

How School Leaders Sustain Student-Centered Innovation:

Lessons from North Minneapolis



Welcome

Joel Luedtke

The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation

The State of the Principalship in Minnesota

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Executive Director of Educational Leadership,
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THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

The State of the Principalship

June, 2023

Katie Pekar, EdD



Center for
Applied Research and
Educational Improvement

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Do Principals Really Matter?

Exploring the research behind this leadership role

Impact of the principal

“Across six rigorous studies estimating principals’ effects using panel data, principals’ contributions to student achievement were nearly as large as the average effects of teachers identified in similar studies. Principals’ effects, however, are larger in scope because they are averaged over all students in a school, rather than a classroom.”



Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). How principals affect students and schools. *Wallace Foundation*

Studies demonstrate that schools with more effective principals have:

- Lower student absenteeism and chronic absenteeism.
- Higher teacher job satisfaction.
- Reduced teacher turnover, particularly of effective teachers.
- Better academic achievement among students

Replacing a below average elementary principal with an above average principal would result in an additional 2.9 months of math learning and 2.7 months of reading learning for students

Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). How principals affect students and schools. *Wallace Foundation*



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Through funding from the Joyce Foundation and the Minneapolis Foundation, CAREI developed a statewide survey of principals to elevate their voices in Minnesota while informing multiple stakeholders including (but not limited to) policymakers, school boards, principal licensure and professional development programs, and organizations like MESPA and MASSP that support Minnesota principals.

Survey Administration

- Every principal and AP in MN sent a person-specific email
- November 11, 2021 through December 5, 2021
- Will administer every other year
- Report of findings at z.umn.edu/MNPS22



Survey Topics

- Career Information
- Job Satisfaction
- Preparation and Licensure
- Professional Development
- Working Conditions
- Influence
- Educational Ecosystem
- COVID-19 and School Transformation
- Culturally Responsive School Leadership
- Leadership Self Efficacy and Needed Supports
 - School Improvement
 - Management and Decision-making
 - Culture and Climate
 - Instructional Leadership

Follow- Up Focus Groups

Participants

- Twin Cities leaders (2 groups)
- Greater Minnesota leaders (2 groups)
- Elementary leaders (1 group)
- Secondary leaders (1 group)
- Leaders identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) (1 group)
- Leaders identifying as Female (1 group)
- Early-career leaders (1 group)

Topics

- **Professional development**
- **Instructional leadership**
 - **Culturally Responsive School Leadership**
- **Staff and student mental health**
- **Community-Engaged Leadership***
- State accountability
- Supervisor support
- Group-specific questions

The state of the ‘Principalship’ in Minnesota

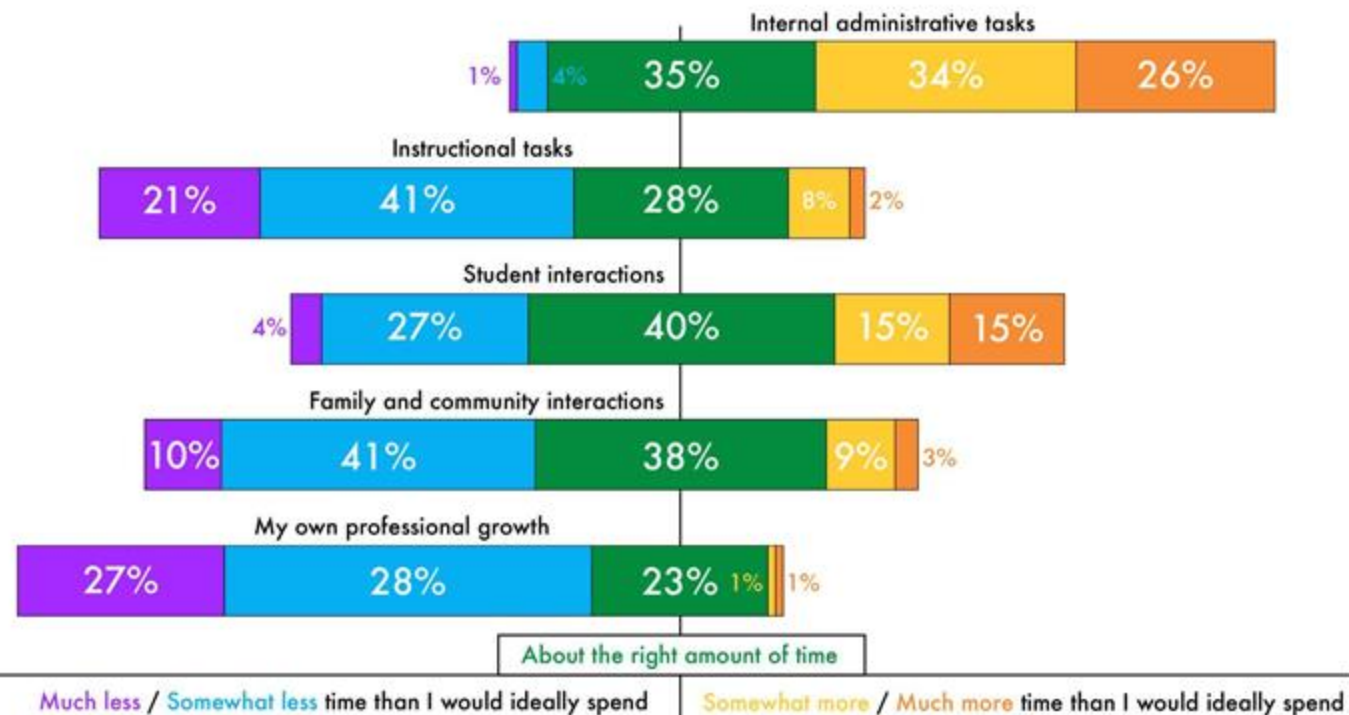
Working Conditions

- **79%** of respondents feel their primary role is to be an instructional leader...
- However, only **61%** of respondents report their supervisor ensures they have the time to do so.
- Only **46%** of respondents agreed that their current workload is sustainable



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Time Spent on Tasks by Type



Principals lack confidence and time in the area nearly 80% say is the most important part of their job:

Instructional Leadership

Average confidence by area of leadership



Culturally Responsive School Leadership

- a subset of IL and part of Culture and Climate account for 4 of the 5 lowest rated areas of confidence

Instructional Leadership

Creating culturally-responsive assessments

Instructional Leadership

Designing culturally-responsive curriculum

Culture & Climate

Addressing staff mental health challenges

Instructional Leadership

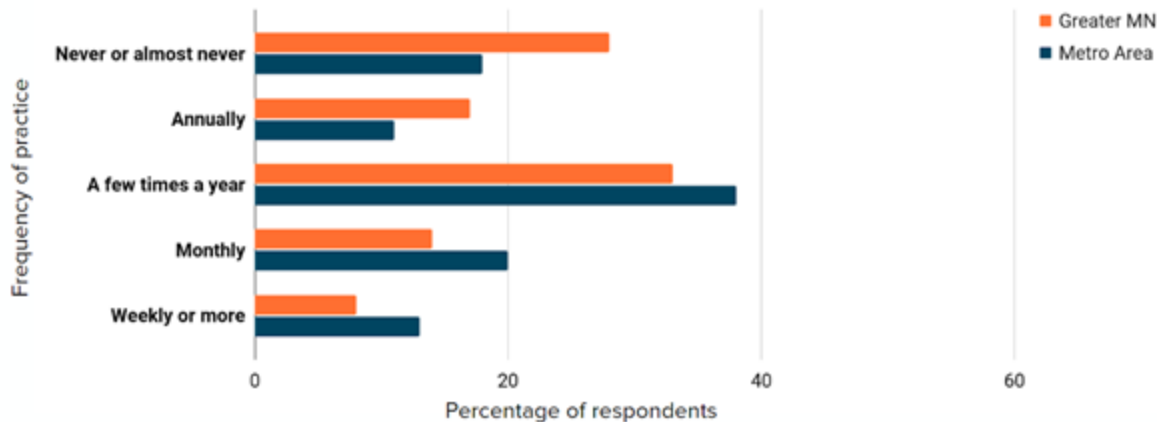
Supporting culturally-responsive pedagogy

Culture & Climate

Facilitating discussions with staff about gender identity

Within CRSL, **Community Engaged Leadership**, primarily involving marginalized families, is infrequently practiced.

Inclusion of families of marginalized students in school-level decisions



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Mental health is an overwhelming concern.

Staff and students' mental health are primary concerns among principals, and they need genuine help in addressing these issues. Additionally, nearly one in ten respondents cited that they need mental health support for *themselves*.

School Culture and Climate Activities Posing the Greatest Challenge

Activity	N	%
Addressing staff mental health challenges	219	46%
Addressing student mental health challenges	177	37%

What would you identify as the most helpful supports at this stage of the pandemic?



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Principals need more and better professional development (PD).

There is a deep desire for more professional learning, but the pressure felt to be “in the building” is a key barrier. However, the type of PD opportunities matter: the form of PD principals reported engaging in most often (district sponsored meetings and presentations) was also cited as the *least effective*.

Type of PD Engaged In Most Often

1. **Presentations at scheduled school / district meetings**
2. Networking with other educational leaders
3. Other workshops or trainings
4. State or local conferences
5. MESPA provided opportunities
6. Other cohort-based learning experience
7. MASSP provided opportunities
8. Formal coaching
9. Formal mentoring
10. National conferences
11. Minnesota Principals Academy
12. Doctoral coursework

Rank of Usefulness of PD Experiences

1. Minnesota Principals Academy
2. Networking with other educational leaders
3. Doctoral coursework
4. Formal mentoring
5. Other cohort-based learning experience
6. Formal coaching
7. National conferences
8. MESPA provided opportunities
9. MASSP provided opportunities
10. State or local conferences
11. Other workshops or trainings
12. **Presentations at scheduled school or district meetings**



THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY

Recommendations

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION • HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 2023

Authors
Katie Pikel
Sara Kemper

Center for
Applied Research and
Educational Improvement
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover

SERIES OVERVIEW

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CARE) at the University of Minnesota conducted the first biennial

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INTRODUCTION

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CARE) at the University of Minnesota conducted the first biennial Minnesota Principals Survey (MnPS) in November and December 2021 to "elevate principal voice" in Minnesota education policy and better understand the working conditions, concerns, and needs of Minnesota school leaders. Overall, nearly 800 principals, assistant principals, and charter school directors working in public schools across the state responded to the survey; the results of which can be accessed at <https://care.umn.edu/mnps>.

To better understand school leaders' experiences and solicit their ideas, we conducted a series of focus groups with 49 Minnesota principals in November 2022. The purpose of the Policy and Practice Briefs series is to summarize our findings and recommendations from the survey and follow-up focus groups in five focus areas: **professional development, instructional leadership, culturally responsive school leadership, community engaged leadership, and staff and student mental health**. This executive summary highlights key findings and selected recommendations in each of these areas, as well as overarching recommendations across the series, which can be accessed in full at care.umn.edu/mnps.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As indicated on the 2021 MnPS, the type of PD participated in most frequently by principals—presentations at scheduled school or district meetings (70% of respondents)—was rated least useful. Oppositely, two of the types of PD school leaders participated in least frequently—the Minnesota School Academy (MSA) (7% of respondents) and doctoral coursework (5% of respondents)—were rated among the most useful. We asked focus group participants why they thought some forms of PD were more useful than others, and what might help them to better access high-quality PD.

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEADERSHIP

An addendum to the full report of findings from the 2021 MnPS. See

CONCENTRATION ON CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

While educational leaders and community members in Minnesota

INTRODUCTION TO INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

We draw from four nationally recognized educational leadership

SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN MINNESOTA

In Minnesota, there are over 100 core leadership competencies that

PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN MINNESOTA

In order to maintain their administrative licensure, K-12 principals in

Key Focus Group Findings

- Participants shared that PD experiences such as MSA, doctoral coursework, and other forms of networking were especially useful because they involved **sustained learning with peers**, and often included access to **relevant research findings** that addressed their specific challenges.
- In order to leave school to attend PD, principals emphasized the need for a **reliable backup plan** so others could fulfill principals' essential responsibilities as well as **personal comfort** with delegating.

Selected Recommendations

- For Policymakers:** Ensure the 125 clock hours for principal licensure are meaningful, and address content areas in which principals indicate low self-efficacy (e.g., Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Instructional Leadership).
- For System Leaders:** Invest in developmental approaches to principal learning that are ongoing and collective in nature (e.g., PLCs, collaboratively engaging in problems of practice) versus traditional "sit and get" PD.
- For Building Leaders:** Be proactive in developing a delegation structure that allows you to be out of the building and secure your supervisor's buy-in.
- For Principal Preparation and PD Providers:** Ensure that professional learning programs leverage high-impact strategies such as one-on-one support, learning communities, and job-embedded learning.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

A majority of Minnesota school leaders (62%) told us on the 2021 MnPS that they spend less time than they would like on instructional tasks (like curriculum, instruction, assessment, and PLC meetings), and a similar proportion (50%) reported spending more time than they would like on internal administrative tasks (like personnel issues, scheduling, and reports). Furthermore, seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents also told us that they felt their primary role was



Across all of these, principals tell us the 4Ts need to be addressed:



Across all of these, principals tell us the 4Ts need to be addressed:

Time

Principals told us they spent more time than they would like on administrative tasks and less time than instructional leadership and family and community engagement; that there is not enough time for their own professional growth or engagement in policy influence and that that daily 'urgent' tasks (e.g., finding substitute teachers, responding to mental health crises) take time away from more strategic tasks like teacher coaching and curricular alignment.



Across all of these, principals tell us the 4Ts need to be addressed:



Training

Better training is needed, especially in instructional and culturally responsive leadership. On one hand, leaders felt their licensure programs had prepared them well to carry out the management and decision-making aspects of their jobs. On the other hand, respondents lacked confidence in instructional leadership.

Across all of these, principals tell us the 4Ts need to be addressed:

Trust

Principals wanted their supervisors to trust and support them—to ‘have their backs’ when needing to make an unpopular decision or lead an uncomfortable conversation.



Across all of these, principals tell us the 4Ts need to be addressed:



Transformation

More than half of principals report their workloads are not sustainable. Investments in high-quality, sustained professional development, fundamental restructuring of the use of time and resources, and sustained support will all need to take place. Our recommendations center the transformations that could take place in order to ensure the role of school leader is truly transformational.

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

June 2023

Authors

Regina Seabrook
Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Findings

The majority of principals tell us they spend less time on IL than they would like and it is the area they report the least confidence.

Principals tell us they had to prioritize administrative or managerial tasks that crowded out IL tasks

More district-level support for IL in the form of coaching as well as co-creation of instructional programs would be welcomed

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

June 2023

Authors

Regina Seabrook
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Recommendations

- **For Policymakers.** Consider funding incentives for districts that offer year-long paid internships for those studying to be principals with a focus on instructional leadership to enhance schools' instructional leadership capacity.
- **For System Leaders.** Partner with principals to identify administrative tasks that principals do that other —whether at the school or district level— could take on.
- **For Building Leaders.** Prioritize those instructional leadership tasks shown to improve student learning— like teacher coaching and feedback conversations—
- **For Principal Preparation and PD Providers.** Continually crosswalk MN Admin competencies with coursework and PD, and use MnPS data to inform offerings.

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

**CULTURALLY
RESPONSIVE
SCHOOL
LEADERSHIP**

June 2023

Authors

Victor Coy Carter Jr.
Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Findings

Low self-efficacy reported in the areas of CRSL

Frequency of engagement in CRSL activities wavers among principals

Principals report a fear or discomfort, a lack of time, a need for more training, and for district leaders to “have their backs”

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

June 2023

Authors

Victor Coy Carter Jr.
Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Recommendations

- **For Policymakers.** Require CRSL education as part of licensure renewal for school leaders and onboarding for school board members.
- **For System Leaders.** Be prepared to support all leaders, but especially leaders of color in predominantly White schools, when they face resistance to culturally responsive work from staff or families. Use your positionality to explicitly support the decisions and actions of your school leaders.
- **For Building Leaders.** Access and leverage tools to self- assess your own equity leadership and CRSL practice.
- **For Principal Preparation and PD Providers.** Require CRSL training in administrator preparation programs to meet or exceed the cultural competency requirement for educator license renewal in Minnesota.

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEADERSHIP

June 2023

Authors

Darius Stanley
Victor Coy Carter Jr.
Sara Kemper
Katie Pikel
Yue Zhao

Findings

School leaders lack preparation, experience, and self-efficacy in several domains pertinent to community engaged leadership

51% of leaders reported spending somewhat less or much less time than they would like on family and community interactions

Principals desired to have dedicated staff to assist with CEL

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

COMMUNITY
ENGAGED
LEADERSHIP

June 2023

Authors

Darius Stanley
Victor Coy Carter Jr.
Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Recommendations

- **For Policymakers.** Provide community leadership pathways that do not require traditional licensing to ensure community voice is included in school and district leadership.
- **For System Leaders.** Prioritize community engagement as a core component of the district's work such that it becomes part of the cultural fabric of every school.
- **For Building Leaders.** Develop and institutionalize student, family, and community-focused listening/learning sessions with a plan to respond to input.
- **For Principal Preparation and PD Providers.** Ensure course activities include practice in community engagement. Examples might include participatory action research, community-based equity audits, or report card deliveries/home visits.

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH

June 2023

Authors

Daniel Brogan
Sara Kemper
Katie Pikel
Yue Zhao

Findings

Principals cited student mental health (66%) and staff mental health (68%) as the two most significant challenges faced related to the pandemic.

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH

June 2023

Authors

Daniel Brogan
Sara Kemper
Katie Pikel
Yue Zhao

Findings: Students

Challenges manifested as emotional dysregulation, absences and bullying. Leaders felt these were exacerbated by social media, societal upheaval

Many report needing more personnel, training in concrete practices to respond to emotional dysregulation and resources to direct families to for support

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH

June 2023

Authors

Daniel Brogan
Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Findings: Staff

Challenges manifested as compassion fatigue, heightened emotions and retreating

Student behaviors, loss of a sense of purpose and lack of voice in decision making were all cited as contributing to burnout

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH

June 2023

Authors

Daniel Brogan
Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Recommendations: Students

- **For Policymakers.** Invest in significantly improving the ratios of mental health support personnel including through telehealth partnerships and workforce programs that incentivize careers in mental health.
- **For System Leaders.** Encourage building leaders to adopt an equity-oriented universal mental health screener and establish a schoolwide system for social and emotional learning.
- **For Building Leaders.** Leverage needs assessments, resource mapping, and equity-oriented universal screeners
- to better understand needs, available resources, and gaps.
- **For Principal Preparation and PD Providers.** Provide training on conducting a needs assessment and resource mapping to identify strengths, gaps, and priorities

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH

June 2023

Authors

Daniel Brogan
Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Recommendations: Staff

- **For Policymakers.** Require and fund annual school climate surveys.
- **For System Leaders.** Collect data
 - from school staff about their working conditions, and use it to inform strategies to prevent burnout
- **For Building Leaders.** Work towards reducing staff burnout by addressing the issues of staff planning time and staff coverage.
- **For Principal Preparation and PD Providers.** Help aspiring principals develop the skills, mindsets, and behaviors that have been consistently shown to promote positive climate: fostering trust, protecting team planning and learning time, and including staff members in decision-making.

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

June 2023

Authors

Sara Kemper
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Yue Zhao

Findings

Type of PD reported most frequently used also cited as least useful

Sustained learning with peers grounded in relevant research was a desire

Principals need to become more comfortable with leaving the building and need a reliable back-up plan to do so

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

June 2023

Authors

Sara Kemper
Katie Pekel
Yue Zhao

Recommendations

- **Policymakers.** Ensure the 125 clock hours for principal re-licensure are meaningful, and address content areas in which principals indicate low self-efficacy
- **For System Leaders.** Invest in developmental approaches to principal learning that are ongoing and collective in nature
- **For Building Leaders.** Develop a delegation structure that allows you to be out of the building and secure your supervisor's support.
- **For Principal Preparation and PD Providers.** Ensure that professional learning programs leverage high-impact strategies such as one-on-one support, learning communities, and job-embedded learning.

Two Overarching Recommendations

THE MINNESOTA PRINCIPALS SURVEY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION • HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

POLICY & PRACTICE BRIEF

**OVERARCHING
RECOMMENDATIONS**

June 2023

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Center for
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover

Synthesizing 779 responses to a 70-question, comprehensive survey about the principalship along with the feedback of 49 leaders in 9 focus groups into a brief set of recommendations is not simple; however, a lengthy list would not be useful, either. Therefore, our overarching recommendations each address four critical needs communicated through the survey and focus groups by principals: Time, Training, Trust, and Transformation—the four T's.

Time. Over and over again, principals conveyed time as an issue. In the survey, they told us they spent more time than they would like on administrative tasks and less time than they would like on instructional leadership and family and community engagement. They told us there is not enough time for their own professional growth or engagement in policy influence. In focus groups, they reiterated that daily "urgent" tasks (e.g., finding substitute teachers, responding to mental health crises) take time away from more strategic tasks like teacher coaching and curricular alignment.

Training. Overwhelmingly, principals told us they needed more and better training. On one hand, leaders felt their licensure programs had prepared them well to carry out the management and decision-making aspects of their jobs. On the other hand, respondents lacked confidence in instructional leadership—the aspect of their job that nearly 80% said was their primary role—specifically as it relates to culturally responsive instructional practices. They cite feeling obligated to be in their buildings, limited time, and a lack of access to high quality, research based professional development as obstacles to their own growth and improvement as leaders.

Trust. Principals report high levels of job satisfaction and that they feel their work is valued by the staff at their school; however, they also expressed trepidation about leading amidst community division and facilitating conversations about gender identity and race. Principals wanted their supervisors to trust and support them—to "have their backs" when needing to make an unpopular decision or lead an uncomfortable conversation.

Transformation. The role of the principal is immense, and more than

half of principals tell us that their workloads are not sustainable. While 90% of leaders tell us they feel that they can be successful leading their schools, to support their sustainability may require transforming key aspects of the principalship. Investments in high-quality, sustained professional development, fundamental restructuring of the use of time and resources, and sustained support will all need to take place. Our recommendations center the transformations that could take place in order to ensure the role of school leader is truly transformational.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: DEVELOPMENTAL
APPROACH TO INITIAL TRAINING, INTERNSHIP,
AND ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Both the MN Principal Survey data and the follow-up focus groups highlight a need for a developmental approach to principals' initial training and internship experiences and to their ongoing professional development. The vast majority of those entering the principalship have certification and experience in education. However, those experiences and their credentials are varied, giving some more experience in literacy and others more experience in mental health. We argue that candidates' prior credentialing and experiences should be accounted for in the crafting of their initial training programs, thus allowing for an approach that meets their content and developmental needs. This approach can and should be carried through into the internship experience, which we feel should be significantly broadened as well as into the ongoing professional development experiences of licensed administrators.

Initial Training. Our survey data demonstrates that leaders feel their initial preparation programs solidly prepared them in areas that largely fall into the category of management and decision making while they report feeling less prepared in areas like instructional and culturally responsive school leadership. Licensed Minnesota principals are highly credentialled with a minimum of 60 credits beyond their bachelor's degree and a demonstration of entry level competency in 86 competencies per Minnesota Administrative Rule 3512.0510. However, 58% of principals reported "culturally



Two Overarching Recommendations

*Developmental Approach to Initial Training, Internship,
and Ongoing Professional Development*

Two Overarching Recommendations

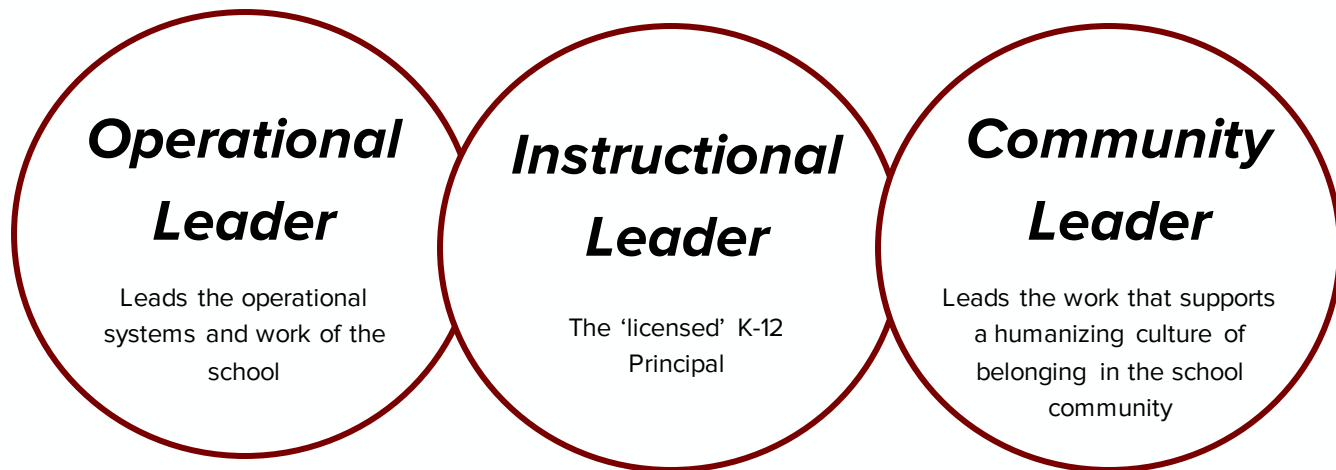
*Developmental Approach to Initial Training, Internship,
and Ongoing Professional Development*

A Different School Leadership Model

Developmental Approach to Initial Training, Internship, and Ongoing Professional Development



A Different School Leadership Model



Operational Leader

- This role would lead the operational systems and work of the school. They would have primary responsibility for things like: **communication, scheduling, HR functions, budgeting, safety and security, busing, reporting, and sustainability of the building.**
- As an example of the value this kind of role may have for a district, in the 5,000 student district of Acton-Boxborough in Massachusetts, investing in an 'energy manager', something the operations leader could do, netted the district \$500,000 in annual savings in energy costs (Lieberman, 2023).

Instructional Leader

- (The 'licensed' K-12 Principal) This role would lead the academic systems and work of the school. They would have the primary responsibility for **curriculum, instruction, assessment**.
- The instructional leader would work with teachers to determine and execute the academic continuous improvement agenda in the building.
- Things that likely would fall in this leader's portfolio would be MTSS, curricular selection, instructional coaching, data analysis, and professional learning related to academics.

Community Leader

- This role would lead the work that supports a humanizing culture of belonging in the school community. They would have primary responsibility for **student and staff wellbeing, engagement of student voice and activism, social and emotional learning (SEL), school climate, and family and community engagement.**
- As the leader who interfaces with organizations and the broader community in which the school is situated, they would champion the desires of the community, bring the ancestral knowledge of community members not only into the school, but also into the curriculum, and could lead resource mapping efforts to better integrate school and community.
- Ideally, this individual would see themselves—and be seen—as a member of the surrounding school community.



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Developmental and Impact Evaluation Results and Lessons Learned

Drs. Ava Yang-Lewis and Mark Lewis

ACT Research

Developmental and Impact Evaluation

Results and Lessons Learned



July 25, 2023

About Us

- Research
- Evaluation
- Strategy
- Design & Development



Participatory, Developmental, and Impact Evaluation Approaches

We supported schools in:

- Piloting and learning from small aspects of their potential programs during a smaller grant phase before the “Bold” grants even began
- Designing high-level theories of change and working models for their programs
- Designing and iterating their programs
- Co-designing learning and evaluation plans and tools
- Adapting to emerging learning and events

Participatory, Developmental, and Impact Evaluation Approaches

This looked like:

- Design sessions for program theories/models
- Co-designing flexible yearly evaluation plans that allowed for emerging needs & developments
- Co-creating data collection tools
- Helping schools gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, including tracking operational data through a research agreement with the district
- Providing frequent and actionable feedback to the schools by participating in meetings, team step-backs, presentations, and short action-focused reports

Benefits and Limitations of the Evaluation Approach

- The relational nature and long-term engagement can increase an evaluation's credibility, use, and effectiveness for driving development and innovation.
- The relational nature and long-term engagement means that we have also come to personally know the Foundation and schools and have a strong commitment and personal interest in their overall successes.



A case study on the impact of a partnership between community, educators, and a family foundation through two student-centered learning grants in North Minneapolis.

COMMUNITY-LED GRANTMAKING AND INVESTING IN LEARNING AND EDUCATOR-LED INNOVATION POSITIVELY ALTER STUDENT AND EDUCATOR EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOLS

A case study on the impact of a partnership between community, educators, and a family foundation through two student-centered learning grants in North Minneapolis.



Prepared by ACT Research for The Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota:

Mark Rose Lewis, PhD
Ava Yang-Lewis, PhD

Connected Community Academy

(Henry High)



My Story My Brilliance

(Olson Middle)



Community Connected Academy (CCA)

A mostly insulated, community-connected, student-centered pathway for 11th and 12th graders. It consists of four core teachers, a counselor, and a special education teacher. Students spend most of their day in CCA with a cohort of other students, only leaving for electives. The key components of CCA are:

- ❖ cohorts of students
- ❖ a project-based curriculum with a social justice emphasis
- ❖ a focus on students' futures including experiential real-world learning and internships
- ❖ a focus on social emotional learning (including identity development and advocacy)
- ❖ intentional culture and relationship building
- ❖ an integrated team of teachers and an embedded counselor
- ❖ deliberate connections to North Minneapolis through the curriculum, internships, and other programming

The CCA pathway at Henry continues and is currently being adapted to work within school and district realities and budget.



My Story My Brilliance (MSMB)

Founded on the core assumption that “our students possess inherent brilliance and a strong capacity for learning, but that conditions met within traditional schools frustrate, rather than cultivate these capacities”, MSMB aimed to “reconnect students with their agency (My Story) and their unique talents (My Brilliance)”. The key components of MSMB are:

- ❖ the creation of interdisciplinary teams of teachers and counselors
- ❖ a transformative counseling model that featured counselors at each grade level
- ❖ journaling
- ❖ a school wide commitment to intentional teaching and social-emotional learning
- ❖ a more relevant curriculum and interdisciplinary projects

and a focus on three student-centered questions: “Who am I now? From where did I come? Who am I becoming?”



For all intents and purposes, MSMB ended in the fall of 2021. The results and lessons that we'll share are focused on the fall of 2017 through the spring of 2021.

Impact & Results



Challenges

- District budget cuts challenged these programs and overall school operations every year
- A global pandemic severely disrupted both schooling and lives
- All in the context of generations of racism and new tragedies

Shortcomings

- **Unrealized program elements.** Some elements of the schools' intended program designs were never fully or sustainably implemented.
- **Finding time to plan.** Even with financial support for additional positions, finding time to plan during the summer and especially during the school year was a challenge.
- **Building systematic, repeatable processes.** Building systematic, repeated processes, was also a challenge, with schools designing creative new approaches but not always making them a regular, repeatable part of how they teach or support.



**Community
Connected
Academy**

Building a sense of community and strong support

"I think this larger sense of community, like we've had some tumultuous times in CCA where there's been conflict over the years between students and we've worked through it. ... And I think that's super important, that sense of community and what it means to be a part of a community." – CCA Educator

% responding "Often" or "Almost Always"

Students feel that they belong at CCA/school



Teachers are interested in getting to know their students



Teachers care about their students



Students have friends at school



Preparing students for college, career, and real life

95%

Of students agree or strongly agree that CCA is helping them be ready for college, career, and real life

Helping students understand who they are

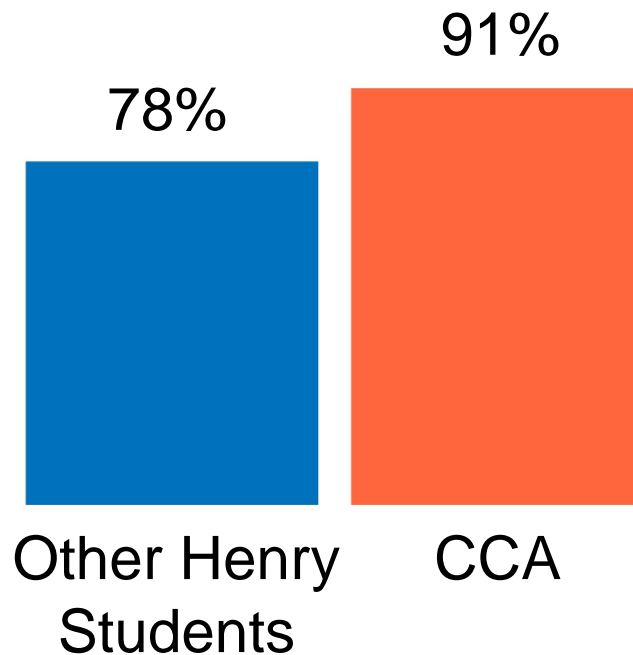
“CCA helps me develop my identity because it gives me an opportunity to work on projects that reflect on who I am.” – CCA Student

“CCA made me learn that there were many opportunities to choose from.” – CCA Student

“Before CCA, I knew I was going to college. Didn’t know what I wanted to go for and [I was] not motivated ... North News [internship] helped me find a passion and do a double major. It helped me focus on what I want to do ...” – CCA Student

**Strong retention
and graduation**

Graduation Rate



Promising Lessons for Schools



Cohort models, insulated pathways, and teacher-counselor teams can build community and provide strong support

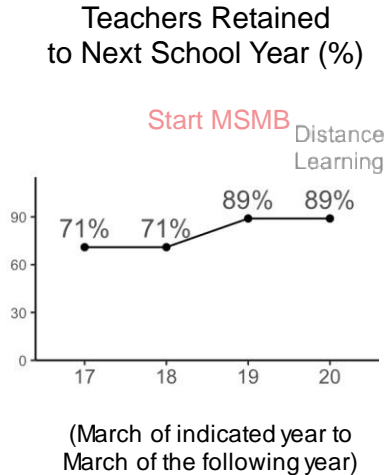


Project-based learning and internships engage and excite students and help prepare them for the real world



OLSON
MIDDLE SCHOOL

Teacher retention



Teamwork and a profoundly different teacher and counselor experience

“The staff went from running away every year to coalescing and being here and really having a sense of mission.” – Olson Educator

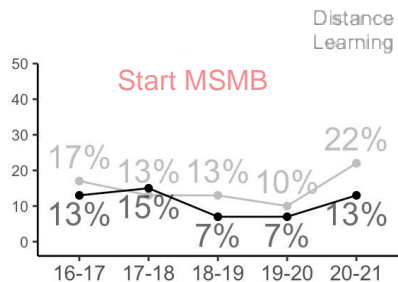
“They [teachers] know, okay, if this is going on in my classroom and I've tried to handle it myself but it's not working, I know I've got somebody who can come and either just step out in the hall with the student, maybe just sit down next to the student in the classroom. I know that if I make a phone call to a parent as a teacher, I know that I've got my counselor on my teaching team to help support me.” – Olson Educator



Promising academic and disciplinary outcomes with room for growth in standardized test scores

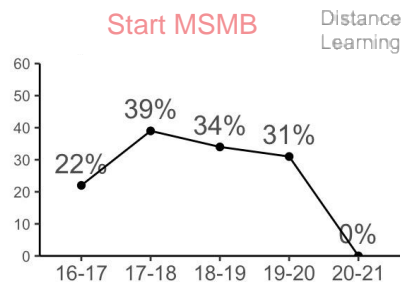
I think the academic piece came along because ... [if] you don't get suspended so much, you are present in school more, you're probably going to be more successful. – Olson Educator

% Failing 1 or More Classes (Q1)

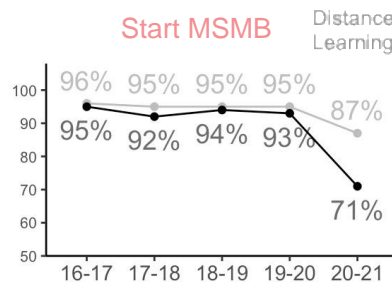


-Olson -District

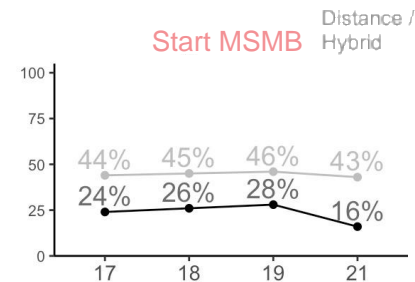
% Suspended At Least Once (Q1 + Q2)



Attendance (Q1)



MCA Reading % Proficient



New levels of student support

“I feel like I have good relationships, they know me, they know I do my work. If I don't do my work, they know there's something going on in my life and help.”
– Olson Student

“Counselors at Olson have helped me to get through the times where it feels like the world is crashing down, and where you feel trapped.” – Olson Student

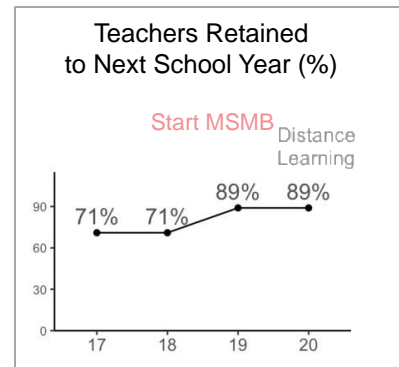
“They’ve helped me become a better person – I can always go to them when I need them. They always encourage me to do my work and will actually help me do work, and that’s a good thing.” – Olson Student



Promising Lessons for Schools



The journaling and counseling models (including the educator teamwork components) are concrete and reproducible ways to build foundational relationships and improve climate.

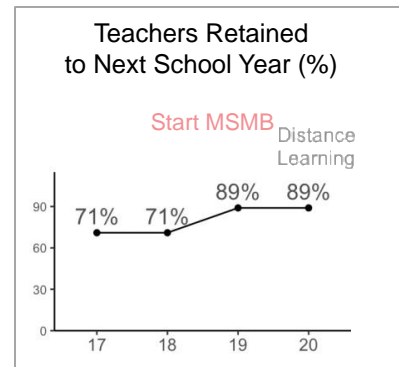


This type of change can have a significant impact on climate and outcomes in a short period of time.

Promising Lessons for Schools



The journaling and counseling models (including the educator teamwork components) are concrete and reproducible ways to build foundational relationships and improve climate.



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Key Lessons Learned for Grantmaking in School Change

- Engage deeply and commit to long-term partnerships
- Invest in learning
- Investing directly in educators may be a game changer for designing new ways of teaching, learning, and supporting students; AND they need time and capacity to do this work.
- This work is not possible without strong school leaders who empower and actively support their staff to design and implement change



A case study on the impact of a partnership between community, educators, and a family foundation through two student-centered learning grants in North Minneapolis.

COMMUNITY-LED GRANTMAKING AND INVESTING IN LEARNING AND EDUCATOR-LED INNOVATION POSITIVELY ALTER STUDENT AND EDUCATOR EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOLS

A case study on the impact of a partnership between community, educators, and a family foundation through two student-centered learning grants in North Minneapolis.



Prepared by ACT Research for The Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota:

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A Conversation with School Leaders

Yusuf Abdullah

Associate Superintendent, Minneapolis Public Schools and former principal of Patrick Henry High School

Dr. Steve Emerson

Assistant Professor, St. Cloud State University and former principal of Olson Middle School

How School Leaders Sustain Student-Centered Innovation:

Lessons from North Minneapolis