Principals’ Work and Well-Being in Ontario

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Booklet #1
Work Intensification of Principals

PART OF A SERIES OF 4 BOOKLETS
Overview

This booklet summarizes the findings of a research survey. The following results include principals’ work intensification, how it manifests, the contributing factors, and the related challenges and possibilities.

The Respondents

2419 invited
35.6% response rate

- 541 elementary principals
- 123 secondary principals
- 23 middle school principals
- 12 K-12 principals
- 5 system principals
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours Spent per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student discipline/attendance</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student well-being</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative directives</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with parents</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff well-being</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District school board office committees</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom walk-throughs</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building maintenance</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational health &amp; safety</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking hallways, playground, etc.</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal school management</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School personnel</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; instructional leadership</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-related activities</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget (central &amp; funding raised by school)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student transportation</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s own professional development</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Many principals would like to spend LESS time on student discipline and attendance (57.7%).

They would also like to decrease the number of hours spent on activities related to managerial and administrative matters such as:

- Administrative Directives (53.1%)
- Internal School Management (43.8%)
- School Board Committees (29.6%)
- Building Maintenance (28.0%)

Principals also felt that the following activities should have MORE time dedicated to them:

- Classroom Walk-Throughs (75.2%)
- Curriculum & Instructional Leadership (74.5%)
- Principal’s Own Professional Development (74.0%)
How Principals Spend Their Time

- **57.3** avg. # of hrs worked per week
- **97.5%** % of principals working more than 40 hrs per week

Hours Spent on Communication Tasks & if Less, More, or the Same Amount Should be Spent

- **10.5** e-mail
- **7.8** informal (impromptu) meetings
- **5.4** formal (pre-scheduled) meetings
- **3.8** phone (cell or landline)

- **LESS**
  - 2.2 text messaging
  - 1.7 social media
  - 1.3 other modes of communication
  - 1.1 school newsletter

Political Climate

The **TOP 10** areas where principals’ work has been VERY or EXTREMELY impacted by the political climate surrounding public education in the past 2 years:

1. Growing mental health issues among students, teachers, and parents (94.5%)
2. A system of anxiety in education (86.0%)
3. Impact of the changing government (82.2%)
4. Finite resources available to meet demanding constituents (68.9%)
5. A culture of complaints and litigation in educational system (63.8%)
6. Diversification of student discipline (59.6%)
7. Advances in Information Communication Technology (59.3%)
8. Consumer mentality among parents (57.3%)
9. Operational and building management demands (53.6%)
10. Other (50.0%)
Work-Related Challenges & Possibilities

**Principals AGREED or STRONGLY AGREED with the following statements:**

**Highest in agreement**
- I know how to get my job done
- My work requires me to always be available or “on call”
- I encounter increased demands from competing priorities from different stakeholders
- My work puts me in emotionally draining situations
- My job makes a difference in the school community
- My school is a good place to work
- My work requires extensive memory recall
- I find it impossible to take a day off or a sick day
- I find my work unpredictable
- I am unable to take a break during the work day

- I feel pressured to work long hours
- Increased threats of litigation and complaints have influenced the way I do my work
- I get behind on my work
- Increased parental engagement has influenced how I go about doing my work
- I can make my own decisions about how I do my work
- The pace of my work is too fast
- I find it impossible to attend professional development events
- I often have time to complete all my work tasks
- I have the appropriate resources to do my job

**Lowest in agreement**
- I have compassion for people at my work
- The demands of everyday work life have an impact on me
- I often feel overwhelmed by my work responsibilities
- My work negatively impacts my relationship with my family & friends
- I do not find current professional activities helpful for my work
- The role of principalship is what I expected
- I have given up trying to make big improvements or changes in my professional life
- I do not fit very well with the communities my school serves
- I do not enjoy being in a new situation that requires me to change old familiar ways of doing things
### Policy & External Influence

Principals reflected on which of the following provincial policies impacted their work **A LOT:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reg. 274/12: Hiring Practices</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safe Schools Act - Bill 212 (Progressive Discipline and School Safety)</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
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<td>Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
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<td>Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill 13 - Anti-Bullying</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety Act (incl. Bill 168 changes)</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Well-Being Strategy</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
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<td>Bill 115 - Putting Students First Act</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Day Kindergarten - Full Day Early Learning Statute Amendment Act</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Education Strategy/First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) Policy Framework</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Racism Act</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fluctuating Enrollment/School Closures (ARC)</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents in Partnership: Parent Engagement Policy</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policies related to Truth and Reconciliation</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
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<td>Collaborative Professionalism (PPM 159)</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
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Recommendations

For Ministry of Education

- align the number of policies and initiatives principals are responsible for to address the time-consuming nature of regulations, follow-up reports, and documentation
- recognize context matters and allow principals more localized discretion and decision-making
- make provincially standardized templates, sample documents, and routine tasks to alleviate principals’ paperwork and administrative tasks

For District School Boards

- streamline work processes by consolidating standardized templates, forms, samples, and routine tasks into an interactive portal/database to alleviate principals’ paperwork and administrative tasks

For Professional Associations

- advocate and lobby for members to have more staffing arrangements (e.g., co-principalship, VPs, administrative assistants, dedicated school management positions, and district resource people), and increased health and well-being benefits (e.g., counselling, physiotherapy, etc.), resource allocations, and administrative time.
- enhance its process for disseminating and sharing information with its members

For Principals

- create opportunities for collaboration
- engage in peer support and learning on effective practices
- create or revisit your existing well-being plan to determine if it includes all components of your well-being
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For the full research report, visit:

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