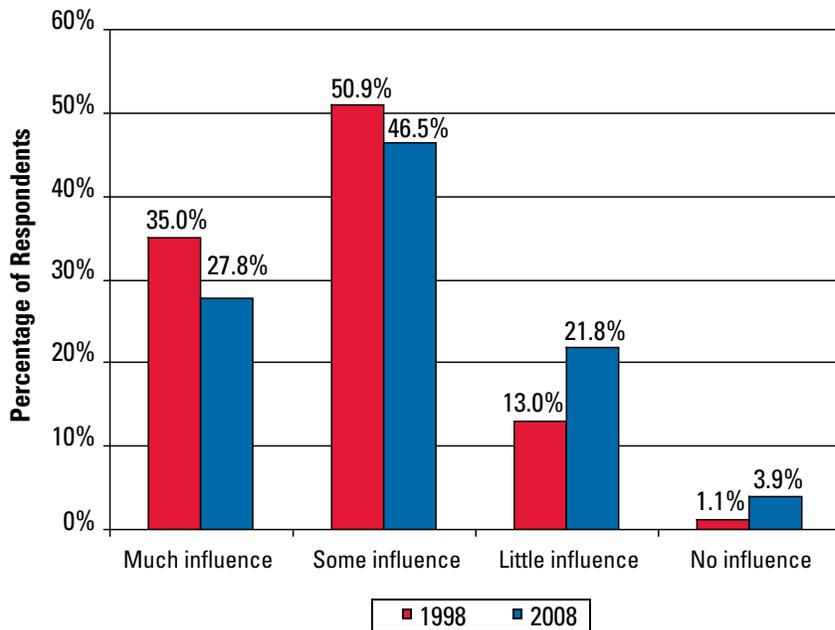
brought about by NCLB and state accountability requirements. About 1 in every 4 respondents selected the *little* or *no influence* options (21.8% and 3.9%). (See Figure 3.)

A review of subgroupings of respondents revealed both similarities and differences. For example, the subgroups of principals by experience level were all equally likely to select either the *much* or *some influence* options (less than 5 years: 76.5%; 5-14 years: 73.0%; 15 or more: 73.3%). In contrast, principals working in urban schools (large urban: 50.0%; medium urban: 51.7%) were much more likely to consider themselves as having *little* to *no influence* on decisions that affect elementary schools and elementary education than those working in suburban (30.6%) or, especially, small town (16.2%) or rural schools (14.5%).

The difference in response patterns between the group that considered their authority to be in balance with their responsibilities and principals who felt there was an imbalance was even more striking. Almost 3 in every 5 of the *not-in-balance* principals (57.5%) as contrasted with the *in-balance* respondents (12.8%), selected the *little* or *no influence* options. (See Table 6.)

Table 6. Perceived Influence of Principal on School District Decisions That Affect Elementary Schools and Elementary Education						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Authority Given to Run Your School in Balance With Responsibility	
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	Yes	No
• Much influence	27.8%	28.4%	27.9%	26.8%	38.4%	1.3%
• Some influence	46.5	48.1	45.1	46.5	48.8	41.3
• Little influence	21.8	19.8	23.0	22.5	11.3	47.5
• No influence	3.9	3.7	4.1	4.2	1.5	10.0

Figure 3. Perceived Influence of Principal on School District Decisions That Affect Elementary Schools and Elementary Education, 1998 and 2008





A Retrospective Look—1948 and 1958

[A principal's] success as a manager and also as an instructional leader will depend upon the democratic relationships which he cultivates in his school. Good teamwork relationships with teachers and pupils cannot be developed by fiat. They require a democratic climate and a leadership which shares the responsibility for planning and the credit for the results achieved. (William C. Reavis, faculty member from the University of Chicago and member of the Editorial Committee that developed the 1948 report, 1948, p. 270)

Today's principal can be characterized as one who works well primarily through co-operative relationships: he does not go it alone; he is not a legalist, but neither is he a weak personality. (NEA Research Division, 1958, p. 30)

Principals generally have very good relationships with other people, especially with groups in their own schools.



Question: How would you describe your working relationships with each of the parties listed?

Principals were asked to assess the strength of their relationships with school board members, superintendents, other central office staff, teachers, students, school-based advisory groups (where present), parents, and the community served by the school. A scale of *excellent*, *good*, *fair*, and *poor* was used to characterize these relationships.

The principals responding to this survey reported 90.0% or better combined *excellent* or *good* relationships with 6 of the 8 groups.

The most positive relationships tended to occur within the school, where *excellent* relationships were reported with students (83.0%, with no principals reporting either a *fair* or *poor* rating), teachers (66.4%), school-based advisory groups (55.4%), and parents (54.8%). While relationships with school boards (16.0% *fair*, 4.3% *poor*) and superintendents (8.5% *fair*, 4.3% *poor*) were reported as strained by a few of the principals, a strong majority of principals reported that relationships with each of these two groups was either *excellent* or *good* (superintendent: 87.2%; school board: 79.8%). (See Table 7.)

In terms of differences among the subgroups, the *in-balance* and *not-in-balance* authority and responsibility groups stand out, with the least successful relationships with school boards, superintendents, and central office staff found among those respondents not satisfied with their authority/responsibility balance. For example, only 22.5% of the *not-in-balance* respondents characterized their relationships with their superintendents as *excellent*, with 27.6% of them rating it as either *fair* or *poor*. This contrasts with feedback from the principals satisfied with the authority-responsibility balance, 65.8% of whom felt they had *excellent* relationships with their superintendents and only 7.0% of them a *fair* or *poor* relationship. On a more positive note, the *not-in-balance* principals were just as likely to feel they had good relationships with others in their schools. For example, all the principals in both groups considered their relationships with students to be either *excellent* or *good*, with over 90% of them characterizing their relationships with teachers this way.

Table 7. Principals' Perceptions of Their Relationships With Each of the Parties Listed				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
School board				
Excellent	35.8%	32.1%	37.2%	36.6%
Good	44.0	50.6	44.6	36.6
Fair	16.0	13.6	15.7	19.7
Poor	4.3	3.7	2.5	7.0
Superintendent				
Excellent	53.5	51.3	52.5	56.3
Good	33.7	36.3	35.2	29.6
Fair	8.5	6.3	9.0	9.9
Poor	4.3	6.3	3.3	4.2
Other central office staff				
Excellent	52.5	59.5	51.6	45.7
Good	38.2	32.9	37.7	44.3
Fair	8.9	6.3	10.7	10.0
Poor	0.4	1.3	0.0	0.0
Teachers				
Excellent	66.4	63.0	63.1	74.6
Good	31.1	33.3	35.2	22.5
Fair	2.5	3.7	1.6	2.8
Poor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Students				
Excellent	83.0	82.7	80.3	87.3
Good	17.0	17.3	19.7	12.7
Fair	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Poor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
School-based advisory group				
Excellent	55.4	59.0	50.4	61.4
Good	39.6	34.6	45.5	34.3
Fair	5.0	6.4	4.1	4.3
Poor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Parents				
Excellent	54.8	51.9	53.3	60.6
Good	42.0	40.7	44.3	39.4
Fair	3.2	7.4	2.5	0.0
Poor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Community				
Excellent	43.8	42.0	40.2	50.7
Good	50.2	48.1	54.1	46.5
Fair	6.0	9.9	5.7	2.8
Poor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0



A Retrospective Look—1958

I believe that the key to improvement in the school is the morale of teachers and their rapport with the principal. However, classroom visiting is also important since we cannot discuss classroom problems and progress unless the principal has an understanding from firsthand observation. Furthermore, if relationships are good, teachers want the principal to visit.
Responding principal (NEA Research Division, 1958, p. 28)



Question: In your opinion, has your level of involvement as principal changed in relation to the following areas over the last 3 years?

Principals were asked to indicate, for each of 16 areas, whether their involvement had increased or decreased or whether there had been no change over the past 3 years. Seven of the options presented received an *increase* response from over half the respondents:

- Use of assessment data in instructional planning (86.4%) (new item in 2008 and high across all subgroups of respondents)
- Introduction and use of effective instructional practices (77.4%) (63.5% in 1998)
- Development of school as a professional learning community (75.0%) (new item in 2008)

Almost 9 of every 10 of the responding principals reported an increase in their level of involvement in the area of “use of assessment data in instructional planning.”

- Dealing with the effects of student assessment scores on school's accreditation and/or image (73.1%) (new item in 2008)
- Safety and security issues (66.4%) (new item in 2008)
- Planning/implementation of teacher development opportunities (65.7%) (65.5% in 1998)
- Curriculum development (59.1%) (62.4% in 1998)

Typically, principals see increased responsibilities moved onto their plates each year—with little moved off.

For three items included in both the 1998 and 2008 surveys, the *increase* percentages were substantially less in 2008. However, it is also important to see that few principals reported a *decrease* in their level of involvement for these areas. Obviously, the pattern is for more to be moved onto principals' plates—with little moved off.

- Working with site-based councils or other constituencies: *Increase* down 30.1 points from 61.6% to 31.5%; *decrease* in 2008: 1.4%
- Working with social service agencies: *Increase* down 27.2 points from 66.0% to 38.8%; *decrease* in 2008: 2.2%
- Marketing/public relations/politics to generate support for school/education: *Increase* down 20.9 points from 70.0% to 49.1%; *decrease* in 2008: 2.2%

Less-experienced principals as contrasted with the most-experienced ones were typically more likely to select the *increase* option for the areas included on the survey, sometimes substantially so. For example, 72.2% of the less than 5 years of experience principals indicated they had *increased* their involvement in the area of *curriculum development*, as contrasted with 40.8% of principals with 15 years or more of experience. However, their responses were quite close in regard to other issues such as *dealing with the effects of student assessment scores on school's accreditation or image* (less than 5 years of experience: 70.0% selected *increase*; 15 or more years: 73.2%). (See Table 8.)

This question was another one that highlighted differences between the *balance between authority and responsibility* subgroup and the *lack-of-balance* group, especially in regard to the percentage of each group selecting *decrease in level of involvement*. For example, 27.8% of the *lack-of-balance* group felt there had been a *decrease* in their involvement as regards to participation in district policy development and only 11.4% reported an *increase*. This contrasts with the responses of the *in-balance* group: *decrease*, 2.5%; *increase*, 40.9%.

Table 8. Perceptions of Principals Regarding Areas of Changing Responsibilities During the Last 3 Years				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
Use of assessment data in instructional planning				
Increase	86.4%	90.0%	86.1%	81.4%
No Change	13.3	10.0	13.1	18.6
Decrease	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.0
Introduction and use of effective instructional practices (<i>"increase" reported in 1998 by 63.5%</i>)				
Increase	77.4	88.6	80.3	60.6
No Change	17.2	7.6	14.8	31.0
Decrease	5.4	3.8	4.9	8.5
Development of school as a professional learning community				
Increase	75.0	82.5	80.3	59.2
No Change	23.2	17.5	17.2	38.0
Decrease	1.8	0.0	2.5	2.8
Dealing with effects of assessment results on accreditation and/or image				
Increase	73.1	70.0	75.2	73.2
No Change	26.5	30.0	24.0	26.8
Decrease	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.0
Safety and security issues				
Increase	66.4	66.3	63.9	71.8
No Change	32.5	33.8	33.6	28.2
Decrease	1.1	0.0	2.5	0.0
Planning/implementation of teacher development opportunities (<i>"increase" reported in 1998 by 65.5%</i>)				
Increase	65.7	70.0	70.5	50.7
No Change	30.0	27.5	26.2	40.8
Decrease	4.3	2.5	3.3	8.5
Curriculum development (<i>"increase" reported in 1998 by 62.4%</i>)				
Increase	59.1	72.2	60.7	40.8
No Change	30.8	21.5	29.5	43.7
Decrease	10.0	6.3	9.8	15.5
Marketing/public relations/politics to generate support for school/education (<i>"increase" reported in 1998 by 70.0%</i>)				
Increase	49.1	53.8	48.4	44.3
No Change	48.7	45.0	48.4	54.3
Decrease	2.2	1.3	3.3	1.4

Table 8. Perceptions of Principals Regarding Areas of Changing Responsibilities During the Last 3 Years (continued)				
	Years as a Principal			
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
Attention to issues related to potential legal liability ("increase" reported in 1998 by 58.1%)				
Increase	46.1%	52.5%	40.2%	49.3%
No Change	53.2	46.3	59.0	50.7
Decrease	0.7	1.3	0.8	0.0
Personnel evaluation ("increase" reported in 1998 by 41.7%)				
Increase	38.9	45.0	41.0	28.2
No Change	59.6	53.8	57.4	70.4
Decrease	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.4
Working with social service agencies ("increase" reported in 1998 by 66.0%)				
Increase	38.8	39.2	41.3	35.2
No Change	59.0	58.2	56.2	63.4
Decrease	2.2	2.5	2.5	1.4
Resource allocation (money, personnel, time, etc.) ("increase" reported in 1998 by 51.2%)				
Increase	37.9	44.9	37.7	26.8
No Change	45.8	41.0	46.7	52.1
Decrease	16.2	14.1	15.6	21.1
Participation in district policy development ("increase" reported in 1998 by 36.2%)				
Increase	32.5	49.4	27.3	20.0
No Change	57.8	43.0	63.6	67.1
Decrease	9.7	7.6	9.1	12.9
Working with site-based councils or other constituencies ("increase" reported in 1998 by 61.6%)				
Increase	31.5	46.8	26.4	21.1
No Change	67.0	50.6	73.6	76.1
Decrease	1.4	2.6	0.0	2.8
Personnel selection ("increase" reported in 1998 by 37.0%)				
Increase	31.4	42.5	30.3	18.3
No Change	63.9	53.8	65.6	74.6
Decrease	4.6	3.8	4.1	7.0
Involvement/relationships with early child care providers				
Increase	29.3	32.5	31.1	23.9
No Change	67.5	62.5	65.6	74.6
Decrease	3.2	5.0	3.3	1.4



Question: On which five of the listed areas do you spend the most time?

“Supervision/contact with staff” is an area on which principals indicate they spend the most time, with “my own professional development” ranked last.

Extensive conversation among members of the group assisting with development of the survey instrument identified 17 key areas about which they felt information was important. Respondents were asked to select the 5 areas of the 17 on which they spend the most time. The five areas receiving the highest percentages were:

- *Supervision/contact with staff* (79.6%) ranked high—on the basis of percentage of respondents selecting it—across all groups.
- Response patterns were similar across groups for *interaction with students* (53.0% overall) except for principals in large urban settings. Almost 4 of every 5 of these urban principals (78.6%) selected this option.
- *Discipline/student management* (51.2% overall) was reported by more of the less experienced principals than the most experienced ones (60.5% and 45.1%).
- *Improvement of instruction through support of teachers* (48.4%) varied slightly among subgroups. For example, it was selected more often in larger schools and in schools in all but the

rural communities. Also, the *accountability not in balance with responsibilities* principals selected it less often (37.5%) than the *in-balance* group (53.2%). In contrast, the *not-in-balance* group was slightly *more likely* to report spending time on accountability issues, interaction with/responding to the central office, and special duties as assigned by the special office.

- *Addressing needs of individual students* (48.1%) was reported much more often by experienced principals (63.4%) than the less experienced ones (37.0%).

In contrast, 3 areas of responsibility were selected by only 1 in 10 of the responding principals:

- Special duties assigned by central office (10.9%)
- Safety/security issues (10.2%)
- Budget administration (9.1%)

In the case of *my own professional development*, fewer than 2 of every 100 principals identified it as a priority for his or her time. Although it certainly makes sense that a principal's own professional development cannot take precedence over such responsibilities as improvement of instruction, it is still important to keep sight of the need for principals to attend to their own development needs.

In the 1998 report, authors Doud and Keller noted the following about the responses received:

Perhaps the biggest surprise among these rankings was the relatively low priority given to planning/conducting staff development. Despite the call of most site-based school management proponents and the priority given to staff development within many site-based school improvement planning processes, this finding clearly suggests that—within the prioritization of responsibility areas—staff development receives relatively little of the principal’s time. (p. 12)

Although the 1998 survey took a different approach than used in 2008, asking principals to rank a variety of responsibilities to indicate how they spend their time, the low ranking given staff development in 1998 parallels the relatively low percentage of principals (12.6%) selecting it as one of their 5 *most time* responsibilities in 2008. (See Table 9 and Figure 4.)

Table 9. Areas on Which Principals Indicated They Spend the Most Time

	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
	Total	Less than 5	5-14		
• Supervision/contact with staff	79.6%	86.4%	81.1%	73.2%	78.1% 82.9%
• Interaction with students	53.0	53.1	52.5	54.9	53.3 53.0
• Discipline/student management	51.2	60.5	50.0	45.1	52.4 51.2
• Improvement of instruction through support of teachers	48.4	48.1	51.6	46.5	41.0 54.3
• Addressing needs of individual students	48.1	37.0	49.2	63.4	49.5 47.6
• Data use and management	41.8	43.2	40.2	46.5	43.8 41.5
• Parent/community contacts	29.8	32.1	27.9	31.0	26.7 31.7
• Curricular issues	22.1	22.2	22.1	22.5	21.9 23.2
• Facilities management	20.7	22.2	21.3	18.3	24.8 18.9
• Accountability issues	20.7	16.0	23.8	21.1	25.7 18.3
• Interaction with/responding to central office	16.8	21.0	13.1	21.1	23.8 14.0
• Planning/conducting staff development	12.6	7.4	17.2	11.3	9.5 15.2
• Goal setting and related activities	11.9	9.9	13.1	11.3	10.5 12.8
• Special duties assigned by central office	10.9	14.8	9.0	11.3	13.3 10.4
• Safety/security issues	10.2	12.3	9.0	11.3	12.4 8.5
• Budget administration	9.1	8.6	9.8	8.5	8.6 9.1
• My own professional development	1.8	2.5	0.8	2.8	1.0 2.4
• Other	3.2	2.5	3.3	4.2	3.8 3.0

Figure 4. Percentage of Respondents Listing the Area as 1 of the 5 on Which They Spend the Most Time





A Retrospective Look—1968

Public Relations Procedures Considered to Be *Very Effective* by Responding Principals

	Percentage of Respondents
• Holding conferences for parents in school	66%
• Encouraging parents to visit school	49
• Working closely with parents' organizations	45
• Sending messages with report cards	28
• Supplying school news to local newspapers, radio, etc.	28
• Sending school newspaper to parents	23
• Participation in local community groups	19
• Making speeches to community groups	16

Source: Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, 1968, pp. 56-57.



Question: What is your level of authority in selecting teachers for your school?

Responses to the 2008 survey indicated a continuing shift toward principals having *primary responsibility* for selecting teachers in their school (2008: 59.9%; 1998: 45.0%). Three in 5 principals overall and similar numbers for each of the experience subgroups selected this option.

Principals reported primary responsibility for selecting teachers.

A comparison of the response pattern for 2008 to that from 1998 indicates that most of the shift came from a move away from the *share responsibility with others in the school* option (2008: 12.9%; 1998: 21.8%), although the percentage selecting *share responsibility with central office* also decreased (2008: 21.9%; 1998: 29.2%). (See Table 10.)

Both the *authority/responsibility not-in-balance* and the *certainly/probably would not choose to be an elementary school principal if starting out again* subgroups were much less likely than other subgroups to select the *have primary responsibility* option and more likely to select the *share responsibility with the central office* or *have little responsibility* options (authority/responsibility not in balance: primary 41.3%, share with central office: 27.5%, little responsibility: 12.5%; certainly/probably would not choose to be an elementary school principal if starting out again: primary 38.7%; share with central office: 38.7%; little responsibility: 12.9%).



A Retrospective Look—1968

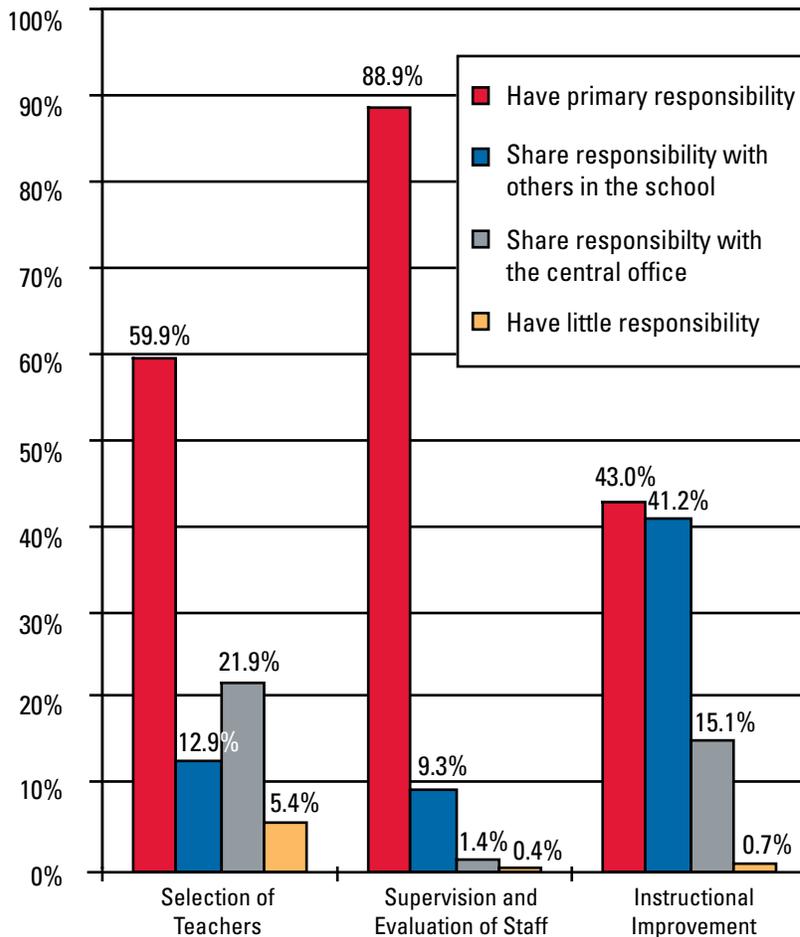
Role of the Supervising Principal in Selecting Faculty

- All assignments are made by the central office; I have nothing to say in the selection of teachers. 33.5%
- I can ask for the type of person needed and accept or reject from among several recommended by the central office. 34.4
- I am expected to outline the qualifications of each teacher needed, to examine the personnel records in the central office, to interview the candidates, and to recommend for assignment the applicants I consider. 28.0
- I employ the teachers without the assistance of a central office personnel service. 4.0

Source: Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, 1968, pp. 56-57.

Table 10. Perceived Level of Principals' Authority for Selection of Teachers				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Have primary responsibility	59.9%	60.5%	59.8%	59.2%
• Share responsibility with others in the school	12.9	17.3	10.7	11.3
• Share responsibility with the central office	21.9	18.5	23.8	22.5
• Have little responsibility	5.4	3.7	5.7	7.0

Figure 5. Principals' Reported Authority/Responsibility in Certain Areas





A Retrospective Look—1948

“Supervisory concepts are dynamic. They have changed in the past twenty years; they will continue to change. principals should look upon supervision as a cooperative process involving classroom teachers. supervision finds its most satisfying results thru attitudes and procedures whereby ‘your’ and ‘my’ problems become ‘our’ problems.” (Department of Elementary School Principals, 1948, p. 122)

About 9 in 10 principals report having primary responsibility for supervision and evaluation of staff.



Question: What level of responsibility do you have for supervising and evaluating staff in your school?

Responses to the 2008 survey looked very much like those from the 1998 survey. Although there was a slight shift away from *primary responsibility* to *share responsibility with others in the school*, the differences between the two surveys are not significant. About 8 to 9 of every 10 responding principals across all groups selected the *primary responsibility* option (2008: 88.9%; 1998: 92.4%).

There were some differences among subgroups. For example, female principals were more likely than male principals to indicate they *share responsibility with others in the school* (female: 12.8%; male: 4.8%), although 84.8% of the females still selected the *have primary responsibility* option. As another example, principals in the smallest schools (less than 400 students) overwhelmingly selected the *have primary responsibility* option (*primary*: 97.3%; *share with others in*

the school: 1.8%), while principals in the largest schools (more than 600 students) reported more collaboration (*primary: 76.9%; share responsibility with others in the school: 21.2%*). Finally, this area is definitely viewed by principals as a school site responsibility, with only about 1 in 100 principals indicating they share it with the central office. (See Table 11.)

Table 11. Perceived Level of Principals' Responsibility for Supervision and Evaluation of Staff

	Years as a Principal			
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Have primary responsibility	88.9%	92.6%	86.1%	90.1%
• Share responsibility with others in the school	9.3	6.2	11.5	8.5
• Share responsibility with the central office	1.4	1.2	1.6	1.4
• Have little responsibility	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.0



A Retrospective Look—1948

After summarizing responses from the principals, the Editorial Committee that prepared the 1948 10-year study recommended that:

Principals should look upon supervision as a cooperative process involving classroom teachers. Supervision finds its most satisfactory results thru attitudes and procedures whereby "your" and "my" problems become "our" problems. (Department of Elementary School Principals, 1948, p. 122)

The responding principals were equally likely to characterize their responsibility for instructional improvement as “primary” or “shared with others in the school.”



Question: What level of responsibility do you have for instructional improvement in your school?

Compared with the previous two items, principals were more likely to report they had *shared responsibility* for *instructional improvement* in their schools, with 41.2% characterizing it as *shared with others in the school* and 15.1% as *shared with central office*. However, over 2 in 5 (43.0%) selected the *have primary responsibility* option. This response pattern is similar to that seen in 1998: *primary responsibility* (39.0%), *share with others in the school* (44.5%), and *share responsibility with central office* (15.8%).

Some differences are seen between principal experience subgroups. For example, the least-experienced principals selected *primary responsibility* most often (49.4%) followed by *share with others in the school* (37.0%). This contrasts with the most-experienced principals, who were more likely to report a collaborative approach (*primary*: 36.6%; *share with others in the school*: 43.7%). (See Table 12.)

Table 12. Perceived Level of Principals’ Responsibility for Instructional Improvement

	Years as a Principal			
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Have primary responsibility	43.0%	49.4%	42.6%	36.6%
• Share responsibility with others in the school	41.2	37.0	42.6	43.7
• Share responsibility with the central office	15.1	13.6	13.9	18.3
• Have little responsibility	0.7	0.0	0.8	1.4



A Retrospective Look—1948

In the 1948 survey the responding principals were asked to “describe briefly *one* supervisory procedure in which he thought he had been especially successful.” Below are a few of their responses:

- I place great emphasis on individual conferences. They are very informal, trying to keep as much as possible the teacher-principal relationship and putting it on a person-to-person basis....So many teachers lay their problems before the principal and then sit back and wait for the answer. Convincing the teacher that she should often make the decision or seek the solution herself depends, I think, on one important point—that is, your willingness to stand behind her decision. You may have to guide her in her thinking, but she is the one who needs to feel a sense of accomplishment, and she will if she makes the decision. (p. 115)
- All teachers within the school who express a desire to do so are given one or more opportunities during the semester to observe in selected teaching situations. Whenever possible, I visit with the teacher to discuss the situation and lesson to be observed. I provide guidance sheets so that the teacher will look for specifics as to teacher’s preparation, pupil participation, organization, and evaluations. After the lesson, the lessons observed are discussed in relation to the teacher’s needs. (p. 115)
- Last summer a group of four teachers and I attempted to find what our immediate neighborhood offered in the way of curriculum material as the basis of a resource unit. We studied a report on the meanings and functions of such a unit. Then we made a plan of work, surveyed our neighborhood, made a chart of our findings, and outlined approaches and

tentative plans of procedures. The give and take of working together and learning from one another has had results which ramified in many directions. (p. 117)

- Thru discussion our teachers divided into groups to make a sampling study of home conditions in our district. Their groups visited the homes and made reports in teachers' meetings. After this, a record was kept of children for the purpose of learning how children grow. These records are to be continued through several years. There has been study of books and reports on how children grow. The indifference of many teachers towards pupils has changed to a basic understanding of pupils' problems. (p. 118)
- The development of a faculty club organized for professional improvement and social activities has done more for our school during the past year than any other activity. This club, with its own officers, plans its own meetings in terms of the needs as found in the group. Principal domination is lacking in that he is not a member of the group but a guest and goes to the meetings as such. The activities of the club are distinct from those of the faculty meetings. Routine matters are handled by notes or bulletins so that such matters are not included within the scope of the faculty club. (p. 118)
- Once a year I plan a full day of teaching in each of the classrooms in my school. The teacher is excused for the day to visit the other teachers and rooms of the building.... I encourage each teacher to spend time visiting the rooms of a grade lower and a grade higher than her own. These three teachers can thus become aware of the problems each must face. The principal, in spending a day with a particular group, learns to appreciate just what the teacher's problems are.... It's a real experience adjusting to a class in domestic science or trying to work with a group of kindergarten children for a day. (p. 119)

Summary

Principals' responses to the 2008 study reflect some shifts since 1998. For example, the percentage of principals characterizing their authority to make decisions concerning their schools as *high* or *moderate* dropped from 92.3% to 83.1%. However, there has been no such shift in response to a question asking if principals felt the authority they had was in balance with the degree to which they would be held responsible if things went wrong—although almost 1 in 3 of the principals felt there was not the appropriate balance. In addition, more of the principals in 2008 characterized their influence on district decisions that affect elementary schools as *little influence* or *no influence* (1998: 14.1%; 2008: 25.7%).

When asked about their authority/responsibility related to three important functions—selection of teachers, supervision and evaluation of staff, and instructional improvement—principals indicated that supervision and evaluation of staff was an area for which they held *primary responsibility*. While 6 in 10 of them also characterized selection of teachers this way, about 1 in 5 of them *share this responsibility with the central office*. Finally, there was a fairly even split between *primary responsibility* and *share responsibility with others in the school* for instructional improvement. Principals continue to characterize their working relationships with parties both inside and outside the school as very good.

When asked to highlight areas on which they spend high levels of time, *supervision/contact with staff* topped the list. Finally, the responding principals highlight *use of assessment data in instructional planning* as

the area in which their involvement had increased markedly over the past 3 years, with the *increase* percentage decreasing substantially in the *area of marketing/public relations/politics to generate support for my school/education*. However, this last had definitely not received a decrease in the principals' attention.

Chapter 4:

Decision Making at the School Site

In the 1998 10-year study, authors Doud and Keller noted that “the literature is filled with references to the decentralization of decision making, empowerment (of both teachers and parents), restructuring, school-based decision making, etc.” (1998, p. 19). In addition, state legislatures and local school boards—as well as the U.S. Department of Education—have placed increasing emphasis on parent and community involvement in school-based decisions. In order to assess the impact such influences are actually having in the schools, both the 1998 and the 2008 studies took a careful look at school-based decision making.



Question: Has your school district delegated more decision-making authority to the school site in the last 3 years?

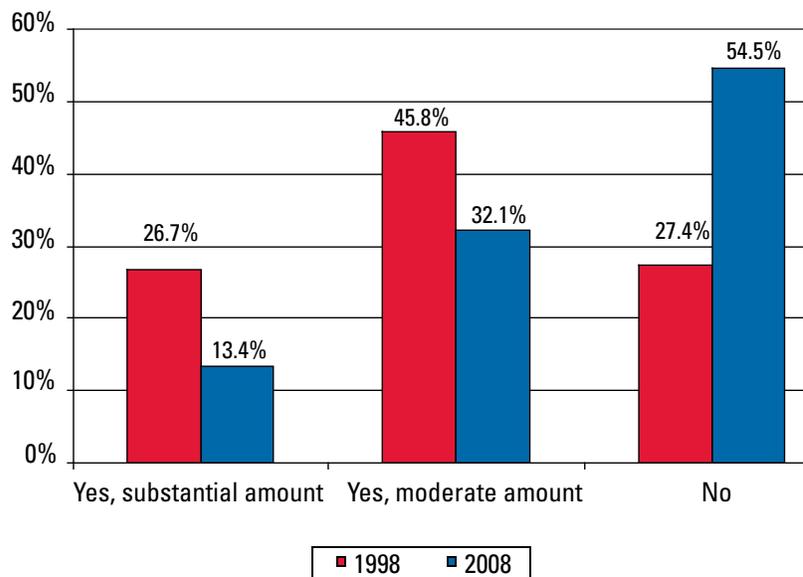
In 1988, 72.5% of principals reported a *substantial* (26.7%) or *moderate* (45.8%) shift in decision-making authority toward the school site. Although some increase in decision-making authority over the past 3 years was also reported in response to the 2008 survey, it was reported

Just under half the principals reported a recent shift in decision making to the school site.

by fewer of the respondents (*substantial increase*: 13.4%; *moderate increase*: 32.1%). Just over half the respondents (54.5%) reported *no increase*. (See Table 13.)

Table 13. Increase in Decision-Making Authority Delegated to the School in the Last 3 Years				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Yes, substantial amount	13.4%	26.3%	8.3%	7.0%
• Yes, moderate amount	32.1	35.0	28.9	36.6
• No	54.5	38.8	62.8	56.3

Figure 6. Increase in Decision-Making Authority Delegated to the School in the Last 3 Years, 1998 and 2008





Question: Does your school have a site-based council or committee?

The number of schools with school-based councils has continued to increase.

Three-fourths of the principals reported that their schools have a school-based council or committee, an increase from the approximately 60% reported in 1998. Such committees were more likely to be found in urban areas (about 90%) or suburban communities (82.4%) than in either small towns (61.2%) or rural areas (70.6%). They were reported with a somewhat higher frequency in larger schools (84.6% in schools with more than 600 students as contrasted with 67.6% in schools enrolling fewer than 400 students). (See Figure 7 and Table 14.)

Figure 7. School Has a Site-Based Council, 1998 and 2008

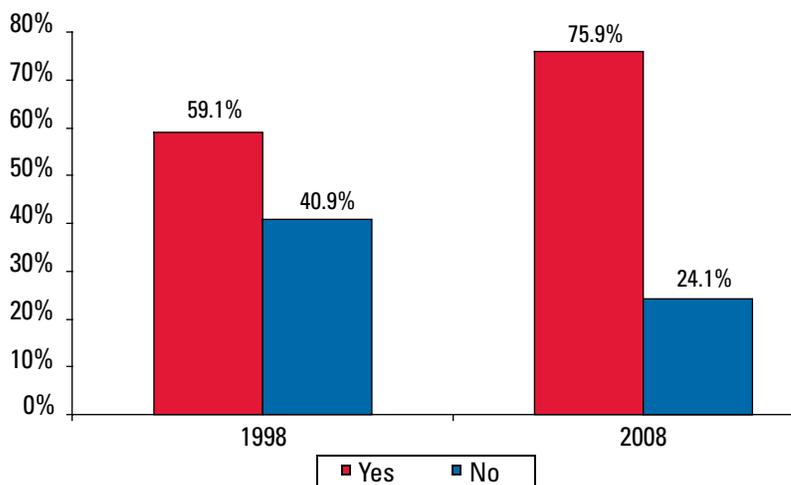


Table 14. Site-Based Councils									
		Number of Students			Community the School Serves				
		Less than 400	400 to 600	More than 600	Large Urban	Medium urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
	Total								
Yes	75.9%	67.6%	78.8%	84.6%	92.9%	90.3%	82.4%	61.2%	70.6%
No	24.1	32.4	21.2	15.4	7.1	9.7	17.6	38.8	29.4
<i>If YES, how would you rate its impact on the quality of education in your school?</i>									
• Highly Positive	10.0	6.8	13.4	9.1	0.0	0.0	11.4	17.1	10.4
• Positive	70.8	68.5	70.7	72.7	61.5	75.0	74.3	68.3	66.7
• None	19.1	24.7	15.9	18.2	38.5	25.0	14.3	14.6	22.9
• Negative	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
• Highly Negative	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>How would you describe its role?</i>									
• Strictly advisory	48.8	53.4	46.3	45.5	30.8	42.9	54.3	46.3	52.1
• Some decision making delegated by district	42.1	38.4	42.7	45.5	61.5	50.0	38.6	39.0	37.5
• Broad decision-making powers	9.1	8.2	11.0	9.1	7.7	7.1	7.1	14.6	10.4
<i>Which of the following groups has at least one representative on the council?</i>									
• Teachers	71.9	63.6	77.9	84.6	92.9	90.3	78.8	60.3	68.1
• Business partners	25.6	27.3	25.0	23.1	28.6	19.4	25.9	20.6	33.3
• Other staff	43.2	39.1	46.2	50.0	64.3	54.8	43.5	35.3	43.5
• Other community members	29.5	28.2	29.8	28.8	28.6	29.0	24.7	23.5	40.6
• Students	7.4	9.1	7.7	5.8	14.3	3.2	4.7	10.3	10.1
• Parents	60.4	52.7	63.5	75.0	85.7	74.2	64.7	45.6	62.3
• Other	5.3	1.8	8.7	3.8	7.1	6.5	3.5	4.4	7.2
<i>How are the members selected?</i>									
• Appointed	10.2	18.1	7.5	4.5	0.0	3.6	4.4	19.5	19.1
• Volunteer	28.2	27.8	33.8	18.2	23.1	28.6	33.8	19.5	29.8
• Elected	20.4	15.3	18.8	36.4	30.8	17.9	26.5	19.5	14.9
• Combination of these	41.3	38.9	40.0	40.9	46.2	50.0	35.3	41.5	36.2



Question: How would you rate the impact of the council on the quality of education in your school?

A high percentage of principals working with school councils rate their impact on the quality of education as positive (*highly positive*: 10.0%; *positive*: 70.8%). These numbers are virtually the same as those reported in the 1998 study. Perhaps even more heartening, *none* of the responding principals characterized the impact as negative (19.1% said there was *no impact*).

Principals in smaller schools, as well as those in suburban, small town, or rural communities were slightly more likely than those in other school size or community type subgroups to express a positive opinion about their school councils.

Principals view their school councils' impact on the quality of education as positive.



Question: How would you describe its role?

The percentage of principals characterizing the role of their school councils as *strictly advisory* increased about 10 points from 1998 (from 38.5% to 48.8%). Principals in the smaller schools were more likely to describe the council's role as *strictly advisory* (53.4%) than the larger schools, as were suburban principals among the community type groups (54.3%). In contrast, about 6 in 10 of the principals in large urban districts reported that their councils had *some decision-making delegated by the central office*.

About half of the principals described the role of their schools' councils as strictly advisory.

Teachers were the group most likely to have representation on the school council.



Question: Which of the following groups have at least one representative on the council?

Respondents were asked to identify the categories of representatives found on their school council. The three groups most likely to be reported as members of school-based decision-making councils were *teachers* (71.9%), *parents* (60.4%), and *other staff* (43.2%). Other groups reported by the principals included *other community members* (29.5%), *business partners* (25.6%), *students* (7.4%), and *others* (5.3%). Participation by school staff and parents both increased with school size, with urban districts most likely to report these groups as having representation on the councils.

Principals reported a variety of approaches to selecting members for the school councils.



Question: How are the members selected?

Of the principals reporting that their schools had councils, 10.2% reported that their council members were *appointed*, 28.2% had *all-volunteer councils*, 20.4% selected members through *elections*, and 41.3% used a *combination of methods*. This represents a slight shift toward volunteer and away from elected boards. Election processes were used substantially more in the larger schools (more than 600 students: 36.4%) than in the smallest schools (15.3%), and more in large urban (30.8%) and suburban (26.5%) areas.



Question: To what extent are teachers in your building involved in the development and evaluation of the instructional program?

While 66.8% of the responding principals report that teachers in their buildings are *formally involved* in development and evaluation of the instructional program, there was a slight shift since 1998 away from this option toward *no formal involvement but opinions solicited*. However, the *not at all* option is still very low (2008: 1.4%; 1998: 0.6%) and represents a marked difference from the 1 in 9 principals reporting in 1988 that teachers were not at all involved. (See Table 15.)

Formal involvement was reported significantly more often in suburban (71.8%), small town (70.1%), and rural schools (72.1%) than in medium-sized urban communities (51.6%) and, especially, large urban communities (35.7%). Another marked difference in regard to the existence of *formal involvement* was seen between the *authority/responsibility in balance* subgroup (71.4%) and the *not-in-balance* subgroup (55.0%).

About two-thirds of the principals report formal involvement by teachers in the development and evaluation of the instructional program.

Table 15. Extent of Teacher Involvement in the Development and Evaluation of the Instructional Program							
	Total	Years as a Principal			Number of Students		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	Less Than 400	400 to 600	More Than 600
• Not at all	1.4%	1.3%	1.6%	0.0%	0.9%	1.0%	3.8%
• No formal involvement but opinions solicited	29.2	32.9	30.3	23.9	31.5	27.9	25.0
• Formal involvement	66.8	63.3	65.6	73.2	63.0	70.2	69.2
• Teachers solely responsible for development and evaluation of program	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.8	4.6	1.0	1.9

Summary

Almost half of the responding principals indicated that additional decision-making authority had been delegated to their schools in the last 3 years. School-based councils, reported by about 75% of the respondents, were felt to have a *positive impact* on their schools. While about half of these councils have a strictly advisory role, 42% have some decision-making authority delegated by their districts and about 9% have broad decision-making powers.

Teachers are most likely to have seats on these councils, followed by parents. In two-fifths of the schools with councils, a combination of methods—appointment, volunteer, and elected—is used to fill the slots.

Chapter 5:

Experience and Preparation for the Position

A variety of converging trends have combined to emphasize the importance of adequately preparing people for the position of principal. First, the complexity of the job is increasingly recognized. In the second edition of *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, NAESP highlights the role of principal as becoming “more complex and challenging,” with these professionals no longer simply managers of their schools (National Association of Elementary School Principals and Collaborative Communications Group, 2008, p. 2).

In addition, the research base on the importance of the principal to the development of a high-performing school continues to build. The Wallace Foundation, a group with a long-term focus on the importance of school leadership, talks about the message this research base provides:

There is growing agreement that with the national imperative for having every child succeed, it is the principal who is best positioned to ensure that teaching and learning are as good as they can be throughout entire schools, especially in those with the highest needs. (2008, p. 1)

Obviously, adequately preparing principals for the job requires a strong sense of what knowledge and skills they should have. Over the last 2 decades NAESP has been actively engaged in efforts—beginning with the publication of *Proficiencies for Principals* in 1986 and more recently with *Leading Learning Communities*—to identify these. The 10-year studies act as a complementary resource by providing trend data concerning the paths people take to the principalship. In addition, they ask principals about the training and experiences that have been of most value to them. These opinions can provide a strong direction for those planning higher education graduate programs as well as associations and state departments of education offering development opportunities for both new and experienced principals.

Over two-fifths of the responding principals have been in the position for fewer than 4 years, with overall means of 10 years as a principal and 6 years in their current schools reported.



Question: Counting this year, how many years have you been a principal? In your current school?

Responding principals reported a mean of 10 years total experience as a principal, representing a decrease of 1 year from the 1998 figure, and with a much higher percentage of them reporting fewer than 4 years of experience (1998: 7.1%; 2008: 20.8%).

Male principals had been in the position for 4 more years than the female principals (13 and 9 years), even though the female principals were, on average, 2 years older (male: 49 years old; female: 51 years) and had 1 more year experience in education (male: 24 years; female: 25 years). It is especially interesting to look at the experience patterns of male and female principals. While 23.1% of the males report being a principal for 20 years or more, only 7.5% of the females report this experience. In contrast, 61.5% of the females have fewer than 10 years experience, compared with 48.0% of the males. Thus the past 10 years have seen a rapid shift toward more females in the elementary school principalship.

Other interesting patterns are evident in the difference between the 1998 and 2008 responses. While 20.8% of the respondents in 2008 reported having fewer than 4 years of experience as a principal, only 7.1% of the 1998 principals responded this way. At the more experienced end of the spectrum (20 or more years of experience as a principal), only 14.2% of the 2008 respondents fell into this category as contrasted with 20.5% in 1998. The average ages *within* the experience subgroups is also shifting, with the two more experienced groups older now than in 1998 (*5-14 years* subgroup: 1998—47 years old, 2008—51 years; *15 or more years* subgroup: 1998—53 years old, 2008—57 years). A similar shift was not seen for the *less than 5 years of experience* subgroup (1998—45 years old; 2008—44 years old). Statistics such as these, along with information on retirement plans of the principals, can be a valuable resource to those interested in projecting the need for people to fill principalships in the next few years. (See Table 16.)

There are significant differences in response patterns among some subgroups. For example, principals with *less than 4* years of experience were much more heavily represented in the *certainly/probably would choose to be a principal if starting out all over again* subgroup (22.8%) than in the *certainly/probably would not* group (9.7%). As another example, the *authority in balance with responsibility was less* likely to include people with 10 or more years of experience (40.5%) than the *not in balance* subgroup (55.7%). While this study cannot make causal inferences from the data—for example, more years in the position tend to negatively impact principals’ opinions about their level of authority—there are enough differences between the two subgroups to warrant taking a careful look at them through the rest of this report and, perhaps, reflecting on some possible reasons.

Principals reported 25 years as a professional in education.



Question: How many total years (including your years as principal) have you been employed as a professional in education?

The median number of years in education has held steady since 1998 at 25 years, an increase of 7 years since the 1968 study. As Doud and Keller indicated in their 1998 report, it appeared that both the age and experience levels of newly appointed principals has been gradually shifting upward over time. This can be significant to work on projecting openings in the principalships in the next decade or so and also for efforts to accurately meet principals’ pre- and in-service development needs. (See Table 17 and Table 18.)

Table 16. Total Years Employed as Principal in Current School, as Principal All Together, and as a Professional in Education

	Years as a Principal					
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	Male	Female
<i>In your current school</i>						
Less than 4 years	41.5%	84.0%	24.8%	21.1%	41.3%	42.1%
4-9 years	39.4	16.0	57.9	33.8	40.4	37.8
10-19 years	16.2	0.0	17.4	33.8	12.5	18.9
20 or more years	2.9	0.0	0.0	11.3	5.8	1.2
• Mean number of years	6	2	6	10	6	6
<i>As a principal all together (including years in present school)</i>						
Less than 4 years	20.8	70.4	0.0	0.0	19.2	22.4
4-9 years	34.3	29.6	57.4	0.0	28.8	39.1
10-19 years	30.7	0.0	42.6	45.1	28.8	31.1
20 or more years	14.2	0.0	0.0	54.9	23.1	7.5
• Mean number of years	10	3	9	22	13	9
<i>As a professional in education (including years as a principal)</i>						
Less than 10 years	4.0	11.1	1.6	0.0	4.8	3.7
10-14 years	11.2	24.7	8.2	0.0	15.2	9.1
15-19 years	21.2	33.3	24.6	1.4	22.9	20.1
20-24 years	11.5	14.8	13.1	4.2	6.7	15.2
25-29 years	14.7	11.1	16.4	16.9	11.4	16.5
30-34 years	22.7	3.7	24.6	40.8	21.0	22.6
35 or more years	14.7	1.2	11.5	36.6	18.1	12.8
• Mean number of years	25	17	25	33	24	25
• Mean age of subgroup in 2008	50	44	51	57	49	51
• Mean age of subgroup in 1998	49	45	47	53	49	49

Table 17. Years, Including Current Year, as Principal in Current School and All Together, 1928 to 2008								
	1928	1948	1958	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
<i>In Current School</i>								
1-3 years				37.6%	34.1%	36.7%	25.2%	41.5%
4-9				32.4	42.7	37.6	45.9	39.4
10-19				23.1	19.7	21.3	22.6	16.2
20 or more				6.9	3.5	4.2	6.3	2.9
<i>Median</i>	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6
<i>All Together</i>								
1-3 years				22.3%	15.4%	16.6%	7.1%	20.8%
4-9				30.1	33.8	29.4	34.3	34.3
10-19				31.6	37.7	36.0	38.1	30.7
20 or more				16.0	13.2	17.9	20.5	14.2
<i>Median</i>	10	10.5	9	9	10	11	11	10

Note: Data for studies 1928 through 1968 are from supervising principals.

Table 18. Total Years of Employment as a Professional in Education, 1968 to 2008					
	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
9 or less	13.3%	7.0%	2.4%	1.0%	4.0%
10-19	40.3	38.4	36.8	15.9	32.4
20-29	18.6	43.6	44.5	58.3	26.2
30 or more	27.7	11.0	16.3	24.9	37.4
<i>Median</i>	18	20	22	25	25

About one-third of the principals report previously working in another school district.



Question: Have you ever served as principal in another school district? If YES, have you ever served as a principal in another state?

Answers in response to this item were remarkably similar to those received in 1998. In both years, about one-third of the principals said they had worked in another school district (1998: 35.0%; 2008: 34.3%).

Not surprisingly, the more-experienced principals were much more likely to report having worked in another school district prior to their current one (15 or more years of experience: 63.4%, and of these 23.9% had worked in more than two other districts) as contrasted with only 10.0% of the principals with fewer than 5 years of experience. In addition, one-fifth of the 15 or more years of experience subgroup (19.7%) indicated they had served as a principal in another state, close to the percentage reported in 1998 (14.4%). (See Table 19.)

Table 19. Principals Who Have Served in Other School Districts						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Yes	34.3%	10.0%	34.4%	63.4%	44.2%	26.8%
No	65.7	90.0	65.6	36.6	55.8	73.2
Of these:						
• One other district	47.4	77.8	45.2	43.5	37.0	58.7
• Two districts	35.1	22.2	40.5	32.6	37.0	32.6
• More than two districts	17.5	0.0	14.3	23.9	26.1	8.7



Question: How many years did you teach at the elementary level before becoming a principal?

Of the principals who reported elementary teaching experience, the mean number of years was 10, the same as that reported in 1998. Female principals taught for a higher average number of years than male principals (females: 12 years; males: 7 years). It will be interesting to see whether this difference between the two groups is maintained in the 2018 study.

Over 9 of every 10 principals reported elementary teaching experience.

Principals with fewer years in the position reported more years teaching than more-experienced principals (fewer than 5 years as a principal: 11 years of teaching; 15 or more years: 8 years of teaching). This pattern fits well with what we will see later in this chapter regarding the average age of principals in these two groups when they were hired for their first principalships—the less-experienced principals responding to the 2008 survey were older, on average, than the more-experienced people and so had more time to teach.

Table 20. Elementary Teaching Experience Prior to Becoming a Principal

	Years as a Principal				Male	Female
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Mean Number of Years	10	11	12	8	7	12

A master's degree or higher is considered a necessity for a principal candidate.



Question: What is the highest college degree you hold?

To provide some historical perspective on this question, 54% of the respondents in 1928 reported they had no academic degree and, in 1958, 21% of the principals said they had “no education related to elementary school administration” before becoming an elementary school principal. The times have certainly changed.

In the 1998 report, Doud and Keller talked about the continuing increase in educational levels of principals over the history of the 10-year studies:

In 1928, approximately 15 percent of K-8 principals held a master's degree. By 1948, the master's degree had become the standard—64 percent of respondents reported that level of academic achievement. The 1998 survey provides evidence that, while the master's degree remains the standard, there is a move for increased preparation requirements. For the first time [in 1998], fewer than 1 percent of today's principals hold only a bachelor's degree. (1998, p. 34)

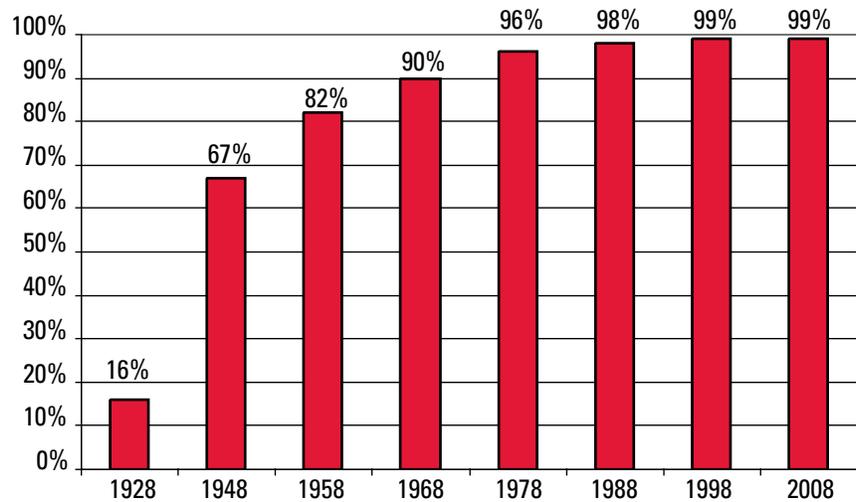
These high educational standards reported in 1998 parallel those reported for this 2008 study. Almost 1 in 10 of the reporting principals have a doctorate, and an additional 28.9% have a specialist degree. Among the experience subgroups, it is evident that the principals continue to work on their formal education: 42.3% of the *15 or more years experience* people have a post-master's degree as compared to 33.4% of the *less than 5 years of experience* group.

The data closely parallel information collected by the National Center for Education Statistics as part of its Schools and Staffing Survey 2003-2004: Bachelor's or less—1.1%, Master's—56.9%, Education specialist—30.5%, and Doctorate—8.5% (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 191).

Female principals are more likely than males to have degrees past master's (females: 41.1%; males: 33.3%), and principals in large urban and suburban districts are more likely than other community type groups to have their doctorates.

Table 21. Highest Degrees Held by Elementary Principals				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
Bachelor's	0.7%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Master's	61.4	64.2	60.3	57.7
Certificate of advanced studies/specialist	28.9	27.2	29.8	31.0
Doctorate	9.0	6.2	9.9	11.3

Figure 8. Percentage With Master's Degree or Higher, 1928 to 2008



Fewer than 2 in 100 of the responding principals reported entering the principalship through an alternative route.



Question: Did you enter the principalship through a traditional route (e.g., teaching experience and graduate study in education) or an alternate route (e.g., directly from business with no education experience)?

There has been some interest in tapping people for the principalship that have no experience in education but who might, for example,

bring skills from the business world to the job. Thus, this question was considered to be important to add to the 10-year study as a source of baseline data. Responses to this 2008 study indicate that the practice is still rare—only 1.8% of responding principals selected the *alternative* option. This response pattern was consistent across subgroups. (See Table 22.)

		Years as a Principal				
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	Male	Female
Traditional	98.2%	96.3%	99.2%	98.6%	99.0%	98.1%
Alternative	1.8	3.7	0.8	1.4	1.0	1.9



Question: Did you graduate from an NCATE-approved program?

Surprise was expressed in the 1998 study that a high percentage (45.0%) of respondents did not know whether or not they had graduated from an NCATE-approved program. While the percentage has decreased, it is still high (now 38.6%). Of the respondents who did have the information, about 9 in 10 (90.6%) had graduated from an NCATE-approved program.

Of the people who felt able to provide a yes or no answer, 9 in 10 indicated that they graduated from an NCATE-approved program.

The mean age of appointment to first principalship continues to increase.



Question: How old were you when you were appointed to your first principalship?

The mean age at which the 2008 respondents were appointed to their first principalships is 40 years, an increase of 4 years since the 1998 survey, and reflecting a trend that began sometime after the 1978 study. This finding supports a possibility raised by Doud and Keller in the 1998 study, specifically, “There is emerging evidence that suggests the pool of acceptable candidates—both male and female—is older and more experienced than it has been in the past” (p. 39). In the 2008 group, almost 1 in 3 (32.1%) was at least 45 years old when first appointed, as compared to only 13.4% in 1998.

This pattern can also be seen by looking at the data from a different angle. Principals in the *15 or more years of experience* group were, on average, 34 years old when they were first appointed. This contrasts with significantly older ages for the other two groups (*less than 5 years of experience*: 41 years of age; *5-14 years of experience*: 42 years of age).

As was seen before in discussion of data from other survey items, there are some differences reported for males and females that point to some differences in career patterns. Specifically, the females were, on average, older when first appointed (36 years for males as compared to 42 for females). In the female principals’ group, 41.5% were at least 45 when first appointed as compared to 16.8% for the

males. (See Table 23 and Table 24.)

Table 23. Age at Time of First Appointment as Principal						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less Than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Less than 26 years old	1.1%	1.2%	0.8%	1.5%	1.0%	0.6%
26-29	9.9	8.6	5.8	19.1	15.8	6.7
30-34	19.3	16.0	10.7	39.7	26.7	14.6
35-39	22.3	22.2	20.7	25.0	28.7	18.3
40-44	15.3	13.6	19.0	10.3	10.9	18.3
45-49	17.5	16.0	25.6	2.9	9.9	22.0
50 or older	14.6	22.2	17.4	1.5	6.9	19.5
• Mean Age	40	41	42	34	36	42

Table 24. Mean Age at Time of First Appointment as Principal, 1968 to 2008				
1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
	33	34	36	40



Question: How many of the following positions have you held?

Principals have a wide variety of prior professional experiences.

The percentage of principals reporting elementary-level teaching experience has decreased since 1998 (from 89.6% to 79.3%), although the percentage of principals who taught at the middle/junior high or high school levels has increased (2008: middle/junior high—47.0%; high school—25.6%). Female principals were more likely than the males to report elementary teaching experience (87.2% and 70.5%), although they were less likely to report teaching experience at the other two levels (middle/junior high: males—57.1%, females—42.7%; high school: males—36.2%, females—20.1%).

In addition, the percentage of respondents reporting experience as an assistant principal has increased at all levels (elementary: 37.5%, up from 28.4% in 1998; middle/junior high: 21.8%, up from 10.8% in 1998; high school: 10.9%, up from 5.7% in 1998). This increase from 1998 to 2008 may be associated with the older average age at which principals in the 2008 group received appointment to their first principalship. There was simply more time to move from teaching to an assistant principalship and then on to the principalship.

Other types of experiences were also reported: coach (23.9%), school supervisor/curriculum specialist (16.1%), central office administrator (10.5%), counselor (4.9%), college faculty (10.5%), and other (17.2%). (See Table 25.)

Table 25. Positions Held by Principals Prior to Taking the Position

	Years as a Principal				Male	Female
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Teacher						
Elementary	79.3%	79.0%	82.8%	84.5%	70.5%	87.2%
Middle/junior high	47.0	48.1	48.4	46.5	57.1	42.7
High school	25.6	24.7	27.9	22.5	36.2	20.1
Assistant principal						
Elementary	37.5	44.4	36.9	36.6	34.3	39.6
Middle/junior high	21.8	19.8	23.8	21.1	29.5	18.9
High school	10.9	9.9	13.9	5.6	16.2	8.5
Counselor	4.9	2.5	4.9	8.5	2.9	6.1
School supervisor/ curriculum specialist	16.1	17.3	18.9	12.7	9.5	20.7
Coach	23.9	28.4	25.4	18.3	41.9	13.4
Central office administrator	10.5	4.9	12.3	14.1	10.5	11.6
College faculty	10.5	13.6	8.2	12.7	4.8	13.4

Note: Because respondents were asked to check all of the experiences that applied to them, the totals reported in the table exceed 100%.



Question: How would you characterize the value of each of the following to you as an elementary school principal?

Respondents were asked to assess 12 experiences that typically occur during preparation for the principalship and/or as a part of continued professional development after attaining the principalship from the perspective of the support it provided to success as a principal. This item also collected data on the percentage of people who had experience with each of the listed items.

In terms of their exposure to each of the experiences, all the respondents reported graduate education, with 99.0% of the respondents reporting teaching experience at some level and 64.0% reporting experience as an assistant principal. This last represents a significant increase from the 1998 survey when only 50.0% of the respondents indicated they had assistant principal experience.

Respondents had more experience with opportunities provided closer to home, with almost all of them reporting experiences with professional development provided by local sources, 94.0% by state-level groups, and 76.0% by national-level groups. This last represents a decrease from the 1998 study, when about 9 in 10 of the principals reported experience with an opportunity provided by a national-level organization.

Principals were most positive about on-the-job experience as a principal—followed by teaching experience—in terms of supporting their success.

About three-fifths of the principals had participated in mentorship programs—about the same proportion as the 1998 study. A slightly higher percentage (about 65% and similar to the 1998 response) had an internship as part of a graduate program.

Respondents with experience with any of the listed items were also asked to rate each of them as having *high*, *some*, or *little value* to success as an elementary school principal. Ranked first on the basis of the *high value* responses was on-the-job experience as a principal (98.5% high value). This was followed by teaching experience (89.5%) and experience as an assistant principal (81.4%). On a positive note, the percentage of respondents assigning *high value* to graduate education (55.6%) has increased substantially since 1998 when only 44.0% of the respondents assigned this rating. Other items that had substantial increases in *high value* percentages from 1998 to 2008 included experience as an assistant principal (up from 67.7% to 81.4%) and principal mentorship programs (up from 32.8% to 50.6%).

The principals were least positive about Internet-based experiences (18.6% *high value*) and national-level professional development (29.0%). (See Table 26.)

Table 26. Value of Types of Preparation and Experience to Success as Elementary Principal			
	High Value	Some Value	Little Value
Graduate education (<i>100% of respondents reported participating</i>)	55.6%	36.5%	7.9%
Experience as a teacher (<i>99% of respondents reported participating</i>)	89.5	10.1	0.4
Experience as assistant principal (<i>64% of respondents reported participating</i>)	81.4	14.0	4.7
On the job experience as principal (<i>100% of respondents reported participating</i>)	98.5	1.1	0.4
Networking with peers (<i>100% of respondents reported participating</i>)	69.0	27.8	3.2
Local-level professional development (<i>98% of respondents reported participating</i>)	35.2	48.7	16.1
State-level professional development (<i>94% of respondents reported participating</i>)	33.1	48.5	18.5
National-level professional development (<i>76% of respondents reported participating</i>)	29.0	48.6	22.4
Principal mentorship program (<i>59% of respondents reported participating</i>)	50.6	33.3	16.0
Internship as part of graduate program (<i>65% of respondents reported participating</i>)	43.0	34.1	22.9
Internet or other online resource (<i>73% of respondents reported participating</i>)	18.6	48.2	33.2

Three-fifths of the principals reported participating in a principal mentorship program.



A Retrospective Look—1978

Preparation and Experience: Percentage Assigning *Much Value* in Terms of Support for the Principalship

- Experience as a teacher 84.8%
- On-the-job experience 84.7
- Experience as assistant principal 39.3
- Graduate education 36.0
- Internship 26.2
- In-service programs 23.9
- State and national principals' meetings 13.4

Summary

The mean amount of time respondents had served in their current assignments was 6 years, the same as reported in 1998. As an additional indicator of stability in the job, the most experienced principals had been in their buildings for an average of 10 years. Two-thirds of the respondents had never worked as a principal in another district, although of those who had, 17.5% had worked in more than two other districts.

While 1998 data indicated principals' number of years as a professional in education was shifting upward, the 2008 data reflected the same 25 year average as that seen in 1998. Even the relatively new

principals, those in the job for less than 5 years, reported an average of 17 years in education.

Virtually all the respondents had teaching experience, with 4 in 5 reporting some elementary-level teaching. The average number of years spent teaching at the elementary level held steady at the 10 years first reported in 1998. Female principals reported more years of elementary teaching than male principals (12 and 7 years). Finally, more of the respondents than in 1998 reported having experience as an assistant principal.

Elementary school principals are highly educated, with two-fifths of them reporting post-masters degrees. Of the responding principals who had the needed information, 9 of every 10 had graduated from an NCATE-approved program. Fewer than 2 in every 100 respondents entered the principalship through an alternative route.

The current principals received their first principalship at an older age than principals responding to the 1998 survey (40 as compared to 36 years old). Female principals, in addition to having spent more years teaching, were older when they were first appointed to the position (42 years old as compared to 36 for males).

The responding principals were most likely to assign a high value rating to on-the-job experience and teaching experience in terms of the support provided to a principal's ability to do the job well. Last place among the listed items was the Internet or other online resources.

Chapter 6:

Principals' Own Professional Development

Included in the previous chapter was information about experiences principals had, including both the extent of their participation and their assessment of the impact each of the experiences had on their ability to succeed as a principal. In this chapter, we will look at other aspects of principals' professional development—topics about which they feel the need for more development, approaches they typically take to address these needs, and, finally, their experiences with online staff development.



Question: In which of the following areas do you feel your own need for professional development is highest?

Respondents were asked: *In which of the following areas do you feel your own need for professional development is highest?* They were also instructed to select no more than 5 from the list of 20. Leading the list were:

Principals identified “developing a professional learning community” as the topic about which they most needed additional development opportunities.

- *Developing a professional learning community (PLC)* (37.5%; new item in 2008): This seems to indicate that—even with the dozens of articles and books available on the topic—principals might need more assistance with the nuts and bolts of nurturing a PLC in their own schools.
- *Differentiating instruction* (31.2%; new item in 2008): While a new item on the 10-year survey, this certainly is not a new topic for principals—or for teachers in their schools. However, the recognition that more differentiation will need to be done to ensure that students meet standards has hit home in the last few years.
- *Improving staff performance* (31.2%; 35.4% in 1998): Of necessity, this will continue to be a major responsibility for principals and one for which, according to their responses to a previous item, they take primary responsibility.
- *Visioning and staff improvement planning* (30.2%; 34.2% in 1998): Much of the recent research on school (and district) improvement points to the need for the school leader to help staff develop and maintain focus on a clear vision for the school. It is also clear that connecting that vision to school improvement requires intensive planning and a high level of staff collaboration, both areas that effective principal leadership can support.

In 1998, *understanding and applying technology* was the area most frequently identified by the principals as one in which opportunities for personal growth were needed, with 49.7% of respondents selecting this. However, this topic dropped to ninth place on the list in 2008, with only 22.1% of the principals selecting it. Ranked last on the list of topics were *assessment/evaluation of students* (9.1%) and *working with special interest groups* (6.7%).

There were some differences among the experience subgroups. For example, the principals with fewer than 5 years on the job ranked *building partnerships with businesses, social services agencies, etc.*, 3rd, while the most-experienced principals ranked it 10th. In contrast, the most-experienced principals ranked *visioning and school improvement* 1st, while the less-experienced principals ranked it 9th. (See Table 27.)

Table 27. Perceived Needs for Professional Development				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Developing a professional learning community	37.5%	42.0%	39.3%	33.8%
• Differentiating instruction	31.2	39.5	26.2	32.4
• Improving staff performance	31.2	29.6	36.1	29.6
• Visioning and school improvement planning	30.2	22.2	32.8	35.2
• Developing/maintaining a positive school climate	25.3	25.9	27.0	21.1
• Dealing with the politics of the job	24.2	28.4	23.0	23.9
• Improving student performance	23.9	13.6	30.3	28.2
• Building partnerships with businesses, human service agencies, etc.	22.1	30.9	18.9	21.1
• Understanding and applying technology	22.1	12.3	26.2	28.2
• Managing organizational change	21.8	24.7	22.1	19.7
• Time management	20.7	23.5	18.0	23.9
• Assessment/evaluation of instructional program	19.6	17.3	20.5	22.5
• Supervision of instructional program	18.6	18.5	23.0	12.7
• Planning and implementation of curricular goals	16.8	12.3	22.1	14.1
• Effective fiscal administration	13.7	22.2	10.7	11.3
• Assessment/evaluation of staff	12.6	13.6	14.8	9.9
• Dealing with diversity/multicultural issues	11.6	9.9	11.5	15.5
• Use of effective communications and presentation skills	9.8	16.0	6.6	9.9
• Assessment/evaluation of students	9.1	6.2	10.7	11.3
• Working with special interest groups	6.7	8.6	5.7	7.0
• Other	2.8	2.5	2.5	4.2



Question: Which three approaches are you most likely to use to address your own professional development?

When asked which 3 approaches (from a list of 10) they were most likely to use to address their own professional development needs, the principals selected these 4 most often:

- *Participate in district-provided opportunities* (65.3% overall): This was ranked first across all groups, with principals in larger districts and schools especially interested in this approach.
- *Face-to-face networking with fellow professionals* (49.8% overall): Male principals were more likely to select this option than female principals (57.1% and 48.8% respectively).
- *Read journals, books, etc.* (47.7% overall): Female principals were more likely to select this option than male principals (56.7% and 39.0% respectively), and principals in larger schools more likely than those in the smallest schools.
- *Attend state association conferences or meetings* (47.0% overall): Principals from the rural districts were much more likely (69.6%) to select this option than the overall respondent group.

Selected by only 3.9% of the respondents were *participate in university non-degree programs* and *participate in online courses/event*. However, 11.6% of the rural respondents selected the online option. (See Table 28.)

Principals pointed to district-provided opportunities as the approach they would most likely use to address their own staff development needs.

Table 28. Approaches Used to Address Own Professional Development (Check no more than 3.)

	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
• Participate in district-provided opportunities	65.3%	61.7%	71.3%	64.8%	67.6%	67.1%
• Face-to-face networking with fellow professionals	49.8	53.1	50.0	50.7	57.1	48.8
• Read journals, books, etc.	47.7	44.4	51.6	49.3	39.0	56.7
• Attend state association conferences or meetings	47.0	51.9	45.1	49.3	52.4	46.3
• Attend national association conferences or meetings	24.2	17.3	28.7	28.2	19.0	28.7
• Participate in school-level opportunities	20.4	17.3	23.0	21.1	20.0	21.3
• Enrolled in graduate program	11.2	18.5	9.0	8.5	15.2	9.8
• Online networking with fellow professionals	4.6	8.6	3.3	1.4	5.7	3.7
• Participate in university non-degree programs	3.9	6.2	4.1	1.4	5.7	3.0
• Participate in online courses/events	3.9	6.2	0.8	7.0	4.8	3.7
• Other	2.1	1.2	2.5	2.8	3.8	1.2

More experienced principals were more likely than the less experienced ones to report participation in an online professional development program.



Question: Have you participated in any online development programs? If yes, what is your assessment of the experience?

About one-third of the respondents indicated they had participated in online development programs. Perhaps surprisingly, a higher percentage of the more experienced principals—those with 15 or more years as a principal (48.6%)—than those with less than 5 years of experience (28.8%) indicated this was the case. However, fewer of the

more-experienced principals characterized the experience as *highly positive, would do it again* (44.1%; less than 5 years: 60.0%). While a slightly higher percentage of female principals reported that they had participated in online development (female principals: 37.8%; male principals: 30.5%), both groups gave equal grades to the experience (*highly positive*: males—54.5%; females—52.4%).

Table 29. Participation in Online Professional Development Programs				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
Yes, have participated	35.1%	28.8%	32.0%	48.6%
No	64.9	71.3	68.0	51.4
<i>Of those who said "Yes"</i>				
• Highly positive, would do it again	53.5	60.0	56.4	44.1
• Not so good, but would be willing to try again	39.4	32.0	38.5	47.1
• Highly unlikely to try again	7.1	8.0	5.1	8.8

Summary

When asked to identify topics about which they felt the personal need for additional development, principals highlighted *developing a professional learning community, differentiating instruction, improving staff performance, and visioning and school improvement planning*. Dropping down from its rank as first on the list in 1998 was *understanding and applying technology*. Ranked last on the list of 20 were *assessment/evaluation of students* and *working with special interest groups*.

As a related item, the principals were also asked about approaches they would be likely to use to address their own professional development needs. Ranked first on a list of 10 options was *participate in district-provided opportunities*, followed by *face-to-face networking with fellow professionals; read journals, books, etc.*; and *attend state association conferences or meetings*. Ranked at the bottom of the list were *participate in university non-degree programs* and *participate in online courses/events*.

Finally, the principals were asked whether they had ever “attended” an online professional development program. About one-third of them had, and just over half of these people rated the experience as *highly positive, would do it again*.

Chapter 7:

The Principalship: Conditions of Employment

While working to provide a high-quality learning environment for children is a tremendous motivator for principals, there are other factors that affect their morale and job performance. Some of these are conditions that surround their employment. Job descriptions, salary and fringe benefits, assessment and evaluation practices, and the demands placed on personal time and energy all affect a principal's morale and performance on the job. For this reason, questions regarding such factors have been included in every 10-year study.



Question: Do you have a contract with your school district? If YES, what is the term of your contract? Was the contract collectively bargained? Finally, please check areas addressed in the contract.

In 2008, 93.8% of the principals indicated they had a contract with their school district, with this high percentage appearing across all groups. Of these, 39.4% report having a 1-year contract, 19.3%—2-year, 10.8%—3-year, 30.1%—continuing (in effect unless notified of

Almost all principals have an employment contract with their district, with 1 in 4 of these collectively bargained.

termination), and 0.4%—other. However, there are some differences among subgroups. For example, principals in the largest schools (more than 600 students) are more likely than the other school size groups to have a 1-year contract (52.1%) and less likely to have a 2- or 3-year contract. Principals in schools serving large urban areas were less likely than the group as a whole to report a 1-year contract (30.8%) and more likely to report a 3-year (23.1%) or continuing (38.5%) contract.

The principals were also asked about areas addressed in their contracts. *Salary* was addressed most often (78.6%), followed by *fringe benefits* (56.5%), *district expectations* (48.1%), and information on *evaluation processes* (37.9%). As with the length of contract, there were differences among the subgroups in regard to these. For example, clauses about *district expectations* and *evaluation processes* were more likely to be included in the contracts of the less-experienced principals. There was also variation by school size. However, these differences were likely linked to district size because, in general, the smaller schools were in smaller districts.

Finally, about one-fourth of the principals reported their contracts were collectively bargained. (See Table 30.)

Table 30. Written Contracts for Principals						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Yes	93.8%	96.3%	94.2%	89.9%	94.3%	93.3%
No	6.2	3.8	5.8	10.1	5.7	6.7
<i>If YES, what is the term of the contract?</i>						
• 1 year	39.4	40.3	38.3	38.1	37.4	39.9
• 2 years	19.3	24.7	14.8	22.2	25.3	16.3
• 3 years	10.8	6.5	13.9	11.1	11.1	11.1
• Continuing (in effect unless notified of termination)	30.1	28.6	33.0	27.0	25.3	32.7
• Other	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.0	0.0
<i>Was the contract collectively bargained?</i>						
• Yes	26.0	22.4	27.0	28.6	28.3	24.3
• No	74.0	77.6	73.0	71.4	71.7	75.7
<i>Areas addressed in the contract</i>						
• Salary	78.6	79.0	83.6	76.1	87.6	76.2
• Fringe benefits	56.5	50.6	63.9	56.3	66.7	51.2
• District expectations	48.1	63.0	46.7	39.4	48.6	50.6
• Evaluation processes	37.9	43.2	39.3	33.8	41.9	38.4



Question: Do you have a written job description? If YES, are you held accountable and evaluated using it?

About 8 in 10 principals reported in 1988 that they had written job descriptions. This proportion was maintained in 1998 and now again in 2008. This year, 70.9% of the principals reported they had been provided with a job description that was standard for all principals in the district, with an additional 7.6% reporting their districts' practices included contracts that could be different for each principal. The standard approach to contracts was more prevalent in suburban districts (81.2%) and used least often in rural districts (68.1%).

About 8 in 10 principals have written job descriptions, with most of them evaluated using components of these descriptions.

Of those principals who reported having a written job description, 71.2% said they are held accountable or evaluated in accordance with that description. Again, the 2008 data was very similar to the 1998 data (68.5%). Differences among subgroups were more substantial in regard to this question than the previous one. For example, only 21.7% of the principals working in smaller schools reported their contracts were used as an element in their evaluations. This contrasts with responses from principals in the largest schools, 50.0% of whom reported the practice was used. A high incidence of use was also reported in large urban districts (91.7%), although much less often in schools in medium-sized urban areas (58.6%). Finally, the least-experienced principals were more likely to say job descriptions were used in their evaluations than the most-experienced principals (84.4% and 63.9% respectively). (See Table 31.)

Table 31. Principals' Written Job Descriptions for Which They Are Held Accountable and Against Which They Are Evaluated	
	Total
Yes, standard for all principals	70.9%
Yes, each principal's may be different	7.6
No	21.5
<i>If YES, are you held accountable/evaluated using it?</i>	
• Yes	71.2
• No	28.8



Question: How many months are included in your work year?

Almost half the responding principals indicated they had a 12-month contract.

The length of the typical principal's work year has been steadily increasing since the question was first asked on the 1958 survey. At that time, only 12.0% of the principals worked under a 12-month contract, with 63.0% of them indicating that their term of employment could be characterized as *10, less than 11 months* and 20.0% saying it was *less than 10 months*. Even in the short term, from 1998 to 2008, there has been a substantial shift. In 1998, 56.4% of the principals had an 11- or 12-month contract. In 2008, however, 71.4% of the principals have an 11- or 12-month contract.

Principals in the larger schools (with many of these in larger districts) are more likely to have a 12-month contract, while only 36.1% of principals in schools enrolling fewer than 400 students have contracts covering 12 months. (See Table 32.)

Months	Total	Number of Students			Community the School Serves				
		Less than 400	400 to 600	More than 600	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Suburban	Small Town	Rural
Less than 10	4.0%	6.5%	1.9%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	3.0%	8.7%
10	24.6	33.3	19.2	13.7	21.4	22.6	20.5	25.4	27.5
11	24.3	24.1	21.2	29.4	21.4	29.0	20.5	26.9	24.6
12	47.1	36.1	57.7	54.9	57.1	48.4	56.6	44.8	39.1

Table 33. Annual Term of Employment, 1958 to 2008				
	Less than 10 months	10, less than 11 months	11, less than 12 months	12 months
1958	20.0%	63.0%	5.0%	12.0%
1968	21.4	47.2	13.9	17.9
1978	7.0	43.8	19.2	30.0
1988	5.7	40.0	21.5	32.8
1998	2.1	41.5	16.0	40.4
2008	4.0	24.6	24.3	47.1

For the 2007-2008 school years, principals reported an average salary of \$84,506.



Question: What is your 2007-2008 salary as a principal?

Principals reported an average salary of \$84,506 for the 2007-2008 school year, an increase of about \$24,000 from 1998. Even with inflation, this represents a real increase in purchasing power, although, as we have just seen, some of this increase rightfully should be “allocated” to cover an increase in the length of the contract year.

However, if we focus simply on the annual salary and ignore factors such as the increase in the length of the contract year, principal salaries have kept pace with inflation over an even longer period of time. For example, the annual 1956-1957 salary for principals of \$6,600 would be \$50,569 if adjusted to a 2008 value.

Not surprisingly, there are differences among the subgroups in terms of the mean salaries paid in 2007-2008. Principals in larger schools are paid more than those in smaller schools (more than 600 students: \$91,676; 400 to 600 students: \$87,550; fewer than 400 students; \$78,484).

Across community types, principals in schools serving urban and suburban communities are paid more than those in small towns and rural areas.

The differences among the experience subgroups, while substantial, are smaller than those above since principals of different experience levels are spread across schools of different sizes and in different types of communities (less than 5 years: \$77,729; 5 to 14 years: \$86,929; 15 or more years: \$88,581). Thus, while experience makes a difference in terms of pay, it is not the only factor that impacts salaries. Degree status also makes a difference although, as with experience, its impact on a specific principal's salary is mediated by other factors such as school size.

Female principals, on average, are paid less than male principals (\$83,897 and \$85,517 respectively), a difference that likely relates to the longer tenure of male principals in the job (female: 9 years as a principal; male: 13 years as a principal).

A practice used when reporting the 10-year study information is to use other data, when available, to check the likely validity of the study data. For the salary figure, a good benchmark is that reported by the Educational Research Service (ERS). Each year, ERS collects salary information from districts across the nation. For principals, they request data on the minimum scheduled salary, the maximum scheduled salary, and the mean salary actually paid a district's elementary school principals. ERS then computes a mean for each of these figures. For 2007-2008, ERS reported the following mean figures:

- Mean of the minimum scheduled salary: \$74,959 (the salary paid to a “entry-level” principal)
- Mean of the maximum scheduled salary: \$98,565 (takes into account factors such as education, experience, school size, and/or length of contract year)
- Mean of the mean salary actually paid: \$85,907 (Educational Research Service, 2008)

This last, the “mean of the mean,” is quite close to the average of \$84,506 computed from the 10-year study data even though the method of collecting data—one from districts and one from individuals—is different.

Table 34. Elementary Principals' Salaries in 2007-2008									
	Number of Students				Community the School Serves				
	Total	Less than 400	400 to 600	More than 600	Large Urban	Medium urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
Less Than \$50,000	1.1%	1.9%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%	3.1%
\$50,000-\$59,999	6.4	10.6	5.9	0.0	0.0	6.9	1.2	10.8	10.8
\$60,000-\$69,999	13.3	17.3	12.9	6.0	14.3	13.8	6.0	15.4	20.0
\$70,000-\$79,999	22.3	27.9	13.9	24.0	0.0	3.4	14.5	27.7	36.9
\$80,000-\$89,999	19.7	15.4	23.8	18.0	14.3	20.7	24.1	21.5	12.3
\$90,000-\$99,999	15.5	13.5	19.8	14.0	35.7	20.7	15.7	15.4	10.8
\$100,000 or More	21.6	13.5	23.8	36.0	35.7	34.5	38.6	7.7	6.2
<i>Mean Salary</i>	<i>84,506</i>	<i>78,484</i>	<i>87,550</i>	<i>91,676</i>	<i>93,992</i>	<i>89,105</i>	<i>93,969</i>	<i>79,089</i>	<i>74,332</i>

Table 35. Principal Salaries, 1956-1957 to 2007-2008						
Have elementary principal salaries kept up with increases in the cost of living?						
	1956-57	1966-67	1977-78	1986-87	1997-98	2007-08
Unadjusted	\$6,600	\$10,200	\$21,500	\$39,988	\$60,285	\$84,506
Adjusted to 2008 value	\$50,569	\$65,751	\$70,997	\$75,788	\$79,629	\$84,506

Note: Salary figures above are those reported in the 10-year studies.



Question: Does your district have merit or incentive pay for principals in addition to the typical step increases? If YES, is any portion of it based on the achievement of students in the principal’s school?

Only 1 in 7 principals report that incentive pay is available to them.

Discussions about merit pay in education have most often focused on the possibility of incentive pay for teachers, with little movement made toward actually implementing the approaches. However, in recent years these discussions have sometimes converged with the increased attention on efforts to ensure students meet standards, and this convergence has reenergized the discussions. But while there are now more instances of incentive pay possibilities for teachers than there were 10—or even 5—years ago, this approach still has not had widespread acceptance. In this survey, as was done in both 1998 and 1988, principals were asked about their district’s approach to merit pay in an effort to gauge whether merit pay for principals has moved ahead any more quickly than merit pay for teachers.

The result? The trend over the past 20 years has actually been a shift downward from an already low level. In 1988, 17.0% of the principals responding to the 10-year study reported the existence of merit or incentive pay. In 1998, this number decreased to 15.3%; in 2008, only 13.6% of principals answered *yes*. (See Table 36.)

Of these principals, only 1 in 5 (19.6%) reported that student achievement was used as a factor in determining who would receive incentive pay and how much, representing virtually no change from 1998 (21.5%). Looking at the principal compensation-student achievement link from another perspective, data from the respondents indicates that only about 2.7% of elementary principals nationally have the possibility for incentive pay based in part on student achievement results.

Table 36. Merit or Incentive Pay for Principals						
		Community Served by School				
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Suburban	Small Town	Rural
Yes	13.6%	15.4%	9.7%	17.6%	11.8%	13.2%
No	86.4	84.6	90.3	82.4	88.2	86.8

The dramatic drop in the percentage of principals reporting tenure is troubling.



Question: Which of the following types of tenure do you have in your school district?

In 1998, fewer than 1 in 3 principals (28.4%) reported that tenure was not available to them. This number has increased over the 10-year period to 44.0%. Principals working in large urban areas had even less job protection; 64.3% of them report having no tenure. There is also a

substantial difference among the experience subgroups. While 51.3% of the less-experienced principals report they have no tenure, fewer of the most-experienced principals responded this way. However, 37.1% of them still selected the *no tenure* option. Since no questions were asked concerning recent district actions related to tenure provisions, we can only wonder about the dramatic decrease in the proportion of principals with tenure. One possibility, though, might be a move by districts to connect principals' continued employment to achievement levels of their students.

Moving on to principals who reported some form of tenure is available to them, we find that this is typically tenure as a professional employee, meaning that—if RIF'ed as a principal—a principal would not be guaranteed another principalship if one came available but could move into a teaching job. About 2 in 5 of the responding principals (38.2%) reported this approach to tenure, while only 17.8% reported they had tenure as a principal. (See Table 37.)

None of the principals in large urban districts—already the group least likely to report tenure of any kind—reported they had tenure as a principal. Among the experience subgroups, the less-experienced principals were substantially less likely to report tenure as a principal (12.5%) than the most-experienced principals (25.7%).

Table 37. Types of Tenure for Principals						
	Total	Community Served by School				
		Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
None	44.0%	64.3%	38.7%	40.0%	48.5%	42.0%
As a principal	17.8	0.0	16.1	25.9	13.2	15.9
As a professional employee (if RIF'ed as a principal, can return to teaching)	38.2	35.7	45.2	34.1	38.2	42.0

The length of principals' work days is increasing.



Question: Taking into consideration the time you typically arrive at school in the morning and leave in the afternoon, how much time (excluding evenings and weekends) do you spend at school each weekday?

We have already seen that the length of principals' work *years* is increasing. Now we will move on to the typical length of their work *days*. In 2008, the mean number of hours reported by principals was 9.8, a substantial increase from the 9.0 hours reported in 1998. Only 1 in 10 principals reported spending 8 hours or less each school day, while 14.4% reported more than 10 hours per day.

Comparison of data from the *least experienced* and *most experienced* principals groups highlights some interesting patterns. While both groups report spending an average of 9.7 hours per day on the job, there are more principals in the least-experienced group at both the lower and upper ends of the spectrum than experienced principals (8 hours or less: least experienced—12.8%, most experienced—8.6%; 11 hours or more: least experienced—14.1%, most experienced—10.0%).

Table 38. Time Principals Spend at School Each Day (Excluding Evenings and Weekends)				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
8 hours or less	10.3%	12.8%	8.3%	8.6%
9 hours	38.2	34.6	36.7	45.7
10 hours	37.1	38.5	38.3	35.7
11 hours	8.5	10.3	10.8	2.9
12 hours or more	5.9	3.8	5.8	7.1
<i>Mean number of hours</i>	<i>9.8</i>	<i>9.7</i>	<i>9.9</i>	<i>9.7</i>



Question: How many additional hours do you spend in school-related activities each week during the academic year? (Exclude summers.)
ALSO: Total mean hours per work week was computed using the hours per day and additional hours per week figures.

Principals reported spending almost 7 additional hours each week on school-related responsibilities during the school year.

Although the typical hours per day average increased from 1998 to 2008, there was a decrease of about 1 hour reported for additional hours per week with 6.9 hours reported for 2008. However, some of the subgroups that reported higher than average length days (for example, principals in larger schools) also reported higher additional hours figures. (See Table 39.)

Table 39. Additional Hours Spent on School-Related Activities Each Week (Excluding Summer)				
	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
8 hours or less	74.3%	68.8%	77.8%	75.7%
9 hours	1.5	5.2	0.0	0.0
10 hours	12.7	13.0	12.0	12.9
11 hours	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.4
12 hours or more	11.2	13.0	10.3	10.0
<i>Mean number of hours</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>7.1</i>	<i>6.6</i>	<i>6.9</i>

For 2008, principals reported a typical work week of 56 hours. Over the 80-year period since the first 10-year study, principals' work weeks during the regular school year have increased 8 hours, from 44 to 56 hours. (See Table 40.)

Table 40. Average Total Hours Worked Each Week, 1928 to 2008							
1928	1948	1958	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
44	44	47	50	50	51	54	56

Most principals are evaluated yearly.



Question: How often are you formally evaluated?

Eight of every 10 principals reported they are evaluated on an annual basis, another 12.0% every 2 or 3 years, and only 7.7% rarely or not at all. Principals with fewer years of experience were more likely (91.3%) than more-experienced ones (15 or more years: 74.3%) to report they

were evaluated annually. There are smaller differences among the school size groups (fewer than 400 students: 83.6%; more than 600 students: 75.0%). The rural principals were most likely to report the *rarely or not at all option*, but this group’s percentage was still low, only 13.0%. (See Figure 9 and Table 41.)

Figure 9. Frequency of Evaluation

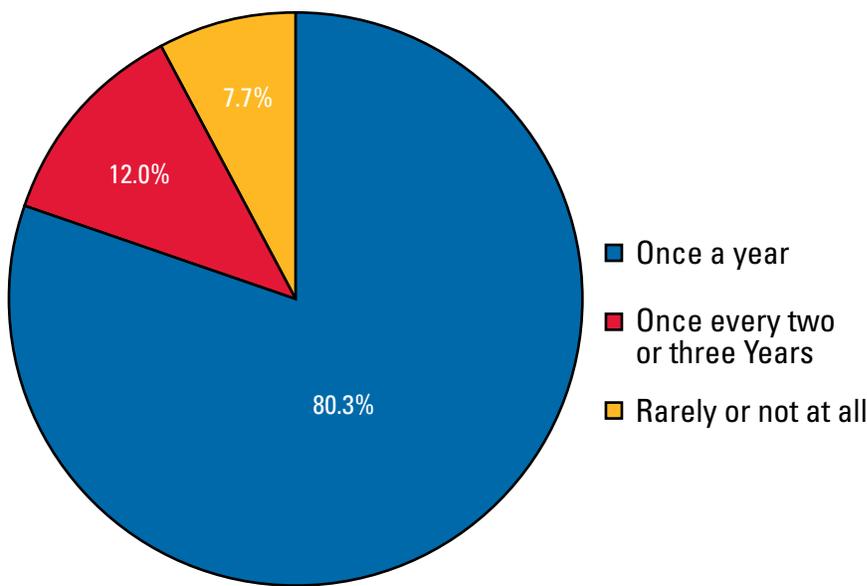


Table 41. Formal Evaluations of Principals: 1978, 1988, 1998, and 2008

	1978	1988	1998	2008
• At least once a year	68%	85%	76%	80%
• Once every 2 or 3 years	10	8	13	12
• Rarely or not at all	22	8	11	8

Two-thirds of the principals report that student performance results are taken into account during their evaluations.



Question: How are student performance results taken into account in your evaluation?

Principals helping to develop the 2008 survey instrument strongly recommended the inclusion of an item about the use of student performance results in principals' evaluations. Although one-third of the principals said student performance results are *generally not mentioned as a factor*, they are *explicitly included* in the evaluation of 15.4% of the principals, with an additional 50.7% of the principals replying that it is *taken into account*.

Differences among the community type groups were substantial, with 42.9% of principals from large urban areas stating that student performance results are *explicitly included*, and an additional 42.9% saying that it was *taken into account*. This contrasts with small town and rural principals, with both groups much less likely to say such results were *explicitly included* (7.5% and 8.8% respectively). (See Table 42.) Perhaps surprisingly, there were not substantial differences among the experience groups.

Table 42. Use of Student Performance Results in Principal's Evaluation						
		Community the School Serves				
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
Explicitly included	15.4%	42.9%	12.9%	22.4%	7.5%	8.8%
Taken into account	50.7	42.9	58.1	51.8	52.2	45.6
Generally not mentioned as a factor	33.8	14.3	29.0	25.9	40.3	45.6



Question: From whom are opinions about your performance normally solicited?

In the 1998 10-year study, authors Doud and Keller spoke about the involvement of several parties in a principal's evaluation:

Increasingly, a variety of stakeholders within the school and community are asked to provide input regarding the principal's performance. Responses to this question in 1978 provided a baseline for comparison. The 1988 study performance documented a rapidly expanding role for teachers, parents, students, and the principal him- or herself. The current study provides further evidence of increased involvement. (p. 55)

While the superintendent is mentioned most often by the 2008 respondent group in general (61.1%), there are substantial differences among the community type groups. Superintendents in the large urban districts are least likely to be involved (14.3%), while superintendents in small town and rural districts—which are, on average smaller and have fewer principals—are highly likely to be involved (82.4% and 81.2% respectively). To some extent, assistant or area superintendents act as the superintendent's representative in the larger districts.

For two of the groups, the incidence of participation decreased from 1998. In 1998, 40.6% of the principals reported participation by teachers; in 2008, this number has decreased to 27.0%. Parent involvement

Although student performance results are included as a factor in the evaluations of many principals, input is still solicited from members of the school and district community.

was also reported less often, although the change from the previous study was less than that for teachers (1998: 28.8%; 2008: 20.7%). Finally, the percentage of principals reporting their own opinions were solicited as part of their own evaluation decreased from 47.8% to 30.2%. These findings are puzzling, and it might be useful to interview some principals about the evaluation processes used in their districts to provide a more in-depth picture of principal evaluation. (See Table 43.)

Table 43. Opinions Solicited for Principal's Evaluation						
	Community the School Serves					
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
Superintendent	61.1%	14.3%	48.4%	50.6%	82.4%	81.2%
Assistant/area supt.	36.1	42.9	54.8	55.3	27.9	15.9
Other central office	19.6	28.6	25.8	24.7	8.8	21.7
Teachers	27.0	14.3	32.3	31.8	23.5	30.4
Parents	20.7	7.1	25.8	27.1	19.1	18.8
Students	7.7	14.3	6.5	8.2	5.9	10.1
Myself	30.2	35.7	25.8	35.3	33.8	26.1
Other	3.9	0.0	3.2	2.4	2.9	8.7

Goal setting is generally part of the evaluation process.



Question: Is goal setting a routine part of your evaluation process? If YES, are you held accountable for progress toward meeting these goals?

Goal setting is reported as routine by 76.2% of the respondents (77.3% in 1998). It was reported most often by principals in suburban (82.4%) and small town (83.8%) settings, and least often in rural areas (61.8%). The most-experienced principals are more likely than the less-experienced ones to say that goal setting was part of their evaluation processes

(80.0% and 68.8% respectively). About three-fourths of the principals who responded *yes* in regard to goal setting said they are held accountable for progress toward meeting these goals. (See Table 44.)

		Years as a Principal		
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
Yes	76.2%	68.8%	79.0%	80.0%
No	23.8	31.3	21.0	20.0
If YES, are you held accountable for progress toward meeting these goals?				
• Yes	73.5	71.4	70.6	79.3
• No	26.5	28.6	29.4	20.7



Question: Do you have the opportunity to use portfolio assessment as part of your evaluation?

About 3 in 10 of the principals have the opportunity to use portfolio assessment as part of their evaluations.

In the 1998 report, authors Doud and Keller provided the rationale for adding this item to the 1998 survey:

Just as authentic assessment of student progress has become more common in recent years, principals at NAESP's national conventions have begun reporting the use of authentic assessment in the evaluation of their performance. The most frequently reported practice has been the use of portfolios: Principals compile portfolios during the school year to help document progress toward established goals. This question was added to the 1998 survey in an effort to establish a baseline. (pp. 56-57)

This year 29.8% of the principals indicated they were able to use portfolio assessment, a small decrease reported for the 1998 figure of 34.3%. The use of portfolios was reported most frequently by principals in large urban areas (50.0%), and least often in rural areas (17.6%). Finally, female principals were more likely to report use of the approach (34.6%) than male principals (22.9%). Since there does not seem to be a difference between the types of schools in which male and female principals are located, this difference raises the possibility that one element of opportunity to use portfolio assessment is personal preference—not simply district policy.

Over a 20-year period, morale of principals has remained high.



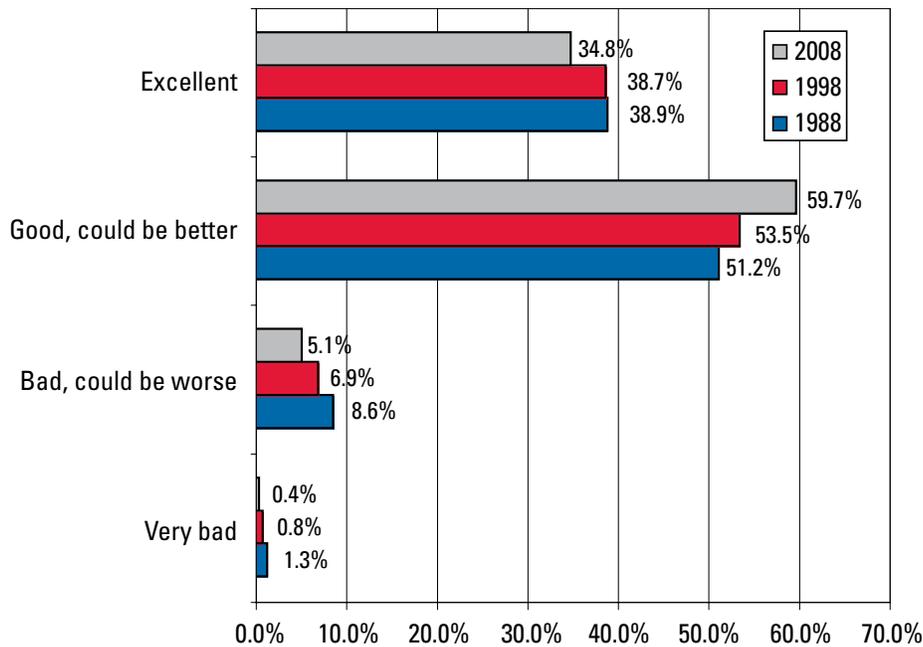
Question: How would you describe your morale?

Overall, elementary school principals were positive about their own morale, with more than one-third of the respondents (34.8%) characterizing it as *excellent*, and another 59.7% as *good, but could be better*. Fewer than 1 in 100 respondents characterized their morale as *very bad*. These high levels of morale were found across subgroups, although principals in the *authority/responsibility not-in-balance* group had a significantly lower percentage in the *excellent* category (17.9% as compared to 41.5% in the *in-balance* group). However, 69.2% of the *not-in-balance* group still characterized their morale as *good*. A similar difference was seen between the *would choose the principalship again* group and the group that indicated it would not.

While there has been a small decrease in the *excellent* responses between 1988 and 2008, a comparison of the 2008 data with the 1988 data also showed a decrease in the numbers characterizing their morale as *bad* or *very bad*. (See Table 45 and Figure 10.)

Table 45. Morale of Principals						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less Than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Excellent	34.8%	35.0%	28.6%	44.3%	32.7%	37.2%
Good, could be better	59.7	58.8	66.4	50.0	58.7	59.1
Bad, could be worse	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.7	7.7	3.7
Very bad	0.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0

Figure 10. Morale of Principals, 1988, 1998, and 2008



Almost two-thirds of the principals say they are commended frequently or sometimes for something they have done as a principal.



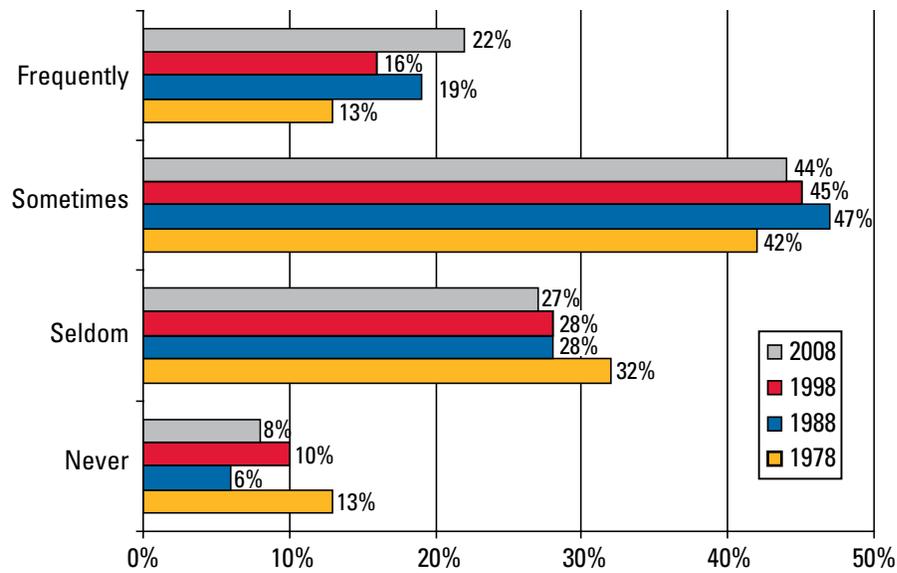
Question: How frequently are you commended—by personal comment or in writing by the superintendent or other central office administrators—for something you have done as a principal?

The percentage of principals who said they were *frequently* commended for something they did as a principal has increased slightly from 1988 (1988: 15.7%; 2008: 21.7%) and is at its highest since the question was first asked in 1978. This is reported much more often in rural (30.9%), small town (20.6%), and suburban districts (21.2%) than in districts in urban settings. From a less positive standpoint, 7.7% of principals in general report they are *never* commended, with an additional 26.8% characterizing this practice as happening *seldom*. (See Table 46 and Figure 11.)

As was found in the 1998 study, the extent to which principals receive commendations for their work appears to be directly related to satisfaction with some aspects of their position. For example, among those principals who believe their authority to make decisions is *not-in-balance* with their responsibilities, almost half (49.4%) that they are *seldom* or *never* commended for their performance, compared to 28.8% in the *in-balance* group.

Table 46. Frequency of Commendation by Superintendent or Other Central Office Administrator						
	Total	Community the School Serves				
		Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
• Frequently	21.7%	7.1%	6.7%	21.2%	20.6%	30.9%
• Sometimes, but not frequently	43.8	50.0	40.0	42.4	50.0	44.1
• Seldom (once a year or less)	26.8	35.7	40.0	30.6	25.0	14.7
• Never	7.7	7.1	13.3	5.9	4.4	10.3

Figure 11. Frequency of Commendation by Superintendent or Other Central Office Administrator, 1978, 1988, 1998, and 2008



Summary

Over 9 of every 10 of the responding principals reported having an employment contract with their districts, with high percentages appearing across all subgroups. Two-fifths of these people have only a 1-year contract, although 30.1% have a continuing contract. Salaries were included as an item in almost 80% of the contracts, with fringe benefits and district expectations addressed in about half of them.

Just under 8 in 10 of the principals have written job descriptions; overall, about 70% said the description is standard for all principals in the district and about 8% said that job descriptions varied from principal to principal. Of the principals with written job descriptions, about 70% said they were held accountable or evaluated in accordance with it.

Almost half the principals have a 12-month contract, with the length of contracts in general shifting upward from 1998. For the 2007-2008 school year, principals reported an average salary of \$84,506, with increases over both 10-year and 50-year periods more than covering increases in the cost of living. However, over these same time periods, both the length of principals' contract years and the time they spend on school-related responsibilities in a typical week have also increased. Only 1 in 7 principals report that the opportunity for merit or incentive pay is available to them, with one-fifth of these reporting that student achievement plays a part in determining who receives a merit adjustment. Thus, fewer than 3 in every 100 principals have merit pay with a student achievement provision available to them.

There has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of principals reporting tenure is *not* available to them—from 28% in 1998 to 44% in 2008. To add to the concern, over half the least-experienced principals have no tenure available to them.

The length of principals' work days—and work weeks—is increasing. Principals currently report spending 9.8 hours at school on a typical day. Added to this is an additional 7 hours per week on school-related responsibilities. Altogether, this results in a work week of about 56 hours, compared to 54 in 1998 and "only" 51 in 1988.

Eight of every 10 principals are evaluated on an annual basis, with less-experienced principals even more likely to report this evaluation cycle. However, about 8% of the principals report they are evaluated *rarely or not at all*. Two-thirds of the principals report that student performance results are taken into account during their evaluations. In addition, input is solicited from members of the school and district community. Just over three-fourths of the principals report that goal setting is a routine aspect of the evaluation process, with three-fourths of these people saying that they are held accountable for meeting these goals. About 3 in 10 of the principals have the opportunity to use portfolio assessment as part of their evaluations, a small decrease in the percentage reported in 1998.

Overall, the 2008 study found that elementary principals are positive about their own level of moral; about one-third characterize it

as *excellent* and an additional 60% as *good, could be better*. Almost two-thirds of the principals say they are commended *frequently* or *sometimes* for something they have done as a principal. However, just under 8% say they are *never* commended.

Chapter 8:

Concerns of Principals

In the 1988 10-year report, author Jim Doud talks about the “environment” of education and its impact on schools. His words remind us that every decade has its challenges for principals:

The past decade has been a time of extraordinary change for elementary and middle school principals. No period in the history of education, even the “golden years” that followed the launching of Sputnik, has witnessed such an intense focus on school operations and program quality as that touched off by the publication in 1983 of the U.S. Department of Education’s *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. Issued under the auspices of then Secretary of Education T. H. Bell, *A Nation At Risk* not only had an enormous impact in and of itself but touched off half a hundred additional reports, each focusing on promoting the specific agenda of the sponsor as a way to improve the nation's schools.

The impact of these reports (and the actions they generated) came swiftly, and was astonishing in its scope. The call for change, largely rooted in a return to a solid intellectual and academic focus and heavily promoted as being necessary

to the nation's economic and political survival, resulted in the enactment of a range of new state mandates. The jury is still out on what the long-term effect of these imposed mandates will be, and a verdict may not be forthcoming until the kindergarten class of 1988-89 becomes the first graduating class of the 21st century....

At any rate, through all of the upheaval and uncertainty that change engenders, elementary and middle school principals must "keep school." They must work with the students who are in their classrooms, the teachers who are already on their staffs, the existing curriculum. They must face the reality of changing home and family structures, societal pressures, limited financial resources, and the host of other problems that are present in today's schools. (1988, pp. 123-124)

To get a sense of principals' assessments of these challenges, NAESP has included a "concerns" section on several of the 10-year study survey instruments. Responses to these items provide both a snapshot of today's principals' concerns and a sense of how things have changed or, in some cases, remained the same, over several years.

In 1958, challenges discussed included: lack of clerical help which the principals felt impacted their ability to provide instructional support, a concern that increasing numbers of principals would be expected to take responsibility for more than one school, and dissatisfaction with preparation programs provided by colleges and universities.

A topic receiving particular attention on the 1978 survey was collective bargaining by teachers. While mixed opinions were reported, 43% of the responding principals felt teacher collective bargaining was having a *bad effect on the quality of education* and an even higher percentage (62%) said it was having a *bad effect on public opinion*. About half of the principals who had experienced a teachers' strike in their building felt that relations between them and the teachers had worsened.

In 1988, only four areas were rated as *major problems* by as many as 20% of the respondents: *providing programs for underachievers, coping with state regulations and initiatives, effectively meshing instruction with special academic programs, and level of parent involvement*.

In 1998, responding principals ranked *fragmentation of the principal's time* first on the list of overall concerns (72% identified it as a *major concern*), followed by *inadequate financial resources, student assessment issues, and students not performing up to potential*. These principals were also asked to make an assessment of factors that affected their own job security, and respondents were more positive in regard to this question. The most worrisome item—*unsatisfactory student performance*—was designated as a *major concern* as it related to job security by fewer than 1 in 3 of the principals. The next items in the ranking (*conflicts with teachers, conflicts with superintendents, conflicts with parents*) were described as major concerns by only about 1 in 7 of the principals.

In 1998, principals identified fragmentation of the principal's time and inadequate financial resources as major concerns.

Over this past decade, schools have continued to face challenges—some in 2008 similar to those in 1998 or even other decades. Others—such as NCLB and increasing high-stakes state accountability requirements—have created new challenges. The question for this 10-year study was “how do principals in 2008 view these challenges?” To help ensure that the “concerns” listed in the survey instrument were on target, NAESP enlisted the help of practicing principals. For the 2008 study, 58 areas were developed with these addressing 5 broad issue areas: program-related, students, faculty/staff, stakeholders, and management.



A Retrospective Look—1958

Frequent moving, often from state to state, is a way of life for thousands of families.... It is not uncommon to find that many of the sixth-grade children at a given school began their kindergarten education elsewhere and have attended several schools since. (Howard 1958, p. 8)



Question: To what extent is each of the items listed currently or potentially (within the next year) a concern in the school for which you are now responsible?

Three *program-related areas* ranked first among the 58 listed on the basis of the percentage of principals characterizing each of them as a current or potential *major concern*:

- Providing a continuum of services for students who are at risk (78.7%)
- Student assessment (71.5%)
- Instructional practice (69.6%)

Other *program-related areas* identified as major concerns by more than half the respondents included: *students not performing to their potential* (67.8%), *increase in the numbers of students with emotional problems* (63.1%), *including assessment results of students with disabilities for purposes of AYP* (62.1%), and *promoting inclusion/collaboration in regard to instruction of students with disabilities* (52.9%).

In the area of *student issues*, no item received a major concern rating from over 50% of the principals. Ranked first on this section were *management of student behavior* (43.8%), *safety and security of students* (43.4%; up from 25.0% selecting *major concern* in 1998), and *bullying* (42.5%). Two *faculty/staff issues* were rated as current or potential major concerns by more than half of the principals: *professional development of staff* (68.3%) and *level of teacher performance* (59.3%).

In the area of stakeholder issues, *financial resources* was identified as a major concern by 64.6% of the principals, with *level of parental involvement* coming in just below the 50% level (49.1%). Finally, three *management issues* received major concern ratings from over half the principals: *fragmentation of my time* (66.8% in 2008 and first on the list of concerns in 1998), *implementing state mandates* (54.7%), and *implementing federal mandates* (50.6%; up from 24.2% selecting *major concern* in 1998). (See Table 47.)

Program-related issues such as providing a continuum of services for students who are at risk headed the principals' list of concerns.

Table 47. Areas Characterized as Currently or Potentially a Major Concern by 50% or More of the Principals

• Providing a continuum of services for students who are at risk (78.7%)
• Student assessment (71.5%)
• Instructional practice (69.6%)
• Professional development of staff (68.3%)
• Students not performing to their potential (67.8%)
• Fragmentation of my time (66.8%)
• Financial resources (64.6%)
• Increase in the numbers of students with emotional problems (63.1%)
• Including assessment results of students with disabilities for purposes of AYP (62.1%)
• Level of teacher performance (59.3%)
• Implementing state mandates (54.7%)
• Promoting inclusion/collaboration in regard to instruction of students with disabilities (52.9%)
• Implementing federal mandates (50.6%).

On a more positive note, many of the areas listed received *little or no* concern ratings from high percentages of the principals. Those designated this way by 75% or more of the principals included:

- Use of drugs by staff members (90.4% selected the *little or no* concern option)
- Use of alcoholic beverages by staff members (88.5%)
- Sexual harassment of students by staff (85.1%)
- Sexual harassment among school staff (83.3%)
- Staff grievances filed through employee unions (77.3%)
- Use of tobacco products by students (76.8%)
- Use of alcoholic beverages by students (75.9%)

Detailed data about principal responses to each of these items have been provided below. In some cases, even though high numbers have not designated a concern as major, a combined major/minor percentage may still indicate that the area is troubling to principals. For example, while *student health issues such as obesity, asthma, etc.* was categorized as a *major* concern by only one-fifth of the respondents, an additional 59.3% felt it is a *minor* concern. (See Tables 48-52.)



A Retrospective Look—1958

[The ideal elementary school program] will be well organized, but it will have great flexibility, allowing for many kinds of individual differences among staff as well as among students. Appropriate academic skills will be well taught. Creativity and self-expression will be encouraged in all areas of the curriculum, especially in the language and graphic arts, in science, and in music. For some children there will be opportunity for quiet, time for rest and relaxation, and free time just to think. For others, there will be special opportunity to work out aggression through vigorous physical activity. There will be formal and informal group experiences for having fun and for working on hard problems. (Howard, 1958, pp. 11-12)

Table 48. Program-Related Concerns Identified by the Principals						
	Total	Community the School Serves				
		Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
Providing a continuum of services for students who are at risk						
Major	78.7%	85.7%	90.0%	72.9%	79.1%	81.2%
Minor	18.8	14.3	10.0	24.7	16.4	17.4
Little or No	2.6	0.0	0.0	2.4	4.5	1.4
Student assessment						
Major	71.5	57.1	71.0	70.6	72.1	76.8
Minor	25.2	35.7	22.6	25.9	25.0	23.2
Little or No	3.3	7.1	6.5	3.5	2.9	0.0
Instructional practice						
Major	69.6	64.3	67.7	60.0	85.1	71.0
Minor	25.6	21.4	22.6	35.3	13.4	26.1
Little or No	4.8	14.3	9.7	4.7	1.5	2.9
Students not performing to their potential						
Major	67.8	92.9	71.0	68.2	63.2	66.2
Minor	29.3	7.1	25.8	28.2	32.4	32.4
Little or No	2.9	0.0	3.2	3.5	4.4	1.5
Increase in the numbers of students with emotional problems						
Major	63.1	78.6	67.7	67.1	62.1	51.5
Minor	26.9	14.3	29.0	21.2	25.8	38.2
Little or No	10.0	7.1	3.2	11.8	12.1	10.3
Including assessment results of students with disabilities for purposes of AYP						
Major	62.1	78.6	58.1	58.8	59.1	65.2
Minor	29.4	21.4	32.3	34.1	25.8	29.0
Little or No	8.5	0.0	9.7	7.1	15.2	5.8
Promoting inclusion/collaboration in regard to instruction of students with disabilities						
Major	52.9	71.4	48.4	50.6	60.3	47.8
Minor	36.5	14.3	41.9	38.8	32.4	37.7
Little or No	10.6	14.3	9.7	10.6	7.4	14.5
Curriculum development						
Major	44.2	42.9	32.3	38.8	50.0	53.6
Minor	43.8	28.6	41.9	50.6	44.1	37.7
Little or No	12.0	28.6	25.8	10.6	5.9	8.7

Table 48. Program-Related Concerns Identified by the Principals (continued)						
	Community the School Serves					
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Declining or flat-lined standardized test scores</i>						
Major	42.3%	50.0%	54.8%	37.6%	39.7%	44.9%
Minor	33.6	28.6	16.1	31.8	38.2	37.7
Little or No	24.1	21.4	29.0	30.6	22.1	17.4
<i>Education of English Language Learners</i>						
Major	32.0	64.3	45.2	32.9	25.0	22.4
Minor	35.3	14.3	32.3	47.1	33.8	31.3
Little or No	32.7	21.4	22.6	20.0	41.2	46.3
<i>Addressing the needs of a culturally diverse population</i>						
Major	29.3	42.9	38.7	28.2	26.9	24.6
Minor	42.9	50.0	48.4	50.6	37.3	33.3
Little or No	27.8	7.1	12.9	21.2	35.8	42.0
<i>Education of gifted and talented students</i>						
Major	25.9	28.6	19.4	27.1	27.9	26.1
Minor	54.4	42.9	64.5	56.5	52.9	49.3
Little or No	19.7	28.6	16.1	16.5	19.1	24.6
<i>School involvement with delivery of social services</i>						
Major	25.2	61.5	22.6	16.5	29.9	25.4
Minor	51.1	7.7	54.8	52.9	47.8	56.7
Little or No	23.7	30.8	22.6	30.6	22.4	17.9
<i>Implementing extended day programs</i>						
Major	16.5	28.6	16.1	15.3	16.4	16.2
Minor	43.4	42.9	41.9	38.8	50.7	41.2
Little or No	40.1	28.6	41.9	45.9	32.8	42.6
<i>Implementing preKindergarten programs</i>						
Major	15.9	28.6	12.9	11.8	14.9	22.4
Minor	31.7	35.7	22.6	24.7	41.8	29.9
Little or No	52.4	35.7	64.5	63.5	43.3	47.8

Table 49. Concerns About <i>Student Issues</i> Identified by the Principals						
	Community the School Serves					
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Management of student behavior</i>						
Major	43.8%	42.9%	48.4%	45.9%	47.8%	37.7%
Minor	49.3	50.0	41.9	48.2	43.3	59.4
Little or No	7.0	7.1	9.7	5.9	9.0	2.9
<i>Safety and security of students</i>						
Major	43.4	28.6	41.9	47.1	45.6	42.6
Minor	41.9	57.1	45.2	38.8	39.7	42.6
Little or No	14.7	14.3	12.9	14.1	14.7	14.7
<i>Bullying</i>						
Major	42.5	50.0	51.6	37.6	45.6	39.1
Minor	51.6	50.0	38.7	56.5	45.6	58.0
Little or No	5.9	0.0	9.7	5.9	8.8	2.9
<i>Absenteeism</i>						
Major	39.7	50.0	48.4	32.9	38.2	42.6
Minor	44.5	35.7	48.4	50.6	44.1	36.8
Little or No	15.8	14.3	3.2	16.5	17.6	20.6
<i>Student health issues such as obesity, asthma, etc.</i>						
Major	20.0	53.8	25.8	15.5	11.8	23.5
Minor	59.3	23.1	58.1	64.3	67.6	52.9
Little or No	20.7	23.1	16.1	20.2	20.6	23.5
<i>Child abuse</i>						
Major	18.5	42.9	12.9	14.1	19.4	19.4
Minor	54.4	28.6	67.7	54.1	56.7	53.7
Little or No	27.0	28.6	19.4	31.8	23.9	26.9
<i>Sexual harassment of students by students</i>						
Major	7.7	21.4	3.2	2.4	11.8	10.1
Minor	51.6	42.9	58.1	47.1	45.6	60.9
Little or No	40.7	35.7	38.7	50.6	42.6	29.0
<i>Inappropriate sexual behavior</i>						
Major	4.8	14.3	0.0	1.2	7.4	7.2
Minor	37.5	21.4	46.7	32.9	42.6	34.8
Little or No	57.7	64.3	53.3	65.9	50.0	58.0

Table 49. Concerns About <i>Student Issues</i> Identified by the Principals (continued)						
	Community the School Serves					
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Vandalism</i>						
Major	4.0%	14.3%	6.5%	1.2%	5.9%	2.9%
Minor	45.2	35.7	48.4	49.4	50.0	36.8
Little or No	50.7	50.0	45.2	49.4	44.1	60.3
<i>Gang activity</i>						
Major	2.9	14.3	9.7	1.2	0.0	2.9
Minor	26.1	50.0	32.3	23.5	27.9	20.6
Little or No	71.0	35.7	58.1	75.3	72.1	76.5
<i>Use of alcoholic beverages</i>						
Major	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	5.9
Minor	21.9	28.6	20.0	17.6	26.9	22.1
Little or No	75.9	71.4	80.0	82.4	70.1	72.1
<i>Use of drugs</i>						
Major	2.2	7.1	0.0	0.0	1.5	5.9
Minor	22.9	28.6	19.4	17.9	26.5	25.0
Little or No	74.9	64.3	80.6	82.1	72.1	69.1
<i>Violent Incidents</i>						
Major	1.8	7.7	0.0	1.2	1.5	2.9
Minor	36.5	53.8	54.8	32.9	35.3	32.4
Little or No	61.6	38.5	45.2	65.9	63.2	64.7
<i>Use of tobacco products</i>						
Major	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.9
Minor	22.1	21.4	23.3	16.5	27.9	23.5
Little or No	76.8	78.6	76.7	83.5	70.6	73.5

Table 50. Concerns About <i>Faculty-Staff Issues</i> Identified by the Principals						
		Community the School Serves				
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Professional development of staff</i>						
Major	68.3%	78.6%	77.4%	65.9%	69.1%	65.2%
Minor	25.8	7.1	19.4	28.2	25.0	29.0
Little or No	5.9	14.3	3.2	5.9	5.9	5.8
<i>Level of teacher performance</i>						
Major	59.3	64.3	67.7	52.9	62.7	59.4
Minor	34.1	21.4	25.8	42.4	26.9	36.2
Little or No	6.7	14.3	6.5	4.7	10.4	4.3
<i>Morale</i>						
Major	41.3	57.1	54.8	36.9	39.7	37.7
Minor	43.1	35.7	32.3	44.0	44.1	49.3
Little or No	15.6	7.1	12.9	19.0	16.2	13.0
<i>Safety and security of staff</i>						
Major	20.7	7.1	22.6	22.4	26.5	14.7
Minor	43.3	42.9	51.6	38.8	38.2	50.0
Little or No	35.9	50.0	25.8	38.8	35.3	35.3
<i>Absenteeism</i>						
Major	15.6	21.4	6.5	16.7	14.7	17.4
Minor	48.1	71.4	38.7	47.6	41.2	55.1
Little or No	36.3	7.1	54.8	35.7	44.1	27.5
<i>Teacher shortages</i>						
Major	11.2	21.4	3.2	11.8	9.0	13.2
Minor	33.8	21.4	32.3	29.4	41.8	33.8
Little or No	55.0	57.1	64.5	58.8	49.3	52.9
<i>Staff grievances filed through employee unions</i>						
Major	2.2	7.1	0.0	2.4	1.5	3.0
Minor	20.4	21.4	29.0	20.0	17.6	17.9
Little or No	77.3	71.4	71.0	77.6	80.9	79.1
<i>Sexual harassment among the staff in the school</i>						
Major	0.7	0.0	3.2	0.0	1.5	0.0
Minor	15.9	28.6	19.4	14.1	17.6	13.2
Little or No	83.3	71.4	77.4	85.9	80.9	86.8

Table 50. Concerns About <i>Faculty-Staff Issues</i> Identified by the Principals (continued)						
		Community the School Serves				
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Sexual harassment of students by staff</i>						
Major	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	1.5%	0.0%
Minor	14.1	28.6	19.4	11.8	17.9	8.8
Little or No	85.1	71.4	80.6	87.1	80.6	91.2
<i>Use of alcoholic beverages</i>						
Major	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0
Minor	11.1	14.3	9.7	10.6	11.8	10.3
Little or No	88.5	85.7	90.3	89.4	86.8	89.7
<i>Use of drugs</i>						
Major	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0
Minor	9.3	7.1	12.9	8.2	11.8	7.4
Little or No	90.4	92.9	87.1	91.8	86.8	92.6

Table 51. Concerns About <i>Stakeholder Issues</i> Identified by the Principals						
		Community the School Serves				
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Financial resources</i>						
Major	64.6%	57.1%	61.3%	58.8%	61.8%	76.8%
Minor	26.2	42.9	29.0	25.9	29.4	18.8
Little or No	9.2	0.0	9.7	15.3	8.8	4.3
<i>Level of parental involvement</i>						
Major	49.1	64.3	64.5	45.9	39.7	49.3
Minor	35.1	21.4	25.8	40.0	32.4	40.6
Little or No	15.9	14.3	9.7	14.1	27.9	10.1
<i>Community support for public schools</i>						
Major	38.9	35.7	45.2	39.3	32.4	42.0
Minor	45.6	42.9	38.7	42.9	47.1	50.7
Little or No	15.6	21.4	16.1	17.9	20.6	7.2
<i>Condition of the physical facility</i>						
Major	33.6	42.9	35.5	23.5	30.9	43.5
Minor	32.8	28.6	32.3	36.5	32.4	31.9
Little or No	33.6	28.6	32.3	40.0	36.8	24.6
<i>Parent training/advocacy/education</i>						
Major	19.6	21.4	19.4	23.5	16.4	17.4
Minor	51.1	71.4	58.1	44.7	55.2	46.4
Little or No	29.3	7.1	22.6	31.8	28.4	36.2
<i>Public school alternatives (vouchers and choice programs)</i>						
Major	8.6	7.1	12.9	10.7	1.5	7.2
Minor	24.9	42.9	35.5	22.6	20.9	24.6
Little or No	66.5	50.0	51.6	66.7	77.6	68.1
<i>Home schooling</i>						
Major	2.6	7.1	0.0	2.4	1.5	1.4
Minor	28.8	14.3	25.8	24.7	26.5	42.0
Little or No	68.6	78.6	74.2	72.9	72.1	56.5

Table 52. Concerns About <i>Management Issues</i> Identified by the Principals						
	Total	Community the School Serves				
		Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Fragmentation of my time</i>						
Major	66.8%	78.6%	74.2%	64.7%	70.6%	60.9%
Minor	26.6	14.3	22.6	28.2	22.1	31.9
Little or No	6.6	7.1	3.2	7.1	7.4	7.2
<i>Implementing state mandates</i>						
Major	54.7	42.9	54.8	47.6	50.8	71.0
Minor	35.6	50.0	41.9	35.7	38.5	24.6
Little or No	9.7	7.1	3.2	16.7	10.8	4.3
<i>Implementing federal mandates</i>						
Major	50.6	42.9	51.6	48.2	45.6	60.9
Minor	36.9	42.9	45.2	35.3	36.8	31.9
Little or No	12.5	14.3	3.2	16.5	17.6	7.2
<i>Evaluation of staff</i>						
Major	47.0	57.1	54.8	45.9	42.6	47.1
Minor	43.0	21.4	35.5	43.5	47.1	45.6
Little or No	10.0	21.4	9.7	10.6	10.3	7.4
<i>Dismissing incompetent staff</i>						
Major	26.9	42.9	16.1	25.9	25.0	27.5
Minor	43.5	35.7	48.4	49.4	38.2	43.5
Little or No	29.5	21.4	35.5	24.7	36.8	29.0
<i>Inadequate availability of technology and/or support services</i>						
Major	26.3	28.6	32.3	28.6	19.1	26.1
Minor	42.6	50.0	41.9	39.3	44.1	43.5
Little or No	31.1	21.4	25.8	32.1	36.8	30.4
<i>Inadequate availability of staff training for technology use</i>						
Major	26.2	28.6	25.8	28.2	25.0	24.6
Minor	46.9	57.1	51.6	43.5	44.1	47.8
Little or No	26.9	14.3	22.6	28.2	30.9	27.5

Table 52. Concerns About <i>Management Issues</i> Identified by the Principals (continued)						
	Community the School Serves					
	Total	Large Urban	Medium Urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
<i>Central office control of decisions that should be school-based</i>						
Major	24.4%	28.6%	29.0%	21.2%	25.0%	23.2%
Minor	40.2	50.0	45.2	52.9	25.0	36.2
Little or No	35.4	21.4	25.8	25.9	50.0	40.6
<i>Increasing enrollment</i>						
Major	21.8	21.4	19.4	22.4	30.9	14.5
Minor	32.5	35.7	29.0	34.1	30.9	31.9
Little or No	45.8	42.9	51.6	43.5	38.2	53.6
<i>Declining enrollment</i>						
Major	18.9	14.3	22.6	8.2	20.9	27.5
Minor	33.3	42.9	38.7	34.1	25.4	34.8
Little or No	47.8	42.9	38.7	57.6	53.7	37.7
<i>Crisis management</i>						
Major	14.4	14.3	19.4	14.1	11.8	15.9
Minor	62.4	35.7	54.8	61.2	66.2	66.7
Little or No	23.2	50.0	25.8	24.7	22.1	17.4

Principals are generally secure in their jobs.



Question: Has your own sense of job security decreased in the last 3 years? If YES, what are some of the reasons why?

Several 10-year studies have included another item that attempts to collect data about principals’ concerns—this time related specifically to their own sense of job security. This item was included again in 2008. However, the panel of principals helping to update the survey suggested that a question should also be added that might help to hone in on principals’ feeling about their own security and also provide good baseline data for the future. Thus, principals were asked in 2008 whether their personal sense of job security had decreased

in the last 3 years. Seven in 10 of the principals (69.3%) responded that they had *not* experienced a decrease in their own sense of job security over the last 3 years, and only 1 in 10 reported feeling *much less secure*. This response is especially interesting in light of the decline in the number of principals over the past decade reporting tenure is available to them. (See Table 53.)

Table 53. Decrease in Own Sense of Job Security Over the Last 3 Years						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
No	69.3%	67.5%	70.6%	71.6%	65.7%	72.0%
Yes, feeling slightly less secure	20.4	22.5	20.2	16.4	23.8	17.7
Yes, feeling much less secure	10.4	10.0	9.2	11.9	10.5	10.4



Question: Relative to your own feelings of job security, indicate the extent to which each of the items listed is currently or potentially (within the next year) an area of concern.

Respondents were asked to characterize each item on a list of 11 possible concerns as *major*, *minor*, or *little or no* problem relative to their own job security. The area ranked first on the list—*accountability issues such as failure of school to meet state standards*—was classified as a major concern by 40.1% of the principals. In comparison, a similar item included on the 1998 survey—*failure to meet district or state standards*—was named a *major* concern by only 20.9% of the respondents.

Accountability issues such as failure of school to meet state standards tops the principals' list of concerns relative to job security.

This was followed by *unsatisfactory student performance*, a *major* concern for 33.5% of the principals (32.4% in 1998). After that, the percentage of principals selecting the major concern option fell sharply, with the next item on the list—*reduction in force due to declining enrollment*—designated a *major* concern by only 11.6%. (See Table 54.)

The principals were also asked to provide comments concerning this item. A few of their responses are included to provide more detail about their concerns. Although the comments here speak to the responding principals' personal situations, together they provide a picture of the types of things that concern principals in general concerning their own job security.

One theme that was anticipated was pressure due to accountability issues, and principals did talk about this. Financial issues received several mentions and likely would have been talked about more often if the survey was conducted today. Another cluster of comments pointed to problems some principals have with relationships with the superintendent, other central office staff, or the school board. Some of these problems could be traced to uncertainties—and sometimes dissatisfaction—that accompany changes in direction due to the hiring of a new superintendent or the election of new school board members. But other more troubling comments pointed to a perceived lack of support for principals or a lack of understanding of a principal's complex role. Here are just a few of the principals' comments about factors affecting their sense of job security:

Table 54. Extent to Which Each of the Items Listed Is Currently or Potentially (Within the Next Year) a Problem Related to Job Security						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or more		
<i>Accountability issues such as failure of school to meet state standards</i>						
Major	40.1%	36.7%	37.0%	50.7%	48.6%	34.4%
Minor	32.7	36.7	34.5	23.9	31.4	33.7
Little or No	27.1	26.6	28.6	25.4	20.0	31.9
<i>Unsatisfactory student performance</i>						
Major	33.5	36.3	31.4	35.8	37.1	30.7
Minor	38.3	40.0	35.6	38.8	37.1	39.3
Little or No	28.3	23.8	33.1	25.4	25.7	30.1
<i>Reduction in force due to declining enrollment</i>						
Major	11.6	11.4	15.3	6.1	7.6	14.3
Minor	26.6	24.1	24.6	33.3	26.7	26.7
Little or No	61.8	64.6	60.2	60.6	65.7	59.0
<i>Conflicts with teachers</i>						
Major	9.3	17.5	5.0	7.5	12.4	6.7
Minor	36.7	37.5	36.1	34.3	40.0	34.8
Little or No	54.1	45.0	58.8	58.2	47.6	58.5
<i>Conflicts with parents</i>						
Major	8.6	12.5	5.1	10.4	10.6	7.4
Minor	41.0	35.0	41.9	43.3	41.3	41.1
Little or No	50.4	52.5	53.0	46.3	48.1	51.5
<i>Reorganization/consolidation of schools</i>						
Major	7.8	6.3	9.3	7.6	9.5	6.8
Minor	20.5	21.3	20.3	21.2	20.0	21.0
Little or No	71.6	72.5	70.3	71.2	70.5	72.2
<i>Conflict with superintendent</i>						
Major	5.9	7.5	4.2	7.6	7.6	4.9
Minor	30.5	28.8	26.9	36.4	35.2	27.6
Little or No	63.6	63.8	68.9	56.1	57.1	67.5
<i>Personal deficiencies in some skill areas needed for the principalship</i>						
Major	4.5	8.8	3.4	1.5	5.7	3.1
Minor	20.8	20.0	22.0	19.4	25.7	17.8
Little or No	74.7	71.3	74.6	79.1	68.6	79.1

Table 54. Extent to Which Each of the Items Listed Is Currently or Potentially (Within the Next Year) a Problem Related to Job Security (continued)						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or more		
<i>Litigation</i>						
Major	4.1%	2.5%	2.5%	9.0%	5.7%	3.1%
Minor	22.7	22.5	21.2	22.4	21.0	23.9
Little or No	73.2	75.0	76.3	68.7	73.3	73.0
<i>Poor personal performance evaluation</i>						
Major	3.0	3.8	2.6	3.0	6.7	0.6
Minor	16.0	18.8	11.1	22.4	14.3	17.3
Little or No	81.0	77.5	86.3	74.6	79.0	82.1
<i>Conflicts with school-based advisory group</i>						
Major	1.5	2.6	0.8	1.5	1.0	1.2
Minor	21.3	16.7	17.6	29.9	24.8	19.1
Little or No	77.2	80.8	81.5	68.7	74.3	79.6

- New central office leadership. New focus with conflicting views. Test scores vs. student growth.
- In my state, we no longer have collective bargaining rights; a principal can be dismissed when his/her contract expires.
- The school board members change regularly and there might be decisions made for political reasons, when trust has not yet been built.
- Too often, loud, complaining parents and teachers are listened to instead of the "silent majority" people who express their support to me but not my superiors.
- Being told things such as "this is a critical year for you" with no direction or encouragement
- We have a new superintendent and new assistant superintendent. I don't know them well enough to predict the level of support they will show for elementary principals, so I'm feeling unsettled.

- Scores are hard to reach with ever-changing guidelines and lack of clarity of guidelines. We have a high number of at-risk students but are held to the same expectation level as other schools with fewer such students. High number of ELL's makes it hard as well.
- An influential principal was fired this spring.
- AYP and other accountability pressures
- The way my state funds public education as well as general financial uncertainty
- The economy and budget cuts have everyone concerned. Hopefully, I can continue to offer my district more than the next guy.
- Too much accountability and too much micromanaging of what should be school site decisions
- Political agendas by board members; weak support by administrators
- I cannot rid the school of ineffective teachers and replace them even though my school is "desirable," and I have 100s of applicants wanting to teach and be here.
- NCLB—Only the principal is subject to termination for inadequate test results. There is no protective agency for us.
- We have new board members and prospective board members who are micromanagers and don't have a vision for the whole district, just their areas of vested interests.
- I fear that my school could face formal school improvement because of stagnant reading scores.
- NCLB and AYP school performance determines whether or not a principal will continue to be offered a contract.
- Too much focus is placed on student achievement on state assessments and too little on the other positive things I accomplish as principal.

- Declining enrollments may cause redistricting; budget reductions systemwide
- Budget reductions have caused us to look at all options district-wide to reduce our expenses—there are no sacred cows.
- Threats made to us by superintendent, deputy superintendents, and other central office personnel; too much responsibility for areas in which we have no control (custodial allotments, supplies to clean the facilities, etc.); interfering board members who have enabled the parents to get anything they want—whether it is in the child’s best interest or not.
- New superintendent who has never been a principal and does not really understand the nature of the job; lack of support from central administration
- Turnover in central office personnel (politics)
- The amount of power parents have
- School boards members with little or no experience in the field of education (and do not want it—it is all about tax money)
- My school is not currently classified by the government for failing to achieve AYP. However, I serve a low socioeconomic area that is struggling to meet the AYP mandates. Therefore, I am unsure of how it will be interpreted if we don’t make AYP.
- The politics of education: If someone on the board doesn’t care for you, it becomes difficult to function even though you have 100% parental and staff support.
- Ever-increasing responsibilities for the principal with limited control of resources; more critical and demanding public willing to express concerns to my supervisor
- Every little thing that does not succeed is viewed as the fault of the principal. It is not a healthy environment when you know that, at any second, something can happen, and it will be your fault.

- Difficult to please the board and my interest in students is not appreciated
- Since 50% of my evaluation is based on assessment data, it is a continual concern that we won't see the expected AYP increase.



Question: Have you ever been named in a civil suit related to your position as principal? To what was the complaint related? Were you satisfied with the outcome?

Only 4.5% of the principals indicated they had been named in a civil suit, a decline from the 10.6% in 1998. Among the subgroups, principals from large urban areas were more likely (15.4%) to respond *yes*, while none of the principals working in small towns indicated this was the case. The principals who said they had been named in a civil suit were also asked about the nature of the case. *Dismissal of a staff member*, *liability for a student's injury*, and a *racial issue* were mentioned most often. Just over half of the principals who had been involved in a suit (54.5%) indicated they were satisfied with the outcome.

The percentage of principals saying that they had been named in a civil suit decreased since the 1998 study.

Summary

When principals were asked about current or potential concerns facing their schools, *providing a continuum of services for students who are at risk*, *student assessment*, and *instructional practice* ranked first on the list of items based on the percentage characterizing each of them as a current or potential *major concern*.

Principals were also asked to think about their own job security. Despite the intense focus on accountability for student results, only one in 10 of them reported feeling *much less secure* in 2008 than they had 3 years previous, and almost 7 in 10 of them felt there had been *no change* in their sense of job security. Related to this topic of job security, 40.1% of the principals classified *accountability issues such as failure of school to meet state standards* as a major concern. This was followed by *unsatisfactory student performance*, a major concern for 33.5% of the principals, a number virtually unchanged since the 1998 survey.

Fewer than 1 in 20 of the principals had been named in a civil suit related to his or her job as principal, a decrease from the 10.6% reported in 1998.

Chapter 9:

Status Questions

NAESP has tracked the personal and professional characteristics of principals and the job of elementary school principal since the 10-year studies began in 1928. This study continues that tradition by reporting on the conditions and status of the individuals who occupy the principalship in 2008. Some items have been added and some deleted through the years as new issues arise or, in the case of some of the items, they are no longer considered necessary or, sometimes, appropriate to ask. However, an intentional effort has been made to maintain some core questions in order to provide the ability to generate trend data on principals, the principalship, and the schools in which principals serve.



Question:
Are you a full-time principal?

The principalship
is a full-time job.

The percentage of principals reporting that their principalship is their *sole responsibility* has edged up slightly from 1998 (from 78.0% to 83.5%). Principals in the largest schools (more than 600 students) are more likely than those in schools enrolling fewer than 400 students to characterize the principalship as his or her sole responsibility (90.4%; 71.6%). There were also differences among the community type groups, with only 72.1% of the principals in rural areas saying

their responsibilities were limited to the principalship. Of those who said they had responsibilities in other areas, these were typically related to *district-level responsibilities*, although 79.5% of the *additional responsibilities* principals still spent less than one-quarter of their days on these. While there were some teaching responsibilities reported, these were minimal—a significant change from the days when most principals were classified as teaching principals. (See Table 55.)

Table 55. Principalship as the Sole Responsibility									
	Total	Number of Students			Community the School Serves				
		Less than 400	400 to 600	More than 600	Large Urban	Medium urban	Sub-urban	Small Town	Rural
• Principalship is my sole responsibility	83.5%	71.6%	92.2%	90.4%	92.9%	90.3%	92.9%	77.9%	72.1%
• I have additional responsibilities	16.5	28.4	7.8	9.6	7.1	9.7	7.1	22.1	27.9



A Retrospective Look—1968

The position of classroom teacher is undoubtedly the one with the longest historical record in American public education. The second longest history belongs to the elementary school principalship. Early in the nineteenth century the larger cities in New England and along the eastern seaboard began designating one of the teachers of the emerging multiple-teacher schools as the “head teacher.” As the population grew and as cities sprouted across the nation, the term “principal teacher” and “teaching principal” came into use. Eventually, many city school systems adopted the terms “principal” or “building principal.” (Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, 1968, p. 5)

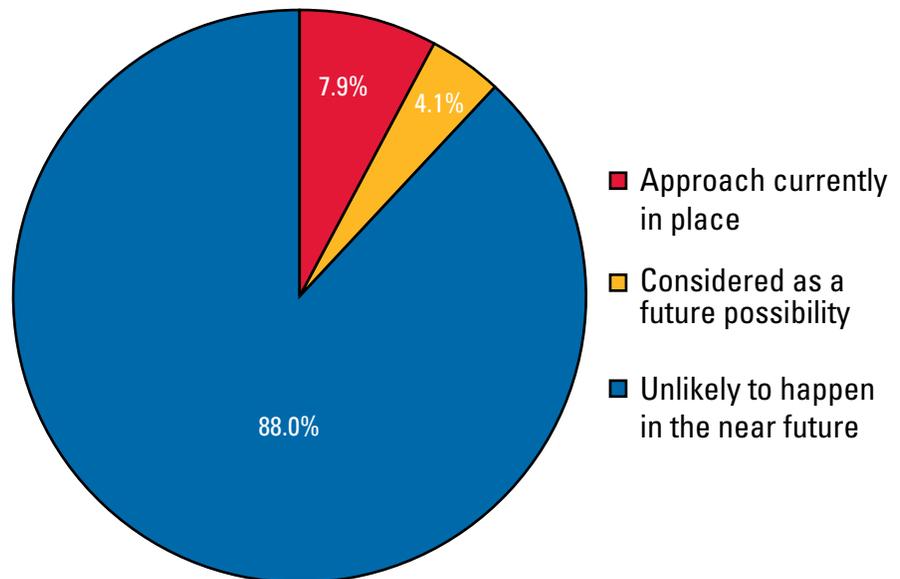


Question: Some districts have begun to formally separate a school's administrative and instructional responsibilities typically held by a principal and assign two people to these functions? What is the status of such an approach in your school?

A strong suggestion was made by the principal advisors on this 10-year project to add an item to the 2008 survey that asked about the possibility that districts would assign two people to handle principal responsibilities—one to focus on administrative tasks and another on the instructional core. Such an approach addressed concerns that the principalship may simply not be “doable,” with too little attention paid to providing instructional leadership. Although 8% of the principals say this approach is *currently in place* in their districts and *being considered* by an additional 4.1%, 88.0% of the principals consider it *unlikely to happen in the near future*. Unexpectedly, the *currently in place* option was reported by more of the principals in smaller schools than those in larger schools (less than 400 students: 12.8%; more than 600 students: 3.9%). (See Figure 12.)

Fewer than 1 in 12 principals reported that their districts have introduced the practice of assigning principalship responsibilities to two people.

Figure 12. District Assigns Two People to School's Administrative and Instructional Responsibilities



The average principal is 50 years old.



Question:
What is your age?

The mean age of elementary principals responding to the 2008 10-year study is 50 years, up 1 year from the 49 years reported in 1998. Female principals were slightly older, on average, than male principals (51 years and 49 years respectively). Not surprisingly, the average age of principals increased through the experience subgroups (less than 15 years of experience: 44; 5-14 years of experience: 51; 15 years or more: 57 years).

A more detailed comparison of the 2008 data with that reported in 1998 reveals some interesting differences. The age distributions have not simply shifted up slightly. Instead, the 2008 pattern has more people reporting at both the lower and upper ends of the age continuum; this leaves fewer people in the middle range. In addition, the higher percentage in the *55 or older* bracket in 2008 might signify the potential for a significant turnover in principals over the next decade.

As was mentioned before, external data sources, when available, are used as checks on data collected through the 10-year studies. One such source is the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey. As can be seen in Table 56, the NCES data fits within the bracket provided by the 1998 and 2008 10-year data.

Table 56. Comparison of 10-Year Study and NCES Data on Principals' Ages			
	Less than 40	40 to 54	55 or older
1998	6.2%	72.9%	20.9%
2004*	14.8	56.8	28.5
2008	15.3	48.0	36.8

*NCES data.

From a historical perspective, it is interesting to note that while female principals are, on average, 2 years older than the male principals in 2008, the age gap was greater in 1928, with the females about 5 years older than the males.

Table 57. Age Distribution of Principals						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Less than 35	4.1%	11.3%	1.7%	0.0%	4.8%	3.7%
35 to 39	11.2	23.8	8.5	0.0	10.5	11.6
40 to 44	13.8	17.5	17.8	1.5	19.0	10.4
45 to 49	11.9	15.0	13.6	6.0	13.3	11.0
50 to 54	22.3	21.3	21.2	25.4	18.1	25.0
55 to 59	23.8	11.3	22.9	40.3	21.0	25.6
60 or older	13.0	0.0	14.4	26.9	13.3	12.8
<i>Mean age</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>51</i>

Table 58. Median Age of Principals, 1928 to 2008								
	1928	1948	1958	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
Total		46.5	47.6	46	46	47	50	50
Male	43.4	44.4	43.7	43	45	47	50	49
Female	48.5	50.0	52.0	56	47	45	50	51

Three-fifths of the principals responding to the 2008 study are female.



Question:
What is your gender?

Trend data on the percentages of males and females holding the position of elementary school principal demonstrate the importance of repeating some questions in every administration of the survey. For example, authors of the 1968 report stated that the 1958 report expressed "concern that the proportion of men supervising principals was continuing to increase with a corresponding decline in the proportion of women principals" and went on to ask what factors might have contributed to this. In their words, the 1968 authors then

enter[ed] the realm of speculation...Undoubtedly, school systems and the Department of Elementary School Principals (NEA) have done much to magnify the principalship as a position worthy of the talents of the most capable young men. This picture was not commonly presented in the 1920's and 1930's when men student teachers often were advised to seek the alleged status and the better salaries of secondary school teaching. (Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, 1968, p. 140)

The authors of both the 1958 and 1968 reports might have been pleased to find that data reported in the 1998 study signaled a movement back toward a more even distribution. In 2008, responses indicated an even more significant shift toward more female elementary school principals. In 2008, 61.0% of the responding principals are female, a dramatic increase from 1998 (female principals: 42.0%). Data from the NCES lend support for the accuracy of the 2008 male/female split. In an analysis from its 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), NCES reported the percentage of elementary school principals who were female to be 56%, a substantial increase from the 1993-1994 SASS (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 191).

Table 59. Gender of Principals				
		Years as a Principal		
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
Male	39.0%	33.8%	31.4%	59.7%
Female	61.0	66.3	68.6	40.3



A Retrospective Look—1968

Steadily over several decades the number of men entering teaching at the elementary level has been increasing. For years both the salaries and the educational status of principals has risen markedly thereby making the principalship more and more attractive to men. (Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, 1968, p. 11)

Table 60. Gender of Principals, 1928 to 2008

	1928	1948	1958	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
Male	44.5%	59%	62%	78%	82%	80%	58%	39%
Female	55.5	41	38	22	18	20	42	61

Note: Data for 1928 to 1958 are for “supervising principals.”

The majority of principals are White.



Question: How would you place yourself among the following racial or ethnic groups?

In this era of increasing diversity in the student population, responses to this item are troubling, with 90.3% of the principals classifying themselves as White. In the 1998 study, authors Doud and Keller talked about this issue:

In 1988, it was anticipated that there would be a 50 percent turnover in elementary principalships during the next 10 years. It also was anticipated that there would be real opportunities for other racial or ethnic groups to assume principalships. Despite affirmative action and other procedures,

minorities of color did not realize the same opportunities as White women.

In the coming decade, we are likely to see a turnover that is similar to what was experienced during the last 10 years. It is anticipated that opportunities will be nearly as great as during the previous decade for qualified individuals to move into the principalship. Given the rapidly increasing diversity of our student population, the need for increased diversity among teachers and principals is even more critical now than it was in 1988. Local, state, and national policy makers; school districts; universities; and professional associations must aggressively identify and recruit promising minority educators. Short of such efforts, there is every reason to believe that minorities in the elementary school—both teachers and principals—will continue to be underrepresented into the 21st century. (1998, p. 81)

Data from this 2008 study point to the continued existence of underrepresentation. However, they cannot tell us why the situation still exists. Certainly, the shortage of persons of color in the teaching population—the pool from which most principals are drawn—is part of the problem. However, there may be other factors as well. This issue is one deserving further investigation in the near future. (NOTE: Data from the 2003-2004 NCES SASS have significantly fewer elementary school principals classified as White, 81.0%. This significant difference between the SASS and 10-year study data is puzzling since other comparisons with SASS tend to confirm the accuracy of 10-year data collected in 2008.)



Question: Where do you reside?

NAESP randomly selects principals for participation in this survey and the hope is that the distribution of respondents matches that available from other authoritative sources. Data from the NCES Common Core of Data for 2006-2007 are the latest available to compare to the 10-year data from 2007-2008, and a review of the two sets of data concerning region of the country indicates a reasonably close match between 10-year respondents and public schools classified as elementary by NCES.

Table 61. Distribution of Schools by Region, 10-Year Study and NCES Data		
	NAESP 10-Year Study (2007-2008)	NCES Common Core of Data (2006-2007)
• New England	6.1%	5.4%
• Mideast	10.4	13.0
• Southeast	21.7	22.8
• Great Lakes	17.9	17.2
• Plains	14.6	9.7
• Southwest	9.9	12.6
• Rocky Mountains	6.1	4.4
• Far West	13.2	15.0

Source: Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009, p. 158.

States included in regions—*New England*: CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT; *Mideast*: DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA; *Southeast*: AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV; *Great Lakes*: IL, IN, MI, OH, WI; *Plains*: IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD; *Southwest*: AZ, NM, OK, TX; *Rocky Mountains*: CO, ID, MT, UT, WY; *Far West*: AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA.



Question: Does your district pay your dues to any professional associations? If you are an NAESP member, does your district pay your NAESP dues?

Overall, just under two-thirds of the principals (64.8%) reported that their districts pay their dues to a professional association, a drop from 1998 (70.7%). Significant differences are present among the subgroups, however. Principals in the larger schools, many of which are in larger districts, are less likely to report dues are paid (48.1%) than principals in the smallest schools (72.9%). Urban districts, and especially large urban districts (46.2%) are less likely to pay dues than rural districts (72.1%). It is possible that these practices have an impact on whether a principal decides to join a professional association, with this possibility supported by the different responses provided by NAESP members as contrasted by those that do not belong to NAESP (member: 76.8% *yes* to the general practice of paying professional dues; nonmembers: 47.2%). In response to a specific question about payment of NAESP dues, 76.6% of NAESP members report their dues are paid.

Just under two-thirds of the principals report that their districts pay their dues to a professional organization.



Question: In which of the following professional education associations do you currently hold a membership?

Principals responding to the 2008 10-year study were about equally likely to report membership in a state association of school administrators (58.9%) and NAESP (56.1%). This was followed by membership in Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), which was reported by 46.3% of the respondents. Only 3.5% of the

About three-fifths of the principals report membership in a state association of administrators and/or NAESP.

respondents reported membership in the American Association of School Administrators, while 3.2% were members of the National Staff Development Council, 2.1% belonged to the National Middle School Association, and 1.8% were members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

There were some differences among subgroups. For example, the more-experienced principals were more likely to belong to a state association of school administrators and/or NAESP (69.0%; 64.8%) than the least-experienced principals (44.4%; 43.2%). In contrast, the pattern shifts for ASCD (less than 5 years of experience: 48.1%; 15 or more years: 38.0%). Finally, while female and male principals are about equally likely to belong to a state association and/or NAESP, more of the females belong to ASCD (54.3% as compared to 41.0% for the males). (See Table 62.)

Table 62. Membership in Professional Associations						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less Than 5	5-14	15 or More		
• State association of administrators	58.9%	44.4%	66.4%	69.0%	64.8%	61.0%
• National Association of Elementary School Principals	56.1	43.2	63.9	64.8	61.0	58.5
• Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	46.3	48.1	53.3	38.0	41.0	54.3
• Phi Delta Kappa	10.9	9.9	9.0	15.5	8.6	13.4
• American Association of School Administrators	3.5	4.9	3.3	2.8	3.8	3.7
• National Staff Development Council	3.2	1.2	3.3	5.6	2.9	3.7
• National Middle School Association	2.1	2.5	2.5	1.4	3.8	1.2
• National Association of Secondary School Principals	1.8	0.0	2.5	1.4	2.9	1.2
• Other	12.3	7.4	17.2	9.9	13.3	12.8



Question: If you were starting out all over again, would you want to be an elementary school principal?

Certainly would was the response selected by 58.4% of the principals, which represents an increase from the 51.5% who responded this way in 1998. An additional 30.0% responded that they *probably would*. Fewer than 2 in every 100 say they *certainly would not*. These high levels of willingness to “reenlist” exist across the experience subgroups and with both male and female principals. In addition, the *certainly would* and combined *certainly/probably would* percentages are at the highest levels ever reported over the five times this item was included on a 10-year survey.

As in prior years, about 9 of 10 principals say they would again choose to be an elementary school principal.

Table 63. Willingness to Again Become a Principal

	Total	Years as a Principal		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Certainly would	58.4%	58.8%	56.8%	61.5%
• Probably would	30.0	30.0	30.5	27.7
• Probably would not	10.1	10.0	10.2	10.8
• Certainly would not	1.5	1.3	2.5	0.0

Figure 13. Suppose You Were Starting Out All Over Again, Would You Want to Become an Elementary School Principal?

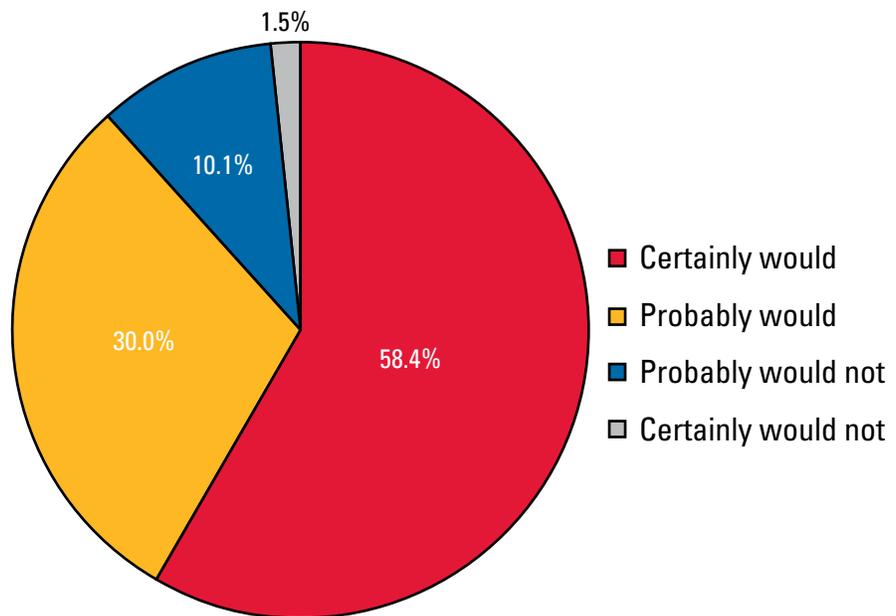


Table 64. Willingness to Again Become a Principal, 1968 to 2008

	Certainly would	Probably would	Probably not	Certainly not
1968	52.9%	33.8%	12.1%	1.2%
1978	49.1	33.8	13.7	3.3
1988	50.5	33.1	13.7	2.7
1998	51.5	33.0	13.3	2.2
2008	58.4	30.0	10.1	1.5

About two-fifths of the principals say they have reached their professional goal.



Question: Do you consider the elementary school principalship your final occupational goal? If NO, what would you like to do?

Approximately 4 of 10 respondents (38.3%) said they consider the elementary school principalship their final occupational goal, a

significant difference from the 57.6% that replied this way in 1998. This large shift is puzzling since other indicators such as morale that would seem to be related from the standpoint of job satisfaction have held steady or improved. On the other hand, the fact that these principals are looking ahead to the possibility of another position should not necessarily be considered a problem. Instead, they may simply be looking for new challenges or they may intend to retire and then move on to another job.

The change in percentage responding *yes* might also reflect the shift toward less-experienced principals in the 2008 response group as compared to the 1998 response group. The less-experienced principals, who are also slightly younger, are much less likely than the more-experienced principals to say the elementary principalship is their final occupational goal. Only 1 in 4 of them (25.0%) as compared to over half the principals with 15 or more years of experience (55.4%) express this opinion. Differences among the age groups are even more striking: 40 or less—only 4.9% indicate the principalship is their final occupational goal; 41-50 years old: 24.4%; older than 50: 55.1%. Finally, NAESP members are more likely than nonmembers to indicate the principalship is their final occupational goal (46.2% and 26.9% respectively). (See Table 65.)

The most desired postprincipalship position is central office staff member (45.9%), with males, less-experienced principals, and younger principals more likely than their counterparts in other subgroups to express this desire.

Table 65. The Elementary School Principalship as a Final Occupational Goal					
	Total	Mean Age	Years as a Principal		
			Less than 5	5-14	15 or More
• Yes	38.3%	55	25.0%	38.5%	55.4%
• No	61.7	47	75.0	61.5	44.6

Table 66. Elementary School Principalship Is My Final Career Goal, 1958 to 2008						
	1958	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
Yes	63%	56%	57%	46%	58%	38%

Principals—now, on average, 50 years old—anticipate they will be able to retire at age 59.



Question: At what age will you be able to retire if you remain in your present retirement system? Do you think that you will be likely to take retirement at that time?

Principals responding in 2008 expect they would be able to retire at age 59, 2 years older than the mean of 57 reported in 1998. This number is fairly stable across subgroups and likely reflects the structure of their state retirement systems. About three-fifths of the principals (62.8%) indicated they thought they would be likely to retire when they reached that age. This represents no change since 1998, when 62.2% of the principals said they planned to retire when they reached the retirement age provided in response to the previous question. (See Table 68.)

The principal’s current age seemed to have little impact on his or her response to this question. Specifically, 60.0% of the principals in the

40-or-less age group said they intended to retire when they reached the *able to retire* year, as did 62.2% of those in the older-than-50 group. However, there were some differences among subgroups. Principals in smaller schools were less likely to say they would take retirement as soon as they were able (52.8%), while principals in the largest schools were more likely (71.2%).

Finally, principals who had said they would *not* take retirement as soon as they were able to were asked at what age they anticipated taking retirement. The mean age reported was 63 years (as compared to 59 years as the age at which they *could* retire).

Table 67. Age at Which Principal Could Retire From Present Retirement System

	Total	Years as a Principal			Age		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	40 or less	41-50	Older than 50
55 or less	31.2%	29.9%	34.8%	26.9%	50.0%	42.1%	20.4%
56 to 59	23.2	23.4	26.1	17.9	22.5	23.7	23.1
60 to 64	31.6	29.9	27.0	40.3	17.5	21.1	40.8
65 to 69	11.4	13.0	11.3	10.4	10.0	9.2	12.9
70 or older	2.7	3.9	0.9	4.5	0.0	3.9	2.7
<i>Mean age at which could retire</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>60</i>

Table 68. Anticipate Taking Retirement at That Time

	Total	Years as a Principal			Age		
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	40 or less	41-50	Older than 50
Yes	62.8%	62.0%	64.1%	60.6%	60.0%	65.4%	62.2%
No	37.2	38.0	35.9	39.4	40.0	34.6	37.8
<i>• If NO, at what age do you see yourself retiring?</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>64</i>

Summary

The elementary school principalship is a full-time responsibility for 83.5% of the respondents to the 2008 study, an increase from the 78.0% reported in 1998. Additional responsibilities for the remaining principals typically focus on district-level responsibilities instead of teaching. Principals in 2008 also responded to an item asking whether their districts had introduced the practice of assigning two people to the principalship, in an attempt to make the job more manageable and also to increase the time available for a principal to focus on instructional leadership. Fewer than one in 12 of them reported their districts used this approach.

The median age of the principals was 50, the same age as reported in 1998. Female principals were 2 years older than the male principals on average, 51 as compared to 49 years. Three in every 5 of the principals is female, and 90% of them classified themselves as White.

Just under two-thirds of the principals report that their districts pay professional dues for them, and the principals are likely to report membership in their state association of school administrators and NAESP.

About 9 in 10 principals indicate they would—if starting out all over again—choose to be an elementary school principal. Two-fifths of them indicate that the elementary school principalship is their final career goal.

The principals, now 50 years old, say that they would be able to retire at age 59 if they stayed in the same state system; three-fifths of them intend to retire then. Of those who said they were *not* likely to retire then, a mean age of 63 was seen as the target for retirement.

Chapter 10:

The School and School District

The work that elementary principals do is obviously affected by the context in which they work—the size of their schools, the amount of support available to them, and, especially, the students they serve. Thus, each 10-year survey asks principals to provide information about some of these variables.



Question: How many separately named elementary schools are under your direction?

Responses to this item indicate that an encouraging trend is continuing—over time, fewer and fewer principals are assigned responsibility for more than one school.

An increasing number of principals report they are responsible for only one school.

Table 69. Number of Separately Named Schools Served by Principal, 1968 to 2008					
	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
One	85.5%	82.3%	87.6%	90.6%	96.1%
More than one	14.6	17.7	12.3	9.4	3.9

The median enrollment reported in 2008 is 450 students.



Question: What is your school’s enrollment(s)?

Data reported by the principals indicate that there are some very small schools in our country (about 8% were reported to enroll fewer than 200 students) as well as some very large ones (12.5% enroll 700 or more students. Not surprisingly, the smaller schools tend to be located in rural areas, while many of the large ones are in larger cities—36% of the schools in larger cities enroll 700 children or more.

The trends in enrollment data provided below focus—for surveys from 1928 through 1968—on schools headed by supervising principals, and thus leave out much smaller “teaching principal” schools. This was intentional since it allows for comparisons across the years of similar settings and principal responsibilities.

Table 70. Median Elementary School Enrollment, 1928 to 2008							
1928	1948	1958	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008
632	520	536	540	430	430	425	450

Note: Responses from “supervising principals” used for 1928 to 1968



Question: Would any of these describe the school(s) in which you work?

In the 1998 report, Doud and Keller noted that “the number of alternative programs has increased during the past decade.” For that reason—and to provide baseline data, a question was included on

the 1998 survey that asked the principals if they worked in a magnet school, a charter school, a school in which vouchers were required, a school that was part of some choice plan, a privately managed school, or none of those.

In 2008, 69.1% of the principals indicated that *none* of these terms fit their school situation, a decrease from the 62.9% reported in 1998.

- Magnet school: 1998—4.7%; 2008—1.8%
- Charter school: 1998—0.9%; 2008—1.8%
- Students use vouchers to attend: 1998—0.4%; 2008—0.0%
- Serves some non-neighborhood students under a choice plan: 1998—31.1%; 2008—19.3%
- Privately managed school: 1998—1.3%; 2008—0.0%
- None of these options: 1998—62.9%; 2008—69.1%

Fewer of the principals in 2008 than in 1998 reported their school to be a magnet, charter, privately managed, or operating under a choice plan.



Question: How would you characterize the community that your school serves?

About half of the respondents reported that they work in rural areas (25.8%) or small towns (25.5%). About 1 in 3 respondents (31.8%) said they work in suburban communities, while 16.8% reported they work in urban communities. Smaller schools are clustered in non-urban areas, although there are a few large schools located in these communities. In contrast, the larger schools are clustered in the urban areas.

The principals responding to the 2008 survey reported working in a variety of settings.

Racial-ethnic composition of the student body varies substantially by community type.



Question: What is the approximate composition of the student body of your school?

The mean racial-ethnic composition of the pupil enrollment within the schools represented in this 2008 study was 71.2% White, 9.9% Black, 14.2% Hispanic, 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.3% Native American, and 1.0% Other. Schools in large urban areas had a different pattern, with about two-thirds of the school's population children of color. In contrast, 78.8% of the students in rural schools are White.

The principals were also asked about the composition of their teaching staff. As with data about the principal, the responses reflected less diversity than that shown in the student bodies of the schools: White—91.9%, African American—2.1%, Hispanics—4.3%, Asian/Pacific Islander—0.9%, Native American—0.7%, and Other—0.2%

Fewer of the principals in 2008 than in 1998 reported the existence of a student council in their schools.



Question: Do you have a student council in your school?

In 2008, 46.2% of the principals reported the existence of a student council in their schools, down from 58.8% in 1998. However, an additional 10.9% reported that in 2008 the possibility of adding a student council to the school's program is planned or being discussed.



Question: How many staff members do you supervise? Use head count not FTE.

Almost three-fourths of the principals report supervising more than 25 professional staff members, for a mean of 35. In addition, the principals supervise an average of 18 support staff personnel. Staff size was largest in schools in large urban areas and smallest in rural schools



Question: Do you have any assistant principal(s) assigned to your school? If YES, how many? What allocation formula is used in your district?

One-third of the principals in 2008 reported working with an assistant principal, with the percentages much higher in the larger schools and in schools in large urban areas in which these large schools tend to be located. Of schools with an assistant principal, the most frequently reported criterion for allocating an assistant principal (AP) to a school was student enrollment (51.4%, down from 62.3% reported in 1998). Just over one-fourth (27.8%) of the principals with APs reported that these people were assigned to all elementary schools in the district. This represents an increase from the 20.2% in 1998, and movement in a positive direction.

One-third of the principals in 2008 said there is an assistant principal assigned to their schools, a substantial gain from 1998 (19.8%).

Table 71. Assistant Principal Assigned to School					
	Total	School Enrollment			
		Less than 400	400 to 600	More than 600	
Yes	33.0%	9.3%	36.5%	73.1%	
No	67.0	90.7	63.5	26.9	
If YES, what allocation formula is used in your district?		Percentage of Principals Saying "Yes"			
• Assigned to all elementary and/or intermediate level schools		27.8%	26.7%	28.0%	29.1%
• Based on school enrollment		51.4	33.3	47.9	60.5
• Based on number of staff members		8.7	6.7	12.0	6.2
• Assigned to work with specific programs		8.7	13.3	12.0	2.1
• Other		3.5	20.0	0.0	2.1

Principals describe their parents as highly supportive.



Question: How would you describe the attitude of parents and the community in general toward your school and its programs?

Elementary schools have traditionally enjoyed strong parental support. Almost three-fourths of the 2008 principals said their parents are *highly supportive* of the school and its programs, and another 24.3% reported *moderate* parent support. *Highly supportive* was reported most often by principals in large urban areas (85.7%), and by the most-experienced principals (86.4%). School size had no correlation with the level of support reported.

Community support was not reported to be as high as parent support. This is not surprising, because community members who do not have students in the schools are typically not as familiar with them

as parents are. Despite this fact, *highly supportive* communities were reported by 54.1% of the principals, with an additional 41.0% of the principals characterizing their communities as *moderately supportive*. Again, the more-experienced principals were significantly more likely to say *highly supportive* (72.3%). (See Table 72.)

Table 72. Parent and Community Attitudes Toward Your School and Its Programs						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Parents						
Highly supportive	73.4%	69.6%	69.5%	86.4%	75.2%	72.2%
Moderately supportive	24.3	24.1	29.7	13.6	23.8	24.7
Little support	1.9	5.1	0.8	0.0	1.0	2.5
No support at all	0.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Community						
Highly supportive	54.1	48.1	48.3	72.3	54.8	53.7
Moderately supportive	41.0	48.1	44.9	24.6	39.4	42.0
Little support	4.5	2.5	6.8	3.1	5.8	3.7
No support at all	0.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6



Question: How would you describe the level of involvement of parents and the community with your school?

Two-fifths of the principals characterized their school's parents as *highly involved*, with another 42.5% saying parents are *moderately involved*. On the other hand, almost 1 in 5 reported *little involvement* by parents. The community received a lower "grade" for its involvement—about one-third of the principals characterized community as having *little involvement*. (See Table 73.)

While fewer of the principals gave high ratings to parent or community involvement than to support by these groups, there were still substantial levels of either high or moderate involvement reported.

Table 73. Level of Parent and Community Involvement						
	Total	Years as a Principal			Male	Female
		Less than 5	5-14	15 or More		
Parents						
Highly involved	39.1%	35.9%	32.2%	56.1%	38.1%	39.8%
Moderately involved	42.5	38.5	48.3	36.4	46.7	39.8
Little involvement	18.0	24.4	19.5	7.6	15.2	19.9
No involvement	0.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Community						
Highly involved	16.3	11.4	14.7	26.2	15.2	17.0
Moderately involved	48.9	44.3	50.9	47.7	43.8	52.2
Little involvement	33.0	41.8	32.8	24.6	39.0	28.9
No involvement	1.9	2.5	1.7	1.5	1.9	1.9

Summary

An increasing number of principals are assigned only one school; in 2008, 96% of the principals reported this was their situation. The schools in which they are working have a median enrollment of 450 students, up 25 students from 1998. Three in 10 of the principals report that their schools could be classified as a magnet or charter school—or one that is privately managed or operating with some sort of choice provision. Fewer of the principals in 2008 (46.2%) than in 1998 (58.8%) reported that their schools had a student council.

The principals reported supervising an average of 35 professional staff members and 18 support staff personnel. One-third of them said there was an assistant principal assigned to their schools, with allocations of APs to schools typically made on the basis of enrollment.

The principals describe the parents in their schools as highly supportive and highly to moderately involved. The community is also given high ratings, with fewer than 1 in 20 of the principals saying the community gives the school little support.

Chapter 11:

Reflections and Implications



A Retrospective Look—1968

Despite the ups and downs of American life and the pressure of many current problems in education—the principalship continues to be a center of stability, common sense, and constructive progress. It is a lighthouse built on a rock. (Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, 1968, p. 4)

Speaking in the Foreword to the 1998 report, then-Executive Director Sam Sava talked about the messages principals provide through their responses to the 10-year studies:

[A] common element that connects the studies is the degree to which principals believe in the work they do and derive enormous satisfaction from shaping the lives and futures of our nation’s children. This powerful belief continues to make the K-8 principalship one of the most gratifying professions one can have. (1998, p. x)

Principals responding to this 2008 study also convey the message that they consider the job to be gratifying. Their morale is high, they indicate that—if they were starting out again—they would choose to be a principal, and many of them say they have reached their career goal. However, their personal satisfaction is countered by their concern that public education will have increasing difficulty attracting good people to the profession. So, in this chapter titled Reflections and Implications, these principals will be provided with the opportunity to make their case concerning this important issue.



A Retrospective Look—1978

“I’m okay—for the most part.” That’s the message we get from the typical principal in 1978.

Principals expressed concern about the ability of public education to attract good people to the principalship.



Question: Concerns have been expressed about the ability of public education to continue to attract quality people to the position of elementary school principal. Do you share this concern? If YES, what are some of the reasons why?

Just over three-fifths of the principals said they were concerned about this issue, a slight drop from 1998 but still too high. Although the more-experienced principals were more likely to express concern than the less-experienced ones, 56.3% of these less-experienced ones still answered *yes*.

Table 74. Ability of Public Education to Attract Quality People to the Principalship						
		Years as a Principal				
	Total	Less than 5	5-14	15 or More	Male	Female
Yes	63.0%	56.3%	64.7%	65.7%	61.0%	64.0%
No	37.0	43.8	35.3	34.3	39.0	36.0

Perhaps the most troubling comment was received in response to a question asking *why* the principals felt this concern, "I love my job, but I would not recommend being a principal to anyone." Thus, many of these people who express satisfaction with their career in so many ways still feel unable to "sell" the elementary school principalship to others.

The number of comments received in response to this question definitely indicate that this is a hot-button issue, since, typically, only a handful of people respond to open-ended items. Analysis of the comments identified categories of concerns that seemed to be most troubling to the respondents.

Low pay and/or salary not commensurate with responsibilities was a category mentioned most often. Next were comments about the *time demands of the job*. This was followed by concerns about an *ever-increasing work load*; the job is seen by many of the respondents as getting to be not "doable" by one person. This was closely followed by comments that specifically mentioned the *stress of the job*.

Although accountability issues related to NCLB and state testing might be related to the stress many principals feel, *accountability issues* came after these other four in terms of frequency. As a related issue, the perception was that *schools are being expected to do everything*. This was especially troubling to some respondents who felt there has been a *decrease in parental and community support for the schools*. Some respondents also felt there was *insufficient district-level support for the schools, and especially, for principals*, although this was mentioned less often than the concern about lack of community and parent support.

Finally, some of the principals mentioned *pipeline issues*. For example, since teacher salaries were viewed as relatively low, fewer people were entering that profession and so fewer people were available to even consider the principalship as a career possibility.

Included here are just a few of the comments from the respondents. Many of them speak to multiple issues, and the sense one gets from reading them is that it is a complex interplay of factors that concern these principals. Remember also that high percentages of the principals said they would personally choose to be a principal again if they were starting over, so most of these comments are not from generally disgruntled people with low morale. Instead, they were written by people who—in general—enjoy being a principal but who see aspects of the position that would discourage high-quality new people from entering the profession.

- Most principals come from within the classroom. Teacher salaries are so poor that we limit our potential selection pool two steps before we need them.
- Long hours, low pay, and lots of pressure to perform
- The work load and responsibilities continue to increase and rarely is there any kind of relief from any level (district, state, etc.).
- Every problem of the world seems to wind up in the lap of the school to solve or address somehow. Parents seem to be accountable for less and less and the school more and more.
- The nature of the job is increasing beyond the ability of one person.
- Quality people want to focus on tasks that have potentially positive outcomes. Sometimes in public education we deal repeatedly with problems without resolving them.
- Amount of stress due to trying to do everything that needs to be done well. People don't have a clue what we do in a day's time. Much of it is not education-related, but has to be dealt with.
- Lack of time for family due to it all being spent at school
- Lack of mentoring, lack of encouragement, lack of support, low morale issues, lack of collaboration with superintendent, other central office staff, and the school board
- I think that without consistent backing from the central office, namely the Supervisor of Schools, this job would be extremely difficult if not impossible. My current supervisor is great, but I can see—particularly concerning parent/child issues—that this could be horrible if I did not have this support that I can count on.
- Fragmentation of the day and too many responsibilities take away from my ability to be an effective leader. I have limited time to be in the classroom, observing and mentoring.

- The principalship is a middle management job. Principals are often squeezed by pressure from central administration, parents, their own school, teachers, and students. The pay is low, and the hours are long. There is very little satisfaction.
- The job is often overwhelming and increasingly bureaucratic in terms of implementing local, state, and federal policy. It is difficult to find time for all parties; instead, I often spend a disproportionate of time with meeting the needs of a few.
- The responsibilities of the job are demanding. The respect for the job is declining. The salary of the job is discouraging.
- The job is becoming less and less about working with school-aged children.
- Teachers have the union to advocate for them, administrators have no one.
- Low pay and lack of respect for the profession
- Principals have thankless jobs that teachers see on a daily basis, so good teachers do not become principals.
- The long hours and total commitment to the job (sometimes at the expense of family and self) seems to create a less-than-inviting milieu for up-and-coming quality people. I often hear the question from teachers I am encouraging to consider the principalship as a future career possibility, "Why would I want to work that much?"
- The responsibilities of educators continue to increase each year. Services that were once the responsibility of the family are being moved into the schools, and the schools are expected to make time and resources available. The current accreditation system doesn't take into account the number of hugs, noses wiped, tears dried, encouraging statements, pats on the back, and parent conferences conducted that are part of the job of schools.

- It is a difficult, time-intensive job that requires a suspension of dignity as the principal must assume responsibility—and blame—for everything that occurs on campus 24/7. The principal must also serve as temporary social worker, nurse, custodian, parent, and teacher as the needs arise. The unions of other employee groups insulate their members from the political winds. Not so for principals.
- The job is huge, the time commitment daunting, the pay at my school per diem for me is less than some teachers. Why should I do this?
- The increase in pay associated with moving from teaching to becoming an administrator is not enough to attract teachers to administration.
- The stakes are high! There is NCLB, AYP, and increasing assessment. There is not enough time for teachers to reflect, collaborate, or develop professionally.
- Who wants to live under a microscope?
- Unrealistic expectations are placed on a single person.
- Principals are often put in the middle without much authority.
- It is a tiring profession that offers little encouragement. If a person is needy for recognition, this is not the profession for them. You must be self-sustaining and able to give much more than you will ever get.
- The increased work load and level of accountability for all that happens in a school can be overwhelming at times. There is a multitude of reports, data collection processes, meeting minutes, and other tasks—some of which can be delegated—but the follow-through to ensure things get done is constant.
- I have frequently been told by my best teachers whom I encouraged to enter the field of administration that they would not ever consider it because: "I don't want to work as hard as you, or as many hours as you do. The pay isn't worth the stress and demands."

- Principals are expected to “fix” everything.
- Lack of respect for the educational profession
- Education has become such a numbers game with test scores that the joy of educating children has been stolen from teachers and principals. As things stand, the best teachers are too smart to go into administration. I have seen the quality of those entering administration plummet in the past 5-10 years.
- I am retiring at the end of this year. There were 51 applicants for my position, and after reviewing their resumes, I consider only 4 of them to be quality candidates.
- Emotional demands of the job
- Lack of respect for the position, and very negative stereotyping of the position by entertainment industry and media



A Retrospective Look—1928

The elementary school principalship has passed through several stages of development all of which still exist in some communities. From the one or two teacher school, in which the clerical and administrative duties were incidental to regular classroom instruction, the office has developed in some communities until it now demands a technically trained executive of the highest order. The committee believes that the future advance of the nation’s public elementary schools will be largely conditioned by the extent to which the idea of the elementary school principal as a professional leader and skilled executive gains general recognition in practice. (Committee on Standards and Training for the Elementary School Principalship, 1948, p. 141)



A Retrospective Look—1948

The growth of the elementary school principalship has been steady and the future looks bright. But the rate of growth and the quality of growth in the future will depend largely upon the principal's conception of the position, his preparation, his relationship with other administrative officers, teachers, pupils, and parents, and his ability to not only keep pace with new developments in education, but to influence them constructively. (Virgil L. Flinn, superintendent of a Virginia county school district and member of the Editorial Committee that developed the 1948 report, 1948, p. 268)

These comments from principals—along with all the other data they provided for this 10-year study—provide a solid base for additional reflections about a “to-do” agenda for a variety of groups involved in issues related to the elementary school principalship. Just a few of these issues will be highlighted here.

First, the importance of attending to the issue of attracting people to the principalship cannot be understated. Since the 1998 study, there has been a shift toward hiring older, more experienced people for the principalship. On the one hand, this might help to ensure there is solid, experienced leadership in our schools. On the other hand, it means that, in a few years, we might see another “bubble” of retirements. Principals responding to this survey have provided a wealth of ideas about barriers to attracting new people, concerns they face in their jobs on a daily basis, and their need to spend both more days and hours

to get the job done well. These concerns deserve concerted attention, both to help current principals focus on providing leadership for their schools without burning out or needing to be a super hero and also to make the job more attractive to new candidates.

Second, and this has implications for the issue above, compensation for principals deserves attention. Two problems have been identified. Compensation is not seen as being in balance with the time needed to do the job well, competing demands, and the level of stress. The brief overview below looks at just one of these factors—time. While, from a purely dollars and cents standpoint, principals’ salaries have been keeping pace with inflation, these professionals have also—over the same period—been expected to work substantially more days and more hours each day.

Table 75. Trend Data on Salaries and Work Weeks/Years						
	1956-57	1966-67	1977-78	1986-87	1997-98	2007-08
Unadjusted	\$6,600	\$10,200	\$21,500	\$39,988	\$60,285	\$84,506
Adjusted to 2008 value	\$50,569	\$65,751	\$70,997	\$75,788	\$79,629	\$84,506
Average Total Hours Worked Each Week	47	50	50	51	54	56
Percentage of Principals With a 12-month Contract	12%	18%	30%	33%	40%	47%

Another problem is salary compression that often has new principals—and assistant principals—paid not much more than they would have made as experienced teachers.

Third, although principals in 2008 were more likely to describe the graduate education as being of *high value* to helping them prepare for the principalship, the number was still too low—56%. In addition, other experiences that should be supporting them during their careers too seldom get *high value* ratings. For example, only one-third of the principals classify professional development opportunities provided by their districts as being of *high value*, and only half of them classify mentoring programs this way. While few of the principals characterized these experiences as being of *little value*, efforts should be made to find out what could be done differently to increase the number of principals who see them as providing solid help.

Fourth, while high percentages of the principals characterized their relationships with their superintendents and school boards as good, there were some troubling comments made by principals responding to questions about job security and about the ability to attract new candidates to the principalship. It seems as though, in some districts, principals do not feel they get the support they need, perhaps because there is a lack of understanding about the complexities of the job. The superintendent-principal and board-principal relationships might be a good topic for future study.

Finally, and while it is presented last here, it is still very important, the principals in 2008 are perceptive observers of the effects of NCLB. Far from being critical of all aspects of the legislation and its implementation, they consider some of the impacts to be good for children and schools. But they also highlight some problems such as the legislation's impact on nontested areas. As discussions begin on reauthorization of the legislation, principals' opinions should be given a forum.



A Retrospective Look—1958

The crowds of school children following so closely upon the wartime conditions and great economic depression of the 1930's and early 1940's called for heroic action from those whose duty it was to provide educational services in the elementary schools.... The decade beginning in 1948 was hailed as a new era in education, as indeed it was. The concepts *crowded*, *mobility*, and the *interdependence of mankind* took on a new meaning. We learned more about individual differences, emotional development, and the education of exceptional children.... We learned how to better communicate with parents. Above all, we learned how to speak out positively for elementary education—how to speak from the strength of numbers and unity, to be heard the length and breadth of America. (NEA Research Division 1958, pp. 1-2)

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