

Leaders We Need Now:

Changes in schooling and the profession from a year interrupted

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A most difficult year for schools and leadership

- 48 States ordered or recommended schools close in 2020-21.
- Social movements in response to racial violence brought protests to 2,000 U.S. cities in all 50 states, in May 2020.
- 24 million people lost jobs or saw a significant reduction in work.
- 75 percent of large school districts remained remote through the end of 2021.

- 42 percent of principals polled said that they were considering leaving the profession.
- Schools are struggling to retain staffing and continue to provide services.
- In 2020, 75 percent of preparation programs cancelled or delayed field experiences for principals and teachers, which is a requirement for graduation and certification.

A research team
from the American Institutes
for Research[®] (AIR[®]) conducted



36 focus groups



with

188 public school principals
all of whom were members
of the National Association of
Elementary School Principals (NAESP)



in

43 states



The principals represented **urban and rural communities; large and small schools;** and red, purple, and blue states.



With support from the Joyce Foundation, National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the NAESP Foundation asked us to answer the following questions:

- What changes in schooling do principals believe will remain after 2020-21, a year punctuated by a national pandemic and racial violence?
- How, if at all, have principals' responsibilities changed through 2020-21?
- What policies do principals believe are needed to support current and future principals?



Leaders We Need Now: Schools pivoted, displaying educators' resilience and grace

Scan the code and read the briefs



In principals' words.....

"You know, the word that we've used is 'pivot.' We've pivoted so much that it was like a ballerina performance every day."

"[Community members] trust us to be incredibly strong and resilient for their kids. . . . We had to find a way to continue relationships, learning, and support to kids."

"Through parts of the past year, community members showed us support and forgiveness like never before."

Leaders We Need Now: Schools pivoted, displaying educators' resilience and grace

Three themes surfaced:

- **Pivot:** The principals described schools as rapidly shifting plans, processes, and perspectives during the year.
- **Resilience:** Many principals expressed a new appreciation for educator resilience in facing seismic changes to classroom instruction, student management, and community support.
- **Grace:** Many principals expressed the need for grace and healing, and many talked about grace provided to them, at least temporarily.

In principals' words.....

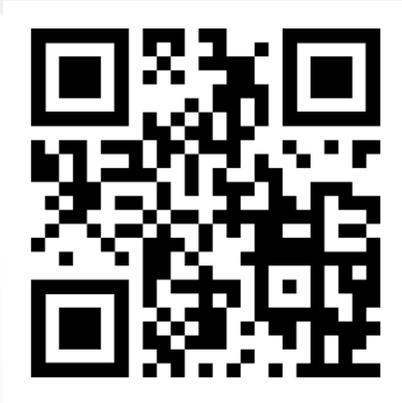
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Leaders We Need Now: Schools changed and some innovations occurred

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In principals' words....

"I know my kindergarten team. They would never have pushed themselves to give students a chance to express themselves in modern technology. My hope is that will not go away, and we will continue to use some of these technologies as an avenue for learning and teaching..."

"We are working with health organizations... We needed to do that. And our visibility within the community increased for that [health] But we also became the beating stick for the parents [who] don't want their kids out of school."

Leaders We Need Now: Schools changed and some innovations occurred

Principals identified some "silver linings" and innovations in schools:

- Scaling technology for supplementary instructional delivery to some students
- New, hybrid staffing practices, including teacher-leadership, part-time teaching and online teaching
- Reengineering student flow to reduce larger group interactions
- New partnerships with community and government agencies

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Leaders We Need Now: Principals' responsibilities and priorities are evolving

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- Take a moment to think about your work as principal or think about the principals that you know.
- After this most challenging year, identify up to two words that capture principals' experience and how the principalship is evolving.

Leaders We Need Now: Principals' responsibilities and priorities are evolving

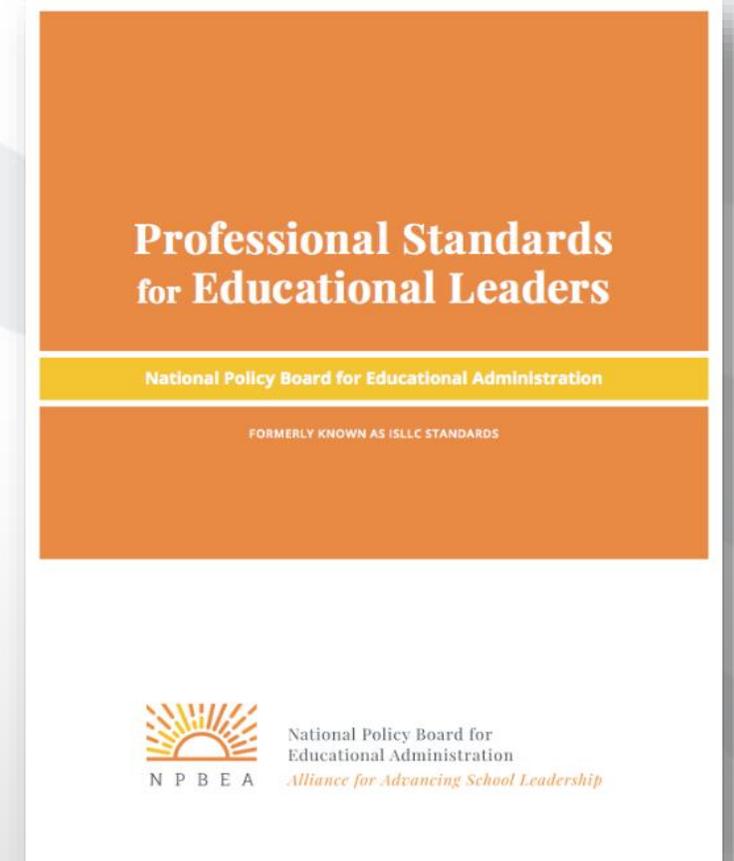
Principals' priorities have shifted in response to urgent needs within their schools, communities. Certain responsibilities have taken priorities, while others have been "back-burnered" temporarily.



- Standard 5: Community of care and support for students
- Standard 7: Professional community for teachers and staff
- Standard 8: Meaningful engagement of families and communities
- Standard 9: Operations and management



- Standard 1: Mission, vision and core values
- Standard 2: Ethics and professional norms
- Standard 3: Equity and cultural responsiveness
- Standard 4: Curriculum, instruction and assessment
- Standard 6: Professional capacity of school personnel
- Standard 10: School improvement



Leaders We Need Now: Principals' responsibilities and priorities are evolving



Two new responsibilities emerged from principals' descriptions of their work, which are not entirely captured within the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.

- **Crisis management:** Principals engaged with community health officials, emergency responders and others in proactively planning responses to crises. Principals felt that school-level engagement in crisis management planning would continue.
- **Social media and communications management:** Principals significantly increased use of social media and communications management across multiple platforms to stem misinformation and clarify messages.

Leaders We Need Now: The Findings Point Toward Policy Supports

Principal pipeline and workforce incentives

- Principal supervision support
- Improve teacher-leader recruitment
- Strengthen pre-service preparation
- Increased access to on-the-job coaching and professional learning
- Greater autonomy in choosing professional learning options

Testing and accountability

- Broaden accountability measures to include additional metrics
- Recognize performance looks different now

Honoring, recognizing and listening to principals

- Find ways to acknowledge principals' work and experiences
- Increase communication and feedback loops between statehouse and schoolhouse

Provide additional funding for infrastructure and support

- Sustain investments to meet longer term school staffing needs



Leaders We Need Now: The Findings Point Toward Policy Supports

Turn to your colleagues

- What themes resonated for you?
- What policy recommendations are actionable in your locality?
- How, if at all, does the research inform your messages, as you are speaking about the future of the profession?
- How do the recommendations map to local state and federal priorities?

