

MEPRI Survey Study of Maine School Administrators



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Overview of the Study

Why was this study conducted? This report is a continuation of efforts to study school leadership in Maine, specifically how Maine principals perceive their work efforts and effectiveness as educational leaders. The Maine Principal Survey was conducted in 1997, 2001, 2005, and 2011 (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012), and represents previous efforts to understand how educational leaders contribute to the health and success of schools by being instructional leaders, the supports that are needed to be successful managers, and the stressors that are placed on the principalship that contribute to attrition of the position (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). This research study was commissioned by the Maine State Legislature and conducted by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) in fall 2021 to update the Maine Principal Survey and provide a more current picture of school leadership. Specifically, this study sought to identify and a) describe current demographic patterns of school administrators and make relative comparisons to national trends, b) understand daily/weekly workload expectations, c) examine job satisfaction and consider the impact of COVID-19, and d) examine available training and supports for principals, the perceived impact as a school administrator, the challenges facing school administrators, and the supports needed to thrive in the profession.

What do you need to know to put this study into context? Since the inception of the high-stakes accountability era in PK-12 education, there has been a barrage of stressors placed on classroom instructors and school leaders (Glickman & Mette, 2020). These include efforts to raise standardized achievement, close achievement gaps between demographic groups, provide increased social services, and address how sociocultural identities based on race, ethnicity, gender, identity, and other lived experiences influence pedagogical practices (Milner IV, 2017). The Task Force in School Leadership (2016) noted the importance of recruiting, preparing, and retaining school leaders, specifically the competencies needed to create a positive school climate, manage people and professional learning, and address challenges facing schools in the 21st century. Given that the Maine Principal Survey was last conducted a decade ago, and that much has occurred in PK-12 education as well as socially, culturally, and politically during the last ten years, it was important to revisit this work and identify factors that contribute to meaningfulness and positive impact that school administrators associate with their work responsibilities. It is also critical that policymakers, researchers, and practitioners clearly understand how variables such as leadership tasks, managerial tasks, and demands of the job correlate with perceived success and meaningfulness of the work.

What methods were used to conduct this study? To learn more about the changing demographics of Maine principals, as well as to better understand how workload expectations impact job satisfaction and challenges facing school administrators, our research team used a survey design with both fixed-choice items and several open-ended questions. This allowed us to analyze quantitative data from the survey using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation,

frequency, minimum, maximum) and inferential statistics (dependent *t* tests, independent *t* tests, ANOVAs, linear regression) to examine the relationship between different variables or aspects of school leadership work. Using school staffing data obtained from the Maine Department of Education to identify school administrators and their email addresses, we develop a stratified, random, representative sample of all public and private school administrators (principals, assistant principals, school heads) based on NCES locale codes. From this sample we identified 456 (roughly half) of the approximate 900 school administrators in the state. Of the administrators identified, 16 emails were returned as undeliverable, and of the 440 administrators that remained in the sample 181 completed the survey (a 41% completion rate) in Fall 2021.

The timing of the survey is important to consider, as it occurred within the third school year affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during a surge in COVID cases due to the Omicron variant in late fall 2021. This event caused severe and continued disruption in school schedules in the 2021-22 school year, increased workload for school leaders and staff tracking COVID contacts, and more severe staffing shortages. All of these factors had a significant impact on workload and stress for school leaders, as indicated through many of the written comments they shared on the survey, as well as in the survey items contrasting their views about their work before COVID and during COVID.

A survey instrument was created based on the original work of the 2011 Maine Principal Survey with many important additions and updating. The overall Cronbach alpha was .637. The survey measures three constructs, namely: 1) training, supports, and available professional development (Cronbach alpha = .648), 2) perceived professional impact as a school administrator (Cronbach alpha = .757), and 3) challenges as a school administrator (Cronbach alpha = .701). Based on input from the MEPRI Steering Committee and the Education Committee of the legislature, as well as the literature about school principal recruitment, preparation, and retention, the survey questions addressed the following areas:

- Demographic representation of principals in Maine
- Frequency of background experience
- Workload
- Job satisfaction data
- Constructs about the school leadership profession, including:
 - Training, supports, and availability of professional development
 - Professional impact as a school administrator
 - The challenges faced by a school administrator
- Open-ended questions that resulting in themes that emerged, including:
 - What specific aspects of your current job make you want to stay in the profession?
 - What types of professional support you would like to have as a school administrator but don't feel like you currently have?

- What specific aspects of your current job make you think about leaving the profession?
- What suggestions do you have that could reduce school administrator workload?

What did we learn from the study? This MEPRI study of Maine school administrators sought to analyze the demographics of Maine principals as it relates to national trends, better understand workload expectations of school administrators in the 21st century, and examine job satisfaction as well as to contextualize the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on job satisfaction. Additionally, the survey sought to examine the supports and training provided to principals, the challenges facing principals, their perceived impact of their work as an administrator, and what support remain needed to better serve as a leader. Of the 181 respondents out of the 440 sampled (41% completion rate), we highlight key findings from the survey in this section. Percentages and frequencies provided below have been rounded for ease of reading.

Demographics

- School leaders responding to this survey predominantly came from rural areas (57), followed by towns (18%), then suburban areas (13%), then cities (11%) and are representative of the geographic diversity for school leaders in Maine.
- School leaders mostly were positioned at the elementary school level (42%), followed by the high school level (24%), then the middle school level (16%), and then a mix of grade combinations such as PK-8, 6-12, PK-12, or alternative high schools (15%), reflecting the fact that a larger portion of Maine schools and school leaders are at the elementary level.
- Principals comprised 64% of all respondents, followed by assistant principals (23%), and then a combination of either school head, teaching principal, or other (11%).
- Females comprised 57% of all school leaders, followed by 39% males, and 2% non-binary or leaders who preferred not to respond, again, reflecting that many of Maine's elementary schools are led by female administrators.
- An overwhelming majority of principals who responded to the survey identified as White (94%), with 3% of all other leaders who identified as another race or who preferred not to respond.
- Almost all respondents identified as not Hispanic/Latinx/of Spanish Origin (93%) with another 5% who chose not to respond.
- Most of the respondents were principals who have earned a master's degree (59%), with another 27% having earned a CAS/an EdS, 9% having earned a doctorate degree, and 3% having earned a bachelor's degree.
- Just under half reported working with no assistant principals (45%), while another 49% indicated they work with one assistant principal, and 5% work with two assistant principals.

Background Experience

- Administrators in this survey indicated they had 24 years of experience as an educator, with 4 being the least years of experience as an educator and 48 being the most years of experience as an educator.
- Administrators in this survey indicated they had 10 years of experience as a principal, with zero being the least years of experience as a principal and 35 being the most years of experience as a principal.
- On average, administrators indicated they have 5 years of experience as an administrator in their current school building.
- On average, administrators indicated they have held 2 different administrative positions over the course of their career as an educator.
- On average, administrators indicated they have served under 3 different superintendents over the course of their career as an administrator.

Workload

- Administrators indicated they supervise 28 teachers as part of their administrative workload.
- Administrators indicated they supervise 14 support staff as part of their administrative workload.
- On average, administrators indicated they are required to conduct 4 observations of each teacher as part of their administrative workload.
- On average, administrators indicated they work 54 hours each week.
- On average, administrators indicated they spend 4 hours each week analyzing instructional data.
- On average, administrators indicated they spent 11 hours each week responding to COVID-19.
- Written comments emphasized workload as the chief factor that makes school leaders think about leaving the profession. The second most often cited factors were job stress and frequently coping with crises or tensions from negative reactions from a divided community. High workload and stress were associated with negative health impacts and reduced work-life balance. Some of the workload in fall 2021 was specifically related to implementing practices to deal with COVID. Administrators shared their ideas about ways workload could be reduced, namely:
 - Additional support/staffing to deal with requirements placed on school districts, along with a reduction in demands such as: less academic testing, changes in special education rules, reducing or streamlining reporting requirements and the teacher evaluation program, and more support for COVID-19 management.
 - More sharing of managerial workloads, specifically reporting requirements, among administrators in the district but also through the increased use of teacher

leaders to meet the requirements of teacher supervision and evaluation requirements.

- More help to address high turnover positions and the general lack of a qualified pool of applicants to fill vacancies, some of which is tied to low funding for schools as well as low pay across the state.
- Increased access to support for students' mental health needs, particularly addressing the increased behaviors observed in the past several years that tend to be associated with trauma experienced by families.

Job Satisfaction

- When asked about job satisfaction on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 = lowest level and 10 = highest level), administrators answered with the following:
 - Overall job satisfaction prior to COVID-19 averaged 7.66 while overall job satisfaction during COVID-19 averaged 5.31
 - This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$)
 - Job stress prior to COVID-19 averaged 6.20 while job stress during COVID-19 averaged 7.74
 - This represents a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.001$)
 - Ability to engage in self-care prior to COVID-19 averaged 5.52 compared to 3.68 during COVID-19
 - This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$)
 - Satisfaction with mentoring and support prior to COVID-19 averaged 5.41 compared to 4.23 during COVID-19
 - This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$)
 - Salary satisfaction prior to COVID-19 averaged 6.49 compared to 5.74 during COVID-19
 - This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$)
 - Likelihood of leaving the profession prior to COVID-19 averaged 3.43 compared to 5.13 during COVID-19
 - This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$)
 - Likelihood of leaving the profession in the next 2 years averaged 4.84
 - Likelihood of leaving the profession in the next 5 years averaged 5.82
- Written comments from the open-ended questions yielded themes related to job satisfaction and factors that make school leaders want to stay in the profession, namely:
 - Enjoyment and satisfaction from direct interactions and relationships with students, and supporting the learning and development of students to help prepare them for adulthood
 - Satisfaction in working with teachers to support their learning and professional growth as instructors, encouraging collaboration among teachers, and a positive school culture to support student success

Training, Supports, and Availability of Professional Development

- The top third of the questions that had the highest mean responses regarding training, support structures, and professional development for Maine principals were a) experience as a teacher contributing to success as an educational leader, b) use of teacher leaders, c) graduate degree training, and d) support from the community.
- The bottom third of the questions that had the lowest mean responses regarding training, support structures, and professional development for Maine principals were a) support from the district level, b) professional development offered within the state, c) professional development at the national level, and d) professional development offered within the school district.
- Principals were more positive ($M = 3.17$) than assistant principals ($M = 3.10$)
- Females were more positive ($M = 3.15$) than males ($M = 3.13$)
- Administrators with a bachelor's degree were the most positive ($M = 3.23$), followed by those with a doctorate ($M = 3.17$), then a masters ($M = 3.14$), and those with a CAS/EdS were the least positive ($M = 3.13$)
- Administrators at the middle school level were most positive ($M = 3.23$), followed by those at the elementary level ($M = 3.14$), then those at various blended levels ($M = 3.11$), and those at the high school level were the least positive ($M = 3.10$)
- Administrators in suburban locales were most positive ($M = 3.26$), followed by those in rural locales ($M = 3.13$), then those in city locales ($M = 3.11$), and those in town locales were the least positive ($M = 3.10$)
- Administrators who work with 1 assistant principal were most positive ($M = 3.21$), followed by those who work with 2 assistant principals ($M = 3.12$), then those who are not a principal ($M = 3.10$), and those with no assistant principals were the least positive ($M = 3.07$)
- Written comments from the open-ended questions yielded themes related to professional support that administrators would like but don't currently have, namely:
 - More support from the superintendent and more professional development from the district in general, as well as opportunities for both principals and assistant principals to meet more often with superintendents and other leaders in the district, a desire to be a part of the decision-making process in a district, and to have more mentoring provided both within the district and from experienced leaders regionally
 - More opportunities for professional connections and community with job-alike leaders, both within the district and regionally, to share ideas, collaborate and engage in professional development
 - More mentoring support both within the district and regionally to help learn additional strategies for leadership and share challenges with the professional role and work-life balance

- Support, respect and appreciation from the public and policymakers to understand the daily demands of the job, especially the demands that have occurred as a result of the COVID pandemic, and to value the important work taking place in schools

Professional Impact as a School Administrator

- The top third of the questions that had the highest mean responses regarding professional impact as a school administrator for Maine principals were a) having a positive influence on the lives of students, b) having a positive influence on the lives of teachers, and c) being happy with leadership efforts to make their school a more equitable place for all students.
- The bottom third of the questions that had the lowest mean responses regarding professional impact as a school administrator were a) the amount of time spent on professional development, b) the amount of time giving feedback to teachers, and c) the amount of time spent on state accountability requirements.
- Principals were more positive ($M = 2.89$) than assistant principals ($M = 2.71$)
 - This difference was statistically significant at $p < .05$
- Males were more positive ($M = 2.99$) than females ($M = 2.75$)
 - This difference was statistically significant at $p < .05$
- Administrators with a bachelor's degree were the most positive ($M = 3.04$), followed by those with a masters ($M = 2.87$), then a CAS/EdS ($M = 2.81$), and those with a doctorate were the least positive ($M = 2.77$)
- Administrators at the high school level were most positive ($M = 2.89$), followed by those at the elementary level ($M = 2.88$), then those at various blended levels ($M = 2.80$), and those at the middle school level were the least positive ($M = 2.76$)
- Administrators in rural locales were most positive ($M = 2.90$), followed by those in suburban locales ($M = 2.86$), then those in town locales ($M = 2.76$), and those in city locales were the least positive ($M = 2.70$)
- Administrators who work with 1 assistant principal were most positive ($M = 2.87$), followed by those who work with no assistant principals ($M = 2.85$), then those who are not a principal ($M = 2.84$), and those who work with 2 assistant principals were the least positive ($M = 2.78$)
- In their written comments, school administrators noted a strong sense of job satisfaction from the positive impact of their professional work in schools to support student learning and well-being, help families in the community, and their contribution to positive outcomes more broadly for society.

Challenges Faced by a School Administrator

- The top third of the questions that had the highest mean responses regarding challenges as a school administrator for Maine principals were a) finding enough qualified teachers

to hire, b) the societal disagreement about the response to COVID, and c) balancing work and personal commitments.

- The bottom third of the questions that had the lowest mean responses regarding challenges as a school administrator were a) societal disagreement about socioeconomic status and class in the US, b) societal disagreement about race in the US, c) lack of support from the community to implement change.
- Principals were more concerned ($M = 2.93$) than assistant principals ($M = 2.91$)
- Females were more concerned ($M = 2.95$) than males ($M = 2.86$)
- Administrators with a CAS/EdS degree were the most concerned ($M = 2.98$), followed by those with a bachelors ($M = 2.92$), then a masters ($M = 2.91$), and those with a doctorate were the least concerned ($M = 2.81$)
- Administrators at the various blended school level were most concerned ($M = 3.06$), followed by those at the elementary and middle school level (both $M = 2.90$), and those at the high school level were the least concerned ($M = 2.86$)
- Administrators in rural locales were most concerned ($M = 2.96$), followed by those in city locales ($M = 2.87$), then those in town locales ($M = 2.86$), and those in suburban locales were the least concerned ($M = 2.83$)
- Administrators who work with 2 assistant principals were most concerned ($M = 3.00$), then those who work with one assistant principal ($M = 2.96$), then those who are not a principal ($M = 2.91$), and those who work with no assistant principals were the least concerned ($M = 2.87$)
- Written comments from the open-ended questions yielded themes related to challenges faced by administrators that contribute to them wanting to leave the profession, namely:
 - Increased workload expectations and working hours, particularly increased demands of the job, along with the need to implement COVID-19 rules and regulations
 - Increased job stress that results from high workload and that negatively impact health and contribute to a lack of work-life balance
 - Managing crises or tensions within schools but also outside of schools, particularly as it relates to public hostility over COVID-19 restrictions, as well as coping with negative reactions, lack of support for school improvement efforts, and the political division around diversity, equity, and inclusion that results in a lack of trust and respect for educators and school leaders.

What did we conclude overall from the study? Our stratified, random, representative survey of all public and private school administrators in Maine provides the first comprehensive study of Maine principals since the Maine Principal Survey was last conducted by the University of Maine 10 years ago. Between that time and now, a new set of social, economic, and cultural challenges have been inserted into the education arena. Results from this study provide critical information about Maine’s educational leadership workforce, how it compares nationally,

significant changes since the 2011 survey study, and what can be done to support the professional needs of the principalship to strengthen retention.

As Maine continues to diversify racially and ethnically, one of the greatest takeaways is to be intentional about representation in Maine educational leadership positions. As Milner IV (2017) points out, addressing the sociocultural identities of students, specifically identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, identity, and other lived experiences, will influence pedagogical and student achievement outcomes. While 56.9% of administrators who participated in this survey identified as women, which can be seen as a success for gender representation in Maine schools, an overwhelming majority of participants identified as White (93.9%) and not Hispanic/Latinx/of Spanish Origin (92.3%). Maine's schools and communities are predicted to become more racially and ethnically diverse in the coming decades, as the rest of the nation (Horsford et al., 2019). Having more diversity in school leadership will be an important factor in helping to support and inspire youth toward academic success and school completion (Khalifa, 2018).

Beyond sociocultural identities of Maine administrators, other conclusions can be drawn from this study that give us insight into administrators across the state. In general, Maine's administrators continue to be highly educated as 85.1% of those who participated in the study indicated they had a MEd or a CAS/EdS, a statistic that should be celebrated. However, professional education cannot solve all the challenges facing Maine administrators and the communities they serve. Just under half of the respondents (45.4%) indicated they work with no assistant principal, a statistic that underscores funding inequities throughout Maine schools and creates managerial and leadership issues, and challenges coping with high workload. These leadership issues are exacerbated by an aging administrator population, highlighted by the average participant in this study having over 24 years of experience as an educator, putting many close to retirement age, as well as superintendent turnover highlighted by the average participant in this study having served under more than three different superintendents.

Since the start of COVID-19, the perceptions of administrators who participated in this study show that overall job satisfaction has fallen, job stress has risen, the ability to engage in self-care has fallen, satisfaction with mentoring and support has fallen, salary satisfaction has fallen, and the likelihood of leaving the profession has risen – *all statistically significantly*. While these data cannot predict what will happen with principals' decisions to stay or leave the profession, they do suggest that principals are under significant pressure to manage increasing high workloads and stressful professional experiences that can lead to exiting the profession. Based on this study, principals supervise a wide range of teachers, ranging from two in the smallest schools to 75 in the larger schools. The same is true for support staff, which in this study ranged from 0 to 108. The maximums of these ranges represent a number far too large to provide ongoing and meaningful feedback about work quality. Concerns about the high workload associated with school leadership and job stress were the most common themes in principals' written comments and reasons they think about leaving the profession. School leaders suggested more staffing including administrative positions are needed to address the workload, and also suggested the state streamline or reduce the burden on schools associated with required

reporting, the teacher evaluation system, testing and other mandates. Principals recommended that teacher leaders could be used to reduce the managerial workload of principals, and more work might be shared among other administrative leaders within the district. On average, findings from this study show principals work 54 hours per week – which means most principals are working roughly 11 hours per workday.

Another important set of findings from this study relates to the types of professional support that school leaders said they don't currently have but need to be successful. Principals clearly communicated the desire for more support from their superintendents and more professional development from the district in general. They also stressed the need for more opportunity to connect with professional networks and job-alike groups to share ideas and gain professional support. Finally, school leaders voiced their desire to be more engaged with the decision-making process with central office administrators and to have more opportunities to be mentored, both from superintendents but also from regional professional groups. Finally, findings from this study show that working with students and teachers, supporting student growth and teachers' professional growth, are the most valued aspects of the professional role that make school leaders want to stay in the profession. When principals feel they have a positive impact on students and can focus on instructional leadership, as opposed to managerial tasks, they feel they can have a significant and positive impact through their work and their work is meaningful. The ability to meet the demands of their job also has a significant and positive association with the perceived meaningfulness of the work, and supporting the development of students and professional growth of teachers should be aspects of training and retention efforts moving forward for the support of Maine principals.

What are some potential implications for education policy and/ or practice? Findings from this study provide comprehensive and insightful implications for policymakers and practitioners to consider moving forward in the 21st century in Maine. The first study of Maine principals in a decade, this report offers robust, comprehensive, and representative data and findings that can and should be used for improving the recruitment, professional development and retention of school principals. Some implications from the findings of this study for policy and practice in Maine include the following:

- **School Leadership Demographics:** Although this survey indicated an increase in the percentage school leaders in Maine who identify as female, the low level of racial and ethnic diversity among Maine school leaders is a concern. There is a need for on-going effort and creative strategies for recruiting, developing, and hiring school leaders that will lead to a diversification of Maine administrators. This can be accomplished through equal employment opportunity (EEO) trainings, pipeline development and grow your own preparation programs that tap members of the community for careers in education. As a profession, the education system in Maine has an opportunity to support the diversification of the sociocultural identities of administrators that are more representative of the public they serve. Currently, 87% of students in Maine identify as

White while 94% of school principals identified as White in this survey. Demographic experts predict a browning of the US in the coming decades (Horsford et al., 2019). Beyond simply maintaining demographic representation, it is important for students to have educators as role models who share various identities as this is tied to school success and achievement (Khalifa, 2018). As such, ensuring Maine has a wide variety of sociocultural identity representation is important, particularly as it relates to understanding the lived experiences of students based on race, ethnicity, SES, gender, orientation/identity, spatiality, and ability, among other identities.

- **School Administrative Staffing and Funding**: Almost half of the school leaders in this study (45%) indicated they do not work with an assistant principal, and most indicated that they see the workload as difficult if not impossible for a single school leader to handle and want more help. Examining funding formulas to look at support for administrative positions, administrative assistants, and teacher leader stipends could help address some of the managerial issues exacerbated in smaller schools and begin to negate the professional isolation that many of the school leaders in the study indicated. More use of teacher leadership to support the work in schools would also help relieve principals' workload. In general, finding ways to support principals as workloads increase will be critical for recruitment and retention in the profession moving forward.
- **Addressing Pipeline Needs**: Based on the data from this study, Maine principals have, on average, 24 years of experience, putting many close to retirement age. Focusing on recruiting early-to-mid career educators to move into the principalship could help support the pipeline and candidates for filling school leadership positions. Equally important is making the position attractive enough for educators to want to step into the role. This will require policymakers and practitioners to rethink and reimagine what school is and what it should be, specifically focusing on supporting efforts that address societal inequities, students' social and emotional development, community engagement and academic outcomes. But it may also require funding and changes in school and district organization to provide sufficient staffing to support the work of schools.
- **Workload and Job Stress Challenges**: Perhaps of greatest insight are the data about the workload and job satisfaction of administrators in Maine. Based on this study, larger schools in Maine require principals to supervise upwards of 75 teachers and 108 support staff, a number far too large to provide ongoing and meaningful feedback about work quality. The funding of assistant principal positions and increased use of teacher leaders to help with supervision requirements would greatly help alleviate administrator workload. Freeing up time for principals to address instructional leadership needed in schools and collaborating with professionals on how to best address the mental health of students would contribute to more positive outcomes for student learning and wellbeing, as well as benefit communities. Other suggestions from school leaders related to reducing and streamlining state requirements for reporting and educator evaluation. Prior MEPRI research found administrators struggled to manage the workload associated with the

number of teacher observations, evaluations and support they needed to provide to educators in their schools (Mette et al., 2019).

- **Job Satisfaction:** Findings from this study highlight that job satisfaction has dropped significantly since the start of COVID-19 and that the likelihood of leaving the profession has risen significantly from the start of COVID-19. As policymakers examine the factors that impact job satisfaction for administrators, they should consider opportunities to restructure education systems to refocus practices that lead to more humanistic outcomes – including the needed focus on social and emotional development of students – as well as the need for administrators to focus more on instructional leadership, which is more strongly correlated with improved teacher practices and student academic achievement than managerial administrative effort (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). This will also require policymakers to consider factors that are positively associated with job meaningfulness, including the nature of the leadership tasks, opportunity for positive impacts on student and teacher development, and the sense that administrators can meet the demands of their job by contributing to the development of a more equitable society.

How robust are the findings? The findings from this study are the most comprehensive data collected about Maine principals since 2012. To learn more about the changing demographics of Maine principals, as well as to better understand how workload expectations impact job satisfaction and challenges facing school administrators, our research team used a survey design with an open response section that included several open-ended questions. Using school staffing data obtained from the Maine Department of Education to identify school administrators and their email addresses, we develop a stratified, random, representative sample of all public and private school administrators (principals, assistant principals, school heads) based on NCES locale codes. From this sample we identified 456 (roughly half) of the approximate 900 school administrators in the state. Of the administrators identified, 16 emails were returned as undeliverable, and of the 440 administrators that remained in the sample 181 completed the survey (a 41% completion rate) in Fall 2021, resulting in a very strong response rate and a survey sample that is highly representative of school leaders statewide in Maine.

Introduction

This report was conducted by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI), commissioned by the Maine State Legislature, to understand how Maine school administrators (principals, assistant principals, heads of school, etc.) perceive their experiences in leadership roles. This survey updates information obtained from previous surveys, *The Maine Principal Study*, last conducted by the University of Maine in 2011, to examine job role demands and job-related stressors. These studies help provide information for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to understand how Maine principals experience their work and conceptualize their effectiveness as educational leaders.

The intent of this study was multifaceted. We created a survey instrument to gather data that could be collected and analyzed to look for shifts and changes within the profession on a yearly basis. Our study sought to gather more detailed information about the demographic characteristics of school administrators in Maine, including but not limited to location (NCES classification of either city, suburban, town, or rural), school level, gender, race, ethnicity, and highest degree earned. Other information included total years as an educator, total years as an administrator, the number of different administrative positions held, and the number of different superintendents served under. We also sought to understand workload expectations and factors related to job satisfaction. Questions related to workload asked about the number of supervised teachers, number of hours worked each week and number of hours responding to COVID-19 each week. Some topics related to job satisfaction included: level of stress, ability to engage in self-care, mentoring and/or support received, and likelihood of leaving the profession. In addition to these important data, we created Likert scaled items in the survey to more deeply understand aspects and perceptual differences among school leaders, including a) available training and supports for principals, b) the perceived impact as a school administrator, and c) the challenges facing school administrators. We also created open-ended questions that asked participants to share aspects of their current job that make them want to either stay or leave the profession, support structures they would like to have as a school administrator but don't currently have, and suggestions for reducing administrative workload.

From this study we sought to analyze the demographics of Maine principals, specifically to better understand the stressors administrators in the Maine public PK-12 education system

experience as well as what they find rewarding. Additionally, this study sought to give voice to educational leaders and to gather their input regarding support structures they would like to see provided, and to hear suggestions about how to reduce their workload. With the data from this study, we believe the State of Maine has an important opportunity to better inform the field of education as we transition further into the 21st century, specifically what suggestions can be considered to recruit, train, and retain high quality school leaders who will ensure high quality school systems throughout the state.

Background

Research across the United States (US) has documented the challenges facing school administrators, specifically factors that contribute to difficulty in attracting and retaining people into educational leadership (Davis et al., 2005; Lee & Mao, 2020). Research at the state level in Maine mirrors those challenges, perhaps even magnifying some of the difficulties in attracting and retaining high quality leaders in more rural areas (Task Force, 2016). One challenge relates to changes in the job role itself in recent years, which is shifting from that of a building manager to one of an instructional leader, someone who must be able to communicate with, lead, and respond to the needs of multiple stakeholder groups in the community a school serves (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Task Force, 2016). This shift demands new knowledge and skillsets that administrators need support to develop over time.

There is also evidence to suggest that the workload for principals has increased since the inception of No Child Left Behind (Mitani, 2018), with school administrators taking on additional roles in their position in order to complying with numerous state and federal initiatives and reporting mandates (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Task Force, 2016). For example, Maine's requirement for all teachers and principals to be observed and formally evaluated on a regular basis has significantly added to principals' workload each year (Mette et al., 2017). Moreover, school leaders must increasingly be able to navigate the political divisions in the US that produce economic, social, and cultural divisions within the schoolhouse.

As experienced principals are aging out of the workforce and retiring, depending on the availability of certified principals in various states and communities this may lead to a larger number of principals who are younger and/or less experienced as school leaders (Hill et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2020). Administrators who are less experienced need mentoring and on-

going professional development to ensure they successfully transition to the principalship (Zepeda et al., 2018). While some district leaders may feel they are providing sufficient supports, school leaders often report they do not find those supports readily available or the time to engage in them when needed (Fairman et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2020; Mette et al., 2017).

The combination of changing job role demands, increased workload, and lack of professional supports are all factors contributing to reports of increased job stress and greater likelihood administrators will choose to leave the profession (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012; Johnson et al., 2020; Task Force, 2016). In rural areas of Maine and elsewhere, turnover in school and district leadership is generally higher as these administrators seek jobs in higher paying districts, clearer role definition as an administrator, and the economies of scale afforded in larger communities (Hansen, 2018; Johnson et al., 2020). As such, both Maine and the US more broadly continue to struggle with the problem of recruitment and retention for school leadership (Davis et al., 2005; Inst. for Educational Leadership, 2000; Johnson et al., 2020; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Task Force, 2016).

While there is some research on the status of the principalship, there are also gaps in the literature. One area that has not yet been well researched is how school and district administrators are responding to changes in social values and issues which can create conflict as communities and educators grapple with how to address these issues, such as racism and equity, through their curricula as well as school policies and practices (Cormier, 2021; Mette, 2022a). There is evidence that Maine school and district leaders are increasingly seeking guidance and professional development to help lead conversations and change in their school systems, and less experienced leaders may feel particularly unprepared for this aspect of their job role (Fairman et al., 2021; Mette, 2022b).

Methodology

This study used a survey design with both fixed-choice items and open-ended response questions to examine the changing demographics of Maine principals, as well as to better understand how workload expectations impact job satisfaction and challenges facing school administrators. This methodology allowed us to better understand the demographics of Maine administrators, as well as their workload expectations and job satisfaction. Additionally, by using a survey design, we sought to better understand the perceptions of a large, representative sample

of Maine principals through quantitative analysis regarding: a) available training and supports for principals, b) the perceived impact as a school administrator, and c) the challenges facing school administrators. We used several open-ended questions to gather more nuanced data that were analyzed qualitatively. The following research questions guided the study:

- How do Maine school administrators view and experience their job?
- What challenges do they experience in their leadership role?
- What professional supports do they have and what additional supports would they like to have?
- What factors and experiences influence their overall job satisfaction and intention to remain or leave the profession?

Using school staffing data obtained from the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) to identify school administrators and their email addresses, we developed a stratified, random, representative sample of all public and private school administrators (principals, assistant principals, school heads) based on NCES locale codes. From this sample we identified 456 (roughly half) of the approximate 900 school administrators in the state. Of the administrators identified, 16 emails were returned as undeliverable (most likely due to administrators retiring or moving to new districts), and of the 440 administrators that remained in the sample 181 completed the survey (a 41% completion rate) in late fall 2021.

The survey was developed based on the 2011 principal survey instrument and modified to incorporate additional variables and analysis capabilities. This allowed for some longitudinal comparison with findings between the 2011 and 2021 survey results. We sought input from current and former Maine principals to refine and validate the survey content and the questions and piloted the instrument with that group. The confidential survey was distributed through Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool used by the University of Maine. The same survey was given to all participants, and participants received three reminder emails to encourage a greater response rate. For more information regarding the survey see Appendix A. Two of the co-authors are former principals and have professional experience to validate the survey results through the data analysis.

The survey included a variety of force-choice response items to collect demographic data, four-point Likert scaled items (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree) to measure perceptions of Maine principal workload expectations and job satisfaction, and four open-ended questions

addressing aspects of the principalship that are rewarding and challenging, as well as suggestions for greater support as a principal. Forced-choice demographic questions asked questions about location (NCES classification of either city, suburban, town, or rural), school level, gender, race, ethnicity, and highest degree earned. Other questions included total years as an educator, total years as an administrator, the number of different administrative positions held, and the number of different superintendents served under. We also sought to understand workload expectations and factors related to job satisfaction. Questions related to workload asked about the number of supervised teachers, number of hours worked each week, and number of hours responding to COVID-19 each week. Questions related to job satisfaction included level of stress, ability to engage in self-care, mentoring and/or support received, and likelihood of leaving the profession.

The four-point Likert scaled items in the survey explored administrators' opinions on three different constructs, namely: a) available training and supports for principals, b) the perceived impact as a school administrator, and c) the challenges facing school administrators. In total, 31 items were used. To establish internal reliability of the instrument, an overall Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated ($\alpha = .637$). Three additional Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated on the individual constructs themselves, which included 12 available training and supports for principals items ($\alpha = 0.648$), 10 perceived impacts as a school administrator items ($\alpha = .757$), and 9 challenges facing school administrators items ($\alpha = .701$). The accepted value of a Cronbach alpha is 0.6 – 0.7 or above (van Griethuijsen et al., 2015; Taber, 2018) as a test of reliability.

Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, minimum, maximum). Additionally, data were analyzed using inferential statistics (dependent *t* tests, independent *t* tests, ANOVAs, linear regression) to examine the relationship between different variables or aspects of school leadership work. Demographic data were also analyzed using the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data that helped identify the school locale classification. In addition to NCES classification, demographic variables helped inform sociocultural identities of school leaders (race, ethnicity, gender, etc.) as well as workloads and job satisfaction.

Four open-ended questions asked principals to determine what aspects of their current job make them want to stay in the profession, as well as what professional supports they would like to have as administrators that they feel they don't currently have. Principals were also asked to

comment on what aspects of their job make them think about leaving the profession and what suggestions they might offer to help reduce administrator workload. Most administrators (n = 144) responded to the open-ended questions.

Qualitative data from the open-ended comments were analyzed using the standard practice of closely reading each anonymous response and open-coding the written comments topically to generate a set of common thematic categories for each question (Charmaz, 1995; Miles et al., 2020). The frequencies of the thematic categories were then tabulated quantitatively to understand which views were more prevalent than others. Analytical memos were developed to explore specific themes in more depth, for example, how administrators' views varied on a particular topic. Representative comments for each theme were collected and reviewed by the research team. The qualitative findings were interwoven where appropriate with the quantitative findings in this report.

The timing of the survey is important to consider, as it occurred within the third school year affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during a surge in COVID cases due to the Omicron variant in late fall 2021. This event caused severe and continued disruption in school schedules in the 2021-22 school year, increased workload for school leaders and staff tracking COVID contacts, and more severe staffing shortages. All of these factors had a significant impact on workload and stress for school leaders, as indicated through many of the written comments they shared on the survey, as well as in the survey items contrasting their views about their work before COVID and during COVID.

Findings

This section of the report is organized into five different sub-sections, each providing insight into the lived experiences of Maine administrators and their perspectives about their jobs as educational leaders. In Part I, we describe the present demographic data and background experience of Maine administrators, which provides the first update of this information since the last Maine Principals' study in 2011. In Part II, we present survey data detailing workload expectations and job satisfaction of Maine principals. Part III describes perceptions of principals about training, support structures, and availability of professional development. In Part IV, we detail the survey data as it relates to perceptions of principals and their professional impact as a

school administrator. In Part V, we present survey data regarding the perceived challenges faced by Maine school administrators. Readers should note that while our survey included school leaders with different job titles (principal, assistant principal and school head), we generally refer to the participants in this report with the common title of “principal” or “school leader” for ease in reading.

Part I. Demographics and Background Experience

This first section of the survey collected information regarding the demographics and background experience of school administrators in Maine. In this section, we describe NCES location, school level, position, gender, race, ethnicity, and highest degree earned. We also describe the average years of experience as an educator, total years as an administrator, the number of different administrative positions held over the course of a career, and the number of different superintendents an administrator has served under. These data help inform who represents Maine administrators in the field and gives insights into their professional experience over the course of their careers.

Locale. Regarding the location of principals from across the State of Maine, our study provides a fairly representative sample of all principals in Maine (see Table 1 for details). Only 10.5% of principals in the study came from schools in cities, while an overwhelming majority of principals in the study (57.5%) came from rural schools. As one of the most rural states in the US (US Census, 2021), this study confirms the need to focus on the experiences of principals serving in rural schools and how their work demands might differ from places with larger population hubs.

Table 1: Maine Principals by Basic NCES Locale.

NCES Locale	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent in study	Percent in Maine
City	19	10.5	10.5
Suburban	24	13.3	18.9
Town	32	17.7	18.1
Rural	104	57.5	52.5

A closer look at the survey data by NCES distinct locale categories reveals how the survey is, again, fairly representative of Maine (see Table 2 for details). Policymakers and researchers can use these data to examine how the size of municipalities and the proximity to population hubs create different leadership opportunities and challenges. These data are particularly important to examine when considering how many principals live in towns or rural

areas that typically lack a critical mass of peers for new principals to learn from or to collaborate with in school improvement efforts, as this type of professional development is typically afforded in suburban areas and cities.

Table 2: Maine Principals by Distinct NCES Locale.

NCES Locale	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent in study	Percent in Maine
City Small	19	10.5	10.5
Suburban Midsize	16	8.8	13.6
Suburban Small	8	4.4	5.3
Town Fringe	8	4.4	4.3
Town Distant	12	6.6	8.1
Town Remote	12	6.6	5.7
Rural Fringe	28	15.5	17.4
Rural Distant	49	27.1	26.4
Rural Remote	27	14.9	8.7

School Level. The survey results indicate that many of the responding Maine principals (42%) serve at the elementary level. This percentage is lower than the national average, which is around 68% of all schools being identified as elementary schools nationally (NCES, 2022). However, this could be lower because of the higher amount of combined school levels, which was 14.9% in this study. The data also indicate that 16% of participants were from the middle school level and 24.3% were from the high school level. This is higher than the national average, which identifies roughly 24% of all schools in the US as secondary.

Table 3: Maine Principals by School Level.

School Level	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent
Elementary	76	42
Middle School	29	16
High School	44	24.3
Other (PK-8, 6-12, PK-12, Alternative HS)	27	14.9

Position. Regarding the different leadership positions held, 63.5% of all participants in the study were principals, with another 23.2% being assistant principals. Less traditional or popular positions made up a smaller percentage of the study, with 4.4% of participants being a school head (typically in private schools) and 5% being a teaching principal. Of those sampled, only 1.1% identified as some other leadership position, such as a director or instructional coach. Table 4 below provides more details.

Table 4: Maine Principals by Position.

Position	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent
Assistant Principal	42	23.2
Principal	115	63.5
School Head	8	4.4
Teaching Principal	9	5
Other (Director, Coach, etc.)	2	1.1

Gender. The survey results indicate that 56.9% of principals identified as female, which is up from 53% who identified as a woman from the last Maine Principals’ Study in 2011 (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). This is slightly higher than national statistics, which show that 54% of US principals identify as female (NCES, 2022). Another 38.7% identified as male, which is lower than national statistics which states 46% of US principals identify as male (NCES, 2022). An additional 1.7% of the study identified as non-binary or preferred not to reply. Table 5 below provides more details.

Table 5: Maine Principals by Gender

Gender	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent
Female	103	56.9
Male	70	38.7
Non-binary	1	0.6
Prefer not to reply	2	1.1

Race. Regarding the race of principals in the study, 93.9% of all those who participated identified as White. This is much higher than national statistics which states 78% of US principals identify as White (NCES, 2022), but it is also representative of the percentage of people in Maine who identify as White (US Census, 2020). Another 1.1% identified as Asian, which is representative of national statistics (NCES, 2022). An additional 2.2% preferred not to reply. Table 6 below provides more details.

Table 6: Maine Principals by Race.

Race	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent
Asian	2	1.1
White	170	93.9
Prefer not to reply	4	2.2

Ethnicity. Looking at the results regarding the ethnicity of principals in the study, 92.3% of all participants identified as not Hispanic/not Latinx/not of Spanish origin. Another 5% of participants preferred not to reply. National statistics suggest roughly 9% of principals identify as

Hispanic/Latinx/of Spanish origin (NCES, 2022). As such, Maine is far lower than the national average in ethnic representation and diversity among school leaders. Table 7 below provides more details.

Table 7: Maine Principals by Ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent
Not Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish Origin	167	92.3
Prefer not to reply	9	5

Highest Degree Earned. The survey results indicate 93.9% of Maine principals have a Masters level education or above, a number slightly less than the 95% of respondents who indicated they had a Masters level education or above from the last Maine Principals’ Study in 2011 (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). The level of education in Maine is slightly lower than the national statistics, which state roughly 98% of US principals have a Masters level education or above (NCES, 2022). Table 8 below provides additional details for comparison.

Table 8: Maine Principals by Level of Education.

Highest Degree Earned	Frequency (N = 181)	Percent in study	Percent nationally
Bachelors	6	3.3	2
Masters	106	58.6	62
CAS/EdS	48	26.5	26
Doctorate	16	8.8	11

Experience as an Educator. Regarding the amount of experience as an educator, principals in the study had an average of 24.21 years of experience. The minimum experience of education of an administrator in the study was four years and the maximum experience of education of an administrator in the study was 48 years. This is fairly steady when comparing data to the last time the Maine Principals’ Study was conducted in 2011 where principals averaged 25 years of experience (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). Table 9 below provides more details.

Table 9: Maine Principals by Total Years of Experience as an Educator.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Total Years as Educator	176	4	48	24.21	8.867

Experience as an Administrator. The survey results indicate administrators in the study had 10.06 years of experience as an administrator, which was slightly less than the respondents who indicated they had 12 years of administrative experience from the last Maine Principals’ Study in 2011 (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). Additionally, the average participant in this study has served in their current administrative position for 5.32 years, which again was slightly less than the respondents who indicated they had served for about 7 years in their current administrative position as noted in the last Maine Principals’ study in 2011 (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). Table 10 below provides more details.

Table 10: Maine Principals by Years as Administrator and as Administrator in Current School.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Years as Administrator	176	0	35	10.06	7.737
Years as Administrator at Current School	176	0	24	5.32	4.622

Number of Administrative Positions Held. Looking at the results regarding the number of administrative positions held by principals in the study, on average principals had held 2.17 different administrative positions in their career. The minimum number of different administrative positions held in the study was 0 and the maximum number of different administrative positions held in the study was 6. Table 11 below provides more details.

Table 11: Maine Principals by Number of Different Administrative Positions Held.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Number of Different Administration Positions Held	175	1	6	2.17	1.228

Number of Superintendents Served Under. The survey results indicate participants in the study had served under 3.26 superintendents on average. The minimum number of different superintendents served under was 0 and the maximum number of different superintendents served under was 16. Table 12 below provides more details.

Table 12: Maine Principals by Number of Different Superintendents Served Under.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Number of Different Superintendents Served Under	176	0	16	3.26	2.318

Part II. Workload Expectations and Job Satisfaction

Another section of the survey collected information regarding the workload expectations and level of job satisfaction of school administrators in Maine. In this section, we describe the number of assistant principals in buildings, number of teachers supervised, average number of hours spent as an administrator each week, average number of hours responding to COVID, overall job satisfaction, level of stress, ability to engage in self-care, receiving mentoring and support, salary, and likelihood of leaving the profession. Data in this section help inform the work conducted by Maine administrators, potential areas for school finance and policy decisions, and provide insights regarding overall job satisfaction of school leaders currently.

Number of Assistant Principals in the Building. Regarding the average number of assistant principals in buildings across the State of Maine, this study provides important insights about the working conditions of Maine principals. Just under half (45.4%) of the responding school leaders indicated they work with no assistant principals, while another 49.2% work with one assistant principal. An additional 5.4% of principals reported working with two assistant principals in schools with larger student populations. In reviewing the Maine Principals’ Study conducted in 2011 there does not appear to be any comparable data to assess any changes in this category. Table 13 below provides more details.

Table 13: Maine Principals by Number of Assistant Principals in Buildings.

# APs in Building	Frequency (N = 130)	Percent
0 Assistant Principals	59	45.4
1 Assistant Principal	64	49.2
2 Assistant Principals	7	5.4

Observation Requirements. The survey results indicate administrators in the study supervised 27.67 teachers and 14.13 support staff. These numbers are slightly less than the respondents who indicated they supervised an average of 31 professional staff and 16 support

staff from the last Maine Principals’ Study in 2011 (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). Participants in this study averaged four different observations for each teacher, and the minimum number of observations for each teacher was one and the maximum number of observations was 30. Table 14 below provides more details.

Table 14: Maine Principals by Observation Requirements.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Number of Teachers Supervised	158	2	75	27.67	14.847
Number of Observations for Each Teacher	152	1	30	4	4.01
Number of Support Staff Supervised	156	0	108	14.13	12.083

Average Number of Hours Spent as an Administrator Each Week. Looking at the results regarding the number of hours spent as an administrator, principals in the study indicated they spent 54.02 hours at work each week. This is down from the respondents who indicated they spent 70 hours of work each week from the last Maine Principals’ Study in 2011, however it is more in-line with the 56 hours of work reported by Maine principals in 1997 (Donaldson & Marnik, 2012). Within this total time, Maine principals in this study reported spending 4.27 hours each week analyzing data and 11.1 hours responding to COVID-19. Table 15 below provides more details.

Table 15: Maine Principals by Hours Spent as an Administrator Each Week.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Average Number of Hours Spent as Administrator Each Week	164	0	80	54.02	9.792
Average Number of Hours Spent Each Week Analyzing Data	164	0	20	4.27	3.710
Average Number of Hours Spent Each Week Responding to COVID	164	0	50	11.10	9.589

Written comments (n=42 comments) specifically emphasized a high workload as the chief factor that makes school leaders think about leaving the profession. Some of the workload

in fall 2021 was specifically related to implementing practices to deal with the COVID pandemic, such as the extra time needed to comply with contact tracing protocols, and managing additional work due to staff absences and shortages. There were 32 comments specifically about the negative impact of COVID on administrators' professional role and workload. However, comments also described frustration with the high demand from the state educational agency for school reporting as well as time for student testing and teacher evaluation procedures. Principals linked their high workload with stress, negative health impacts, and difficulty having a work-life balance. After workload, job stress (n=30 comments) and negative reactions or lack of support from the community (n=30 comments) were mentioned in equal frequency as factors that contribute to thoughts of leaving the profession. Administrators shared their ideas about ways workload could be reduced, namely:

- Additional support/staffing to deal with requirements placed on school districts, along with a reduction in demands such as: less academic testing, changes in special education rules, reducing or streamlining reporting requirements and the teacher evaluation program, and more support for COVID-19 management.
- More sharing of managerial workloads, specifically reporting requirements, among administrators in the district but also through the increased use of teacher leaders to meet the requirements of teacher supervision and evaluation requirements.
- More help to address high turnover positions and the general lack of a qualified pool of applicants to fill vacancies, some of which is tied to low funding for schools as well as low pay across the state.
- Increased access to support for students' mental health needs, particularly addressing the increased behaviors observed in the past several years that tend to be associated with trauma experienced by families.

Overall Job Satisfaction. Regarding overall job satisfaction across the State of Maine, this study provides important insights about Maine principals. Prior to COVID-19, on a scale of 1 – 10, Maine principals reported a mean of 7.66 regarding their overall job satisfaction as an administrator. Currently, Maine principals reported a mean of 5.31 regarding their overall job satisfaction as an administrator. This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$) in reported job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was not measured in previous iterations of the Maine Principals' Study. Table 16 below provides more details.

Table 16: Maine Principals by Overall Job Satisfaction.

	N	Prior to COVID (M)	Prior to COVID (SD)	N	Current (M)	Current (SD)	Δ M (Prior – Current)	p value
Overall satisfaction as an administrator	151	7.66	2.179	151	5.31	2.616	-2.344	< 0.001

Note: Scale of 1 – 10 (1 = lowest satisfaction, 10 = highest satisfaction)

Level of Stress. The survey results indicate administrators in the study have experienced an increased level of job stress since COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, on a scale of 1 – 10, Maine principals reported a mean of 6.20 regarding their level of job stress as an administrator. Currently, Maine principals reported a mean of 7.74 regarding their level of job stress as an administrator. This represents a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.001$). Level of job stress was not measured in previous iterations of the Maine Principals’ Study. Table 17 below provides more details.

Table 17: Maine Principals by Level of Job Stress.

	N	Prior to COVID (M)	Prior to COVID (SD)	N	Current (M)	Current (SD)	Δ M (Prior – Current)	p value
Level of job stress	151	6.20	2.191	151	7.74	2.823	1.536	< 0.001

Note: Scale of 1 – 10 (1 = lowest satisfaction, 10 = highest satisfaction)

After high workload, stress was the second most frequently mentioned factor (n=30 comments) making school leaders think about leaving the profession noted in the written comments on the survey. In their comments, principals attributed their job stress to the high workload, additional work related to COVID management, uncertainty with the pandemic, frequent need to manage crises, and tensions in responding to diverse and negative views from their community. Principals also linked their job stress with negative impacts on their health.

Ability to Engage in Self-Care. Looking at the results regarding the ability to engage in self-care as an administrator, principals in the study indicated a decreased ability to engage in self-care since COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, on a scale of 1 – 10, Maine principals reported a mean of 5.52 regarding their ability to engage in self-care as an administrator. Currently, Maine principals reported a mean of 3.68 regarding their ability to engage in self-care as an administrator. This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$). Ability to engage in

self-care was not measured in previous iterations of the Maine Principals’ Study. Table 18 below provides more details.

Table 18: Maine Principals by Ability to Engage in Self-Care.

	N	Prior to COVID (M)	Prior to COVID (SD)	N	Current (M)	Current (SD)	Δ M (Prior – Current)	p value
Ability to engage in self-care	151	5.52	2.446	149	3.68	2.625	-1.859	< 0.001

Note: Scale of 1 – 10 (1 = lowest satisfaction, 10 = highest satisfaction)

Receiving Mentoring or Support. Regarding receiving mentoring or support, principals in this study indicated decreased access to mentoring or professional support since COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, on a scale of 1 – 10, Maine principals reported a mean of 5.52 regarding receiving mentoring and support as an administrator. Currently, Maine principals reported a mean of 4.23 regarding the mentoring and support they receive as an administrator. This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$). Receiving mentoring and support was not measured in previous iterations of the Maine Principals’ Study. Table 19 below provides more details.

Table 19: Maine Principals by Receiving Mentoring or Support.

	N	Prior to COVID (M)	Prior to COVID (SD)	N	Current (M)	Current (SD)	Δ M (Prior – Current)	p value
Receiving mentoring and support	150	5.41	2.815	149	4.23	2.763	-1.189	< 0.001

Note: Scale of 1 – 10 (1 = lowest satisfaction, 10 = highest satisfaction)

Salary. The survey results indicate administrators in the study have experienced a decreased satisfaction with salary since COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, on a scale of 1 – 10, Maine principals reported a mean of 6.49 regarding their satisfaction with salary as an administrator. Currently, Maine principals reported a mean of 5.74 regarding their level of job stress as an administrator. This represents a statistically significant decrease ($p < 0.001$). Level of salary was not specifically measured in previous iterations of the Maine Principals’ Study, however data from the last 2011 study suggests principals thought their salaries were low at that time. Table 20 below provides more details.

Table 20: Maine Principals by Salary Satisfaction.

	N	Prior to COVID (M)	Prior to COVID (SD)	N	Current (M)	Current (SD)	ΔM (Prior – Current)	<i>p</i> value
Salary	151	6.49	2.670	151	5.74	2.844	-0.748	< 0.001

Note: Scale of 1 – 10 (1 = lowest satisfaction, 10 = highest satisfaction)

Likelihood of Leaving the Profession. Looking at the results regarding the likelihood of leaving the profession as an administrator, principals in the study indicated an increased likelihood of leaving the profession since COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, on a scale of 1 – 10, Maine principals reported a mean of 3.43 regarding the likelihood of leaving the profession as an administrator. Currently, Maine principals reported a mean of 5.13 regarding the likelihood of leaving the profession as an administrator. This represents a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.001$). This question was not included in the previous survey study of 2011, so no comparison is available. Additional data about the likelihood of Maine principals leaving the profession in the next two years and the next five years is provided in Table 21 below.

Table 21: Maine Principals by Likelihood of Leaving the Profession.

	N	Prior to COVID (M)	Prior to COVID (SD)	N	Current (M)	Current (SD)	ΔM (Prior – Current)	<i>p</i> value
Likelihood of leaving the profession	150	3.43	2.862	149	5.13	3.179	1.686	< 0.001
Likelihood of leaving the profession in 2 years	--	--	--	148	4.84	3.329	--	--
Likelihood of leaving the profession in 5 years	--	--	--	148	5.82	3.579	--	--

In the written comments, two broad themes emerged from the open-ended question on aspects of the job that make school leaders want to stay in the profession, namely working with students (n=118 comments) and working with teachers (n=71 comments). The comments elaborated on these two aspects of the job:

- Enjoyment and satisfaction from direct interactions and relationships with students, and supporting the learning and development of students to help prepare them for adulthood

- Satisfaction in working with teachers to support their learning and professional growth as instructors, encouraging collaboration among teachers, and a positive school culture to support student success

Part III. Training, Support Structures, and Availability of Professional Development

The survey also collected information regarding the training, support structures, and availability of professional development perceived by school administrators in Maine. In this section we describe the various factors that help contribute to ongoing professional development by examining the role of background experience, teacher leadership, leadership preparation programs, and other various factors that contribute to professional growth. These data provide critical insight into factors that do and do not contribute to success as an educational leader.

Examining the 12 questions that comprise this construct, Table 22 (see next page) provides important feedback for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners as to what contributes to ongoing professional development and what could be altered in either policy or practice to address the professional development needs of school leaders. The top third of the questions that had the highest mean responses regarding training, support structures, and professional development for Maine principals were: a) experience as a teacher contributing to success as an educational leader, b) use of teacher leaders, c) graduate degree training, and d) support from the community. This is critically important to understand as it relates to the factors that Maine principals believe help them attain success in their roles, namely relying on the knowledge gained from being a teacher (which is necessary for being an instructional leader), understanding that utilizing teacher leaders contributes to success as school leader, being clear that the training received from a leadership preparation program matters, and that to be successful as a school leader principals must serve the community and meet local needs.

The bottom third of the questions shown in Table 22 that had the lowest mean responses regarding training, support structures, and professional development for Maine principals were: a) support from the district level, b) professional development offered within the state, c) professional development at the national level, and d) professional development offered within the school district. This is also critically important for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to understand as this relates what Maine principals are less positive about in their ongoing development. For example, 52 respondents (29%) in this survey said they had no access to training at the national level. Additionally, the only item that principals were negative about (a

Table 22: Maine Principals' Perceptions of Training, Support Structures, and Availability of Professional Development

	N	M	SD
My experience as a teacher contributes to my success as an educational leader.	151	3.77	.605
The use of teacher leaders in my school contributes to my success as an educational leader.	134	3.52	.622
My graduate degree training in educational leadership contributes to my success as an educational leader.	142	3.36	.728
The support from the community contributes to my success as an educational leader.	149	3.22	.761
The mentorship I receive within district or within professional circles contributes to my success as an educational leader.	141	3.09	.898
The encouragement I received to pursue school administration contributes to my success as an educational leader.	151	3.09	.774
My principal internship experience contributes to my success as an educational leader.	107	3.00	.942
The support from the district level contributes to my success as an educational leader.	151	2.89	.928
The professional development offered within the state (e.g. Maine Principals Academy, Beginning Principal/Mentor Program, Great Beginnings, Maine Leadership Development Program, etc.) contributes to my success as an educational leader.	149	2.70	.860
Professional development I access at the national level contributes to my success as an educational leader.	97	2.64	.915
The professional development offered within my school district contributes to my success as an educational leader.	149	2.39	.906
I am a successful educational leader.	149	3.45	.575

mean below 2.5) was the professional development offered within their district contributes to their success as an educational leader ($M = 2.39$), indicating that the support available within districts is not meeting the professional learning and development needs of school leaders.

There are some additional takeaways that are important to highlight. Regarding the perceptions of training, support structures, and availability of professional development, principals were more positive ($M = 3.17$) than assistant principals ($M = 3.10$), while females were more positive ($M = 3.15$) than males ($M = 3.13$). Administrators with a bachelor's degree were the most positive ($M = 3.23$), followed by those with a doctorate ($M = 3.17$), then a masters ($M = 3.14$), and those with a CAS/EdS were the least positive ($M = 3.13$). Administrators at the middle school level were most positive ($M = 3.23$), followed by those at the elementary level ($M = 3.14$), then those at various blended levels ($M = 3.11$), and those at the high school level were the least positive ($M = 3.10$). Administrators in suburban locales were most positive ($M = 3.26$), followed by those in rural locales ($M = 3.13$), then those in city locales ($M = 3.11$), and those in town locales were the least positive ($M = 3.10$). Lastly, administrators who work with one assistant principal were most positive ($M = 3.21$), followed by those who work with two assistant principals ($M = 3.12$), then those who are not a principal ($M = 3.10$), and those with no assistant principals were the least positive ($M = 3.07$). None of these differences were statistically. Table 23 provides more detailed information about these differences.

Table 23: Maine Principals' Perceptions of Training, Support Structures, and Availability of Professional Development Based on Various Demographics

	Training, Supports, Available PD	N	M	SD
Position	Asst. Principal	26	3.10	.365
	Principal	81	3.17	.366
Gender	Female	63	3.15	.373
	Male	55	3.13	.355
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	3	3.23	.153
	Masters	67	3.14	.358
	CAS/EdS	38	3.13	.363
	Doctorate	11	3.17	.452
School Level	Elementary	45	3.14	.352
	Middle School	21	3.23	.302
	High School	33	3.10	.407
	Other (various blend)	20	3.11	.372
Locale (NCES Classification)	City	15	3.11	.326
	Suburban	16	3.26	.423
	Town	22	3.10	.419
	Rural	65	3.13	.337
Number of Assistant Principals	Not a Principal	20	3.10	.279
	0 Asst. Principals	38	3.07	.424
	1 Asst. Principal	48	3.21	.330
	2 Asst. Principals	6	3.12	.286

Several themes emerged in the written comments from the open-ended question related to professional support administrators would like but don't currently have, namely:

- More support from the superintendent and more professional development from the district in general (n=32 comments), as well as opportunities for both principals and assistant principals to meet more often with superintendents and other leaders in the district, a desire to be a part of the decision-making process in a district, and to have more mentoring provided both within the district and from experienced leaders regionally
- More opportunities for professional connections and community (n=17 comments) with job-alike leaders both within the district and regionally to share ideas, collaborate, and engage in professional development
- More mentoring support (n=12 comments) both within the district and regionally to help learn additional strategies for leadership and share challenges with the professional role and work-life balance
- Support, respect and appreciation from the public and policymakers to understand the daily demands of the job, especially the demands that have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to value the important work taking place in schools, reflected in comments responding to various open-ended questions on the survey.

Part IV. Professional Impact as a School Administrator

The survey collected information regarding the perceived professional impact Maine school administrators feel they have on their school and community. In this section we describe the various factors that contribute to perceived professional impact, including the positive influence on students, influencing the lives of community members, time spent on leadership tasks, time spent on managerial tasks, and the ability to address equity in a school. These data provide meaningful takeaways for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to consider regarding the positive impact educational leaders can have on a school, and where they feel constrained by workload demands that reduce more meaningful impact.

Examining the ten questions that comprise this construct, Table 24 (see next page) provides detailed information about what factors contribute to Maine principals feeling like their professional impact as a school administrator leads to positive outcomes for students and the communities they serve. The top third of the questions that had the highest mean responses regarding professional impact as a school administrator for Maine principals were: a) having a positive influence on the lives of students, b) having a positive influence on the lives of teachers, and c) being happy with leadership efforts to make their school a more equitable place for all

students. Data like this are crucial for understanding how school leaders perceive the impact their work has, and it speaks to policymakers about what is valued by school leaders in Maine.

Table 24: Maine Principals’ Perceptions of Professional Impact as a School

Administrator

	N	M	SD
Given the demands of my job, I am able to have a positive influence on the lives of students in my school.	149	3.46	.563
Given the demands of my job, I am able to have a positive influence on the lives of teachers in my school.	149	3.32	.607
In my job I am happy with my leadership efforts to make my school a more equitable place for all students.	149	3.29	.607
I am happy with my district’s leadership to make schools a more equitable place for all.	149	3.03	.830
Given the demands of my job, I am able to have a positive influence on the lives of people in the community my school serves.	149	2.93	.689
In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend on local job requirements (budget process, school event supervision, school board meetings, collective bargaining, etc.).	149	2.54	.721
In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend on professional development (i.e. professional learning communities, book studies, attending conferences, etc.).	149	2.15	.888
In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend giving feedback to teachers (i.e. classroom walkthroughs, instructional coaching, brainstorming new instructional plans, etc.).	149	2.11	.874
In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend on state accountability requirements (teacher evaluation, state reporting, etc.).	149	1.99	.870
The work I do is meaningful as an educational leader.	149	3.68	.521

The bottom third of the questions shown in Table 24 that had the lowest mean responses regarding professional impact as a school administrator were: a) the amount of time spent on professional development, b) the amount of time giving feedback to teachers, and c) the amount of time spent on state accountability requirements. This is highly useful data for policymakers to closely examine. Maine principals were very clear about where they believe they have little

impact with their professional influence. Maine principals are asking for more time with professional development, more time providing feedback to teachers about instruction, and less time engaging in time consuming, state-mandated accountability efforts, including teacher evaluation and reporting. All three of these items were below a mean of 2.5.

In Table 25 below, we provide some additional information about the perceptions of Maine principals and their professional impact as a school administrator. Administrators with a bachelor's degree were the most positive ($M = 3.04$), followed by those with a masters ($M = 2.87$), then a CAS/EdS ($M = 2.81$), and those with a doctorate were the least positive ($M = 2.77$). Additionally, Administrators at the high school level were most positive ($M = 2.89$), followed by those at the elementary level ($M = 2.88$), then those at various blended levels ($M = 2.80$), and those at the middle school level were the least positive ($M = 2.76$). Administrators in rural locales were most positive ($M = 2.90$), followed by those in suburban locales ($M = 2.86$), then those in town locales ($M = 2.76$), and those in city locales were the least positive ($M = 2.70$). Lastly, administrators who work with one assistant principal were most positive ($M = 2.87$), followed by those who work with no assistant principals ($M = 2.85$), then those who are not a principal ($M = 2.84$), and those who work with two assistant principals were the least positive ($M = 2.78$). None of these differences were statistically.

However, there were some statistically significant differences based on demographics. Principals were more positive ($M = 2.89$) than assistant principals ($M = 2.71$), and males were more positive ($M = 2.99$) than females ($M = 2.75$). Both of these differences were statistically significant at $p < .05$. Table 25 provides more detailed information about these differences.

Table 25: Maine Principals' Perceptions of Professional Impact as a School Administrator Based on Various Demographics

	Professional Impact as a School Administrator	N	M	SD
Position	Asst. Principal	34	2.71*	.399
	Principal	99	2.89*	.406
Gender	Female	84	2.75*	.380
	Male	63	2.99*	.409
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	5	3.04	.270
	Masters	87	2.87	.394
	CAS/EdS	42	2.81	.461
	Doctorate	15	2.77	.375
School Level	Elementary	63	2.88	.441
	Middle School	25	2.76	.412
	High School	37	2.89	.378
	Other (various blend)	24	2.80	.367
Locale (NCES Classification)	City	16	2.70	.447
	Suburban	20	2.86	.509
	Town	27	2.76	.447
	Rural	85	2.90	.358
Number of Assistant Principals	Not a Principal	27	2.84	.433
	0 Asst. Principals	51	2.85	.448
	1 Asst. Principal	55	2.87	.384
	2 Asst. Principals	6	2.78	.376

* $p < .05$

Part V. Challenges Faced by a School Administrator

One section of the survey collected information regarding the perceived challenges faced by school administrators in Maine. In this section we describe the various factors that contribute to or mitigate challenges facing school administrators, including workload, work-life balance, societal disagreement, and accountability testing. These data provide critical insight into factors that cause challenges for educational leaders in Maine.

Examining the nine questions that comprise this construct, Table 26 (see next page) provides a nuanced overview of the factors that contribute to the challenges faced by school administrators in Maine. The top third of the questions that had the highest mean responses regarding challenges as a school administrator for Maine principals were: a) finding enough qualified teachers to hire, b) the societal disagreement about the response to COVID, and c) balancing work and personal commitments. These data are powerful in that they reinforce some of what we already know about the need to invest in workforce development in Maine. However, they also provide a snapshot in time about the pressures of responding to COVID in a fractured society and the struggle for principals to do their job and meet personal commitments at home.

The bottom third of the questions shown in Table 26 that had the lowest mean responses regarding challenges as a school administrator were: a) societal disagreement about socioeconomic status and class in the US, b) societal disagreement about race in the US, c) lack of support from the community to implement change. It should be noted that none of these means fall below 2.5, meaning they are still considered challenges by administrators in this construct. This data should be further explored to determine if principals see these factors as less of a challenge than other factors or if they simply perceive they have less control over reducing these challenges. ▸

Table 26: Maine Principals' Perceptions of Challenges as a School Administrator

	N	M	SD
The availability of qualified teachers in Maine is a challenge as an educational leader.	148	3.60	.614
Societal disagreement about response to COVID the US is a challenge as an educational leader.	149	3.58	.680
Balancing work and personal commitments is a challenge as an educational leader.	149	3.54	.712
The number of hours spent doing my job is a challenge as an educational leader.	149	3.40	.687
Focusing on accountability testing for students is a challenge as an educational leader.	148	3.26	.757
Focusing on implementing the PE/PG policies in Maine is a challenge as an educational leader.	148	3.03	.824
Societal disagreement about socioeconomic status and class in the US is a challenge as an educational leader.	149	2.99	.862
Societal disagreement about race in the US is a challenge as an educational leader.	149	2.95	.918
The lack of support from the community to implement change is a challenge as an educational leader.	149	2.85	.844

Table 27 shows some additional insights about challenges that are important to highlight. Regarding the perceptions of challenges as a school administrator, principals were more concerned ($M = 2.93$) than assistant principals ($M = 2.91$), and females were more concerned ($M = 2.95$) than males ($M = 2.86$). Administrators with a CAS/EdS degree were the most concerned ($M = 2.98$), followed by those with a bachelors ($M = 2.92$), then a masters ($M = 2.91$), and those with a doctorate were the least concerned ($M = 2.81$). Administrators at the various blended school level were most concerned ($M = 3.06$), followed by those at the elementary and middle school level (both $M = 2.90$), and those at the high school level were the least concerned ($M = 2.86$). Additionally, administrators in rural locales were most concerned ($M = 2.96$), followed by those in city locales ($M = 2.87$), then those in town locales ($M = 2.86$), and those in suburban locales were the least concerned ($M = 2.83$). Lastly, administrators who work with two assistant principals were most concerned ($M = 3.00$), then those who work with one assistant principal ($M = 2.96$), then those who are not a principal ($M = 2.91$), and those who work with no assistant

principals were the least concerned ($M = 2.87$). None of these differences were statistically. Table 27 below provides more detailed information.

Table 27: Maine Principals' Perceptions of Professional Impact as a School Administrator Based on Various Demographics

	Challenges as a School Administrator	N	M	SD
Position	Asst. Principal	34	2.91	.361
	Principal	98	2.93	.406
Gender	Female	83	2.95	.388
	Male	63	2.86	.362
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	5	2.92	.110
	Masters	86	2.91	.328
	CAS/EdS	42	2.98	.464
	Doctorate	15	2.81	.439
School Level	Elementary	62	2.90	.382
	Middle School	25	2.90	.433
	High School	37	2.86	.389
	Other (various blend)	24	3.06	.257
Locale (NCES Classification)	City	15	2.87	.404
	Suburban	20	2.83	.476
	Town	27	2.86	.352
	Rural	85	2.96	.358
Number of Assistant Principals	Not a Principal	27	2.91	.372
	0 Asst. Principals	50	2.87	.382
	1 Asst. Principal	55	2.96	.397
	2 Asst. Principals	6	3.00	.395

Written comments on the survey yielded themes related to common challenges faced by administrators that contribute to them wanting to leave the profession, namely:

- Increased workload expectations and working hours, particularly increased demands of the job, along with the need to implement COVID-19 rules and regulations
- Increased job stress that results from high workload and that negatively impact health and contribute to a lack of work-life balance
- Managing crises or tensions within schools but also outside of schools, particularly as it relates to public hostility over COVID-19 restrictions, as well as coping with negative reactions, lack of support for school improvement efforts, and the political division around diversity, equity, and inclusion that results in a lack of trust and respect for educators and school leaders.

Conclusion

Our stratified, random, representative survey of all public and private school administrators in Maine provides the first comprehensive study of Maine principals since the Maine Principal Survey was last conducted by the University of Maine 10 years ago. Between that time and now, a new set of social, economic, and cultural challenges have been inserted into the education arena. Results from this study provide critical information about Maine's educational leadership workforce, how it compares nationally, significant changes since the 2011 survey study, and what can be done to support the professional needs of the principalship to strengthen retention.

As Maine continues to diversify racially and ethnically, one of the greatest takeaways is to be intentional about representation in Maine educational leadership positions. As Milner IV (2017) points out, addressing the sociocultural identities of students, specifically identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, identity, and other lived experiences, will influence pedagogical and student achievement outcomes. While 56.9% of administrators who participated in this survey identified as women, which can be seen as a success for gender representation in Maine schools, an overwhelming majority of participants identified as White (93.9%) and not Hispanic/Latinx/of Spanish Origin (92.3%). Maine's schools and communities are predicted to become more racially and ethnically diverse in the coming decades, as the rest of the nation (Horsford et al.,

2019). Having more diversity in school leadership will be an important factor in helping to support and inspire youth toward academic success and school completion (Khalifa, 2018).

Beyond sociocultural identities of Maine administrators, other conclusions can be drawn from this study that give us insight into administrators across the state. In general, Maine's administrators continue to be highly educated as 85.1% of those who participated in the study indicated they had a MEd or a CAS/EdS, a statistic that should be celebrated. However, professional education cannot solve all the challenges facing Maine administrators and the communities they serve. Just under half of the respondents (45.4%) indicated they work with no assistant principal, a statistic that underscores funding inequities throughout Maine schools and creates managerial and leadership issues, and challenges coping with high workload. These leadership issues are exacerbated by an aging administrator population, highlighted by the average participant in this study having over 24 years of experience as an educator, putting many close to retirement age, as well as superintendent turnover highlighted by the average participant in this study having served under more than three different superintendents.

Since the start of COVID-19, the perceptions of administrators who participated in this study show that overall job satisfaction has fallen, job stress has risen, the ability to engage in self-care has fallen, satisfaction with mentoring and support has fallen, salary satisfaction has fallen, and the likelihood of leaving the profession has risen – *all statistically significantly*. While these data cannot predict what will happen with principals' decisions to stay or leave the profession, they do suggest that principals are under significant pressure to manage increasing high workloads and stressful professional experiences that can lead to exiting the profession. Based on this study, principals supervise a wide range of teachers, ranging from two in the smallest schools to 75 in the larger schools. The same is true for support staff, which in this study ranged from 0 to 108. The maximums of these ranges represent a number far too large to provide ongoing and meaningful feedback about work quality. Concerns about the high workload associated with school leadership and job stress were the most common themes in principals' written comments and reasons they think about leaving the profession. School leaders suggested more staffing including administrative positions are needed to address the workload, and also suggested the state streamline or reduce the burden on schools associated with required reporting, the teacher evaluation system, testing and other mandates. Principals recommended that teacher leaders could be used to reduce the managerial workload of principals, and more

work might be shared among other administrative leaders within the district. On average, findings from this study show principals work 54 hours per week – which means most principals are working roughly 11 hours per workday.

Another important set of findings from this study relates to the types of professional support that school leaders said they don't currently have but need to be successful. Principals clearly communicated the desire for more support from their superintendents and more professional development from the district in general. They also stressed the need for more opportunity to connect with professional networks and job-alike groups to share ideas and gain professional support. Finally, school leaders voiced their desire to be more engaged with the decision-making process with central office administrators and to have more opportunities to be mentored, both from superintendents but also from regional professional groups.

Finally, findings from this study show that working with students and teachers, supporting student growth and teachers' professional growth, are the most valued aspects of the professional role that make school leaders want to stay in the profession. When principals feel they have a positive impact on students and can focus on instructional leadership, as opposed to managerial tasks, they feel they can have a significant and positive impact through their work and their work is meaningful. The ability to meet the demands of their job also has a significant and positive association with the perceived meaningfulness of the work, and supporting the development of students and professional growth of teachers should be aspects of training and retention efforts moving forward for the support of Maine principals.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Findings from this study provide comprehensive and insightful implications for policymakers and practitioners to consider moving forward in the 21st century in Maine. The first study of Maine principals in a decade, this report offers robust, comprehensive, and representative data and findings that can and should be used for improving the recruitment, professional development and retention of school principals. Some implications from the findings of this study for policy and practice in Maine include the following:

- School Leadership Demographics: Although this survey indicated an increase in the percentage school leaders in Maine who identify as female, the low level of racial and ethnic diversity among Maine school leaders is a concern. There is a need for on-going

effort and creative strategies for recruiting, developing, and hiring school leaders that will lead to a diversification of Maine administrators. This can be accomplished through equal employment opportunity (EEO) trainings, pipeline development and grow your own preparation programs that tap members of the community for careers in education. As a profession, the education system in Maine has an opportunity to support the diversification of the sociocultural identities of administrators that are more representative of the public they serve. Currently, 87% of students in Maine identify as White while 94% of school principals identified as White in this survey. Demographic experts predict a browning of the US in the coming decades (Horsford et al., 2019). Beyond simply maintaining demographic representation, it is important for students to have educators as role models who share various identities as this is tied to school success and achievement (Khalifa, 2018). As such, ensuring Maine has a wide variety of sociocultural identity representation is important, particularly as it relates to understanding the lived experiences of students based on race, ethnicity, SES, gender, orientation/identity, spatiality, and ability, among other identities.

- School Administrative Staffing and Funding: Almost half of the school leaders in this study (45%) indicated they do not work with an assistant principal, and most indicated that they see the workload as difficult if not impossible for a single school leader to handle and want more help. Examining funding formulas to look at support for administrative positions, administrative assistants, and teacher leader stipends could help address some of the managerial issues exacerbated in smaller schools and begin to negate the professional isolation that many of the school leaders in the study indicated. More use of teacher leadership to support the work in schools would also help relieve principals' workload. In general, finding ways to support principals as workloads increase will be critical for recruitment and retention in the profession moving forward.
- Addressing Pipeline Needs: Based on the data from this study, Maine principals have, on average, 24 years of experience, putting many close to retirement age. Focusing on recruiting early-to-mid career educators to move into the principalship could help support the pipeline and candidates for filling school leadership positions. Equally important is making the position attractive enough for educators to want to step into the role. This will require policymakers and practitioners to rethink and reimagine what school is and what

it should be, specifically focusing on supporting efforts that address societal inequities, students' social and emotional development, community engagement and academic outcomes. But it may also require funding and changes in school and district organization to provide sufficient staffing to support the work of schools.

- Workload and Job Stress Challenges: Perhaps of greatest insight are the data about the workload and job satisfaction of administrators in Maine. Based on this study, larger schools in Maine require principals to supervise upwards of 75 teachers and 108 support staff, a number far too large to provide ongoing and meaningful feedback about work quality. The funding of assistant principal positions and increased use of teacher leaders to help with supervision requirements would greatly help alleviate administrator workload. Freeing up time for principals to address instructional leadership needed in schools and collaborating with professionals on how to best address the mental health of students would contribute to more positive outcomes for student learning and wellbeing, as well as benefit communities. Other suggestions from school leaders related to reducing and streamlining state requirements for reporting and educator evaluation. Prior MEPRI research found administrators struggled to manage the workload associated with the number of teacher observations, evaluations and support they needed to provide to educators in their schools (Mette et al., 2019).
- Job Satisfaction: Findings from this study highlight that job satisfaction has dropped significantly since the start of COVID-19 and that the likelihood of leaving the profession has risen significantly from the start of COVID-19. As policymakers examine the factors that impact job satisfaction for administrators, they should consider opportunities to restructure education systems to refocus practices that lead to more humanistic outcomes – including the needed focus on social and emotional development of students – as well as the need for administrators to focus more on instructional leadership, which is more strongly correlated with improved teacher practices and student academic achievement than managerial administrative effort (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). This will also require policymakers to consider factors that are positively associated with job meaningfulness, including the nature of the leadership tasks, opportunity for positive impacts on student and teacher development, and the sense that administrators can meet the demands of their job by contributing to the development of a more equitable society.

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Appendix A

Demographics

1. Current position
 - a. Assistant Principal
 - b. Principal
 - c. School Head
 - d. Dean
 - e. Teaching Principal
 - f. Other _____ (CTE Assistant Director, Athletic Director, Transformational Coach, etc.)
2. Years of total experience as an educator _____
3. Years of experience as a school administrator _____
4. If you are a principal, how many assistant principals work with you?
 - a. I work with 1 assistant principal
 - b. I work with 2 assistant principals
 - c. I work with 3 assistant principals
 - d. I work with 4 assistant principals
 - e. I am not a principal
 - f. I work with no assistant principals
5. Years in your current position in your school _____
6. School level
 - a. Elementary
 - b. Middle School
 - c. High School
 - d. Other _____ (PK-8, 6-12, PK-12, Alternative HS)
7. Number of different school administrative positions held to date (including assistant principal experience) _____
8. Number of different superintendents you have worked under as an administrator to date

9. Gender
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Transgender Female
 - d. Transgender Male
 - e. Non-binary
 - f. Gender not listed
 - g. Prefer not to reply
10. Race
 - a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - e. White
 - f. Other
 - g. Prefer not to reply

11. Ethnicity

- a. Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin
- b. Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin
- c. Prefer not to reply

12. Highest degree earned

- a. Bachelors
- b. Masters
- c. CAS/EdS
- d. Doctorate

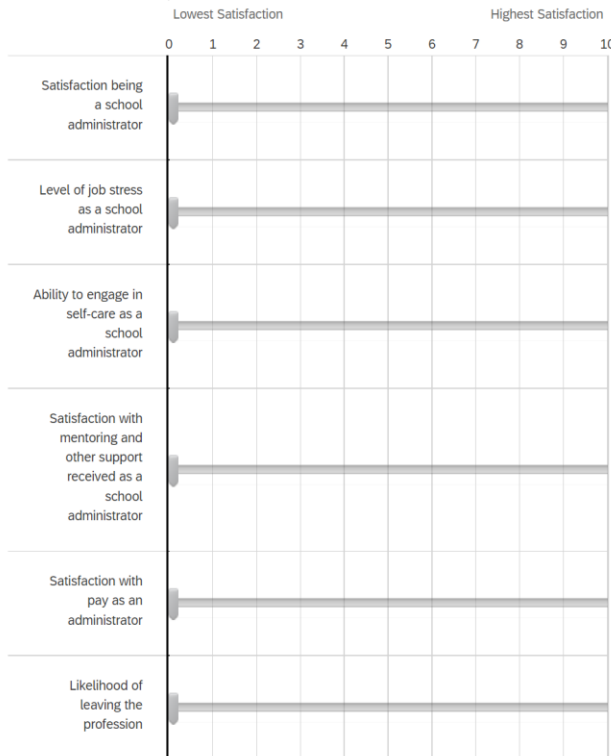
Workload

- 13. How many teachers do you supervise? (N/A if this does not apply to you) _____
- 14. How many observations need to be completed for every teacher you supervise? (N/A if this does not apply to you) _____
- 15. How many support staff do you supervise? (N/A if this does not apply to you) _____
- 16. What are the average number of hours spent in a typical week in your current role?

- 17. What are the average number of hours spent in a typical week examining school data in your current role? _____
- 18. What are the average number of hours spent in a typical week responding to COVID (contact tracing, pivoting to remote learning, ensuring students are in pods, etc.)? _____

Job Satisfaction

19. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 = lowest and 10 = highest, describe your job satisfaction being an school administrator PRIOR to COVID.



20. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 = lowest and 10 = highest, describe your job satisfaction being an school administrator NOW.



Training, Supports, Available PD

21. My experience as a teacher contributes to my success as an educational leader.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Somewhat agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. N/A (I have not been a teacher prior to becoming an administrator)

22. My graduate degree training in educational leadership contributes to my success as an educational leader.

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. Somewhat agree
- d. Strongly agree
- e. N/A (I have not been through a leadership program)

23. My principal internship experience contributes to my success as an educational leader.

- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree
 - e. N/A (I have not been through an internship)
24. The support from the district level contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree
25. The mentorship I receive within district or within professional circles contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree
 - e. N/A (mentoring is not provided or available to me)
26. The encouragement I received to pursue school administration contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree
27. The use of teacher leaders in my school contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree
 - e. N/A (my school does not utilize teacher leaders in this way)
28. The support from the community contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree
29. The professional development offered within my school district contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree
30. The professional development offered within the state (e.g. Maine Principals Academy, Beginning Principal/Mentor Program, Great Beginnings, Maine Leadership Development Program, etc.) contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- a. Strongly disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Somewhat agree
 - d. Strongly agree

31. Professional development I access at the national level contributes to my success as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
 - N/A (I do not access national level professional development)
32. I am a successful educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
33. In a few sentences, what specific aspects of your current job make you want to stay in the profession?
34. In a few sentences, what types of professional support you would like to have as a school administrator but don't feel like you currently have?

Professional Impact as a School Administrator

35. Given the demands of my job, I am able to have a positive influence on the lives of students in my school.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
36. Given the demands of my job, I am able to have a positive influence on the lives of teachers in my school.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
37. Given the demands of my job, I am able to have a positive influence on the lives of people in the community my school serves.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
38. In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend giving feedback to teachers (i.e. classroom walkthroughs, instructional coaching, brainstorming new instructional plans, etc.).
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

39. In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend on professional development (i.e. professional learning communities, book studies, attending conferences, etc.).
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
40. In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend on state accountability requirements (teacher evaluation, state reporting, etc.).
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
41. In my job I am happy with the amount of time I spend on local job requirements (budget process, school event supervision, school board meetings, collective bargaining, etc.).
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
42. In my job I am happy with my leadership efforts to make my school a more equitable place for all students.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
43. I am happy with my district's leadership to make schools a more equitable place for all.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
44. The work I do is meaningful as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

Challenges as a School Administrator

45. The number of hours spent doing my job is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
46. Balancing work and personal commitments is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

47. The lack of support from the community to implement change is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
48. Societal disagreement about race in the US is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
49. Societal disagreement about socioeconomic status and class in the US is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
50. Societal disagreement about response to COVID the US is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
51. The availability of qualified teachers in Maine is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
52. Focusing on accountability testing for students is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
53. Focusing on implementing the PE/PG policies in Maine is a challenge as an educational leader.
- Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
54. In a few sentences, what specific aspects of your current job make you think about leaving the profession?
55. In a few sentences, what suggestions do you have that could reduce school administrator workload?