



The Institute for Education Leadership
L'Institut de leadership en éducation

SUCCESSION PLANNING

FOR ONTARIO SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDS



A STUDY
COMMISSIONED
BY THE INSTITUTE FOR
EDUCATION LEADERSHIP



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Foreword

This report is based on a project commissioned by the Institute for Education Leadership and carried out by The Learning Partnership to address issues that school boards face in building a cadre of outstanding educational leaders. The report summarizes the data gathered through a variety of approaches, provides profiles of current principals and vice-principals, identifies some promising practices and concludes with advice on how schools and school boards can work to strengthen succession planning and leadership development.

Strong leadership is the cornerstone of the success of the educational system in Ontario. Principals, in particular, are second only to teachers in their influence on how well students learn. Without effective superintendents, principals and vice-principals to support excellent teachers, create outstanding schools and foster student achievement, our public education system will suffer. The need to recruit and retain capable leaders means that succession planning and leadership development must become a priority for Ontario schools and school boards. This requires organizations to take a long-term, strategic view of the way they manage their human resources.

“Our school system is only as good as the leadership.”

Official with a provincial organization

The Challenge

A 2001 study carried out for the Ontario Principals' Council predicted that by 2009 more than 80 per cent of the province's elementary and secondary school principals will be eligible for retirement. Given that startling figure, it is critical that Ontario school boards continue to refine their recruiting practices to support a new cadre of school leaders, and to ensure their succession planning practices attract the best candidates for the job.

Some school boards and individual schools are encountering challenges in filling vacant positions. Recruiting new principals and vice-principals is particularly difficult. Despite the fact that nearly 1000 teachers complete their principal's qualification certification each year, the Ontario College of Teachers still has to issue temporary letters of approval allowing teachers without these professional qualifications to act as principals and vice-principals.

As of 2007, there were approximately 17,000 members of the College of Teachers with principal's qualifications; about 56 per cent were 50 or older. Surveys indicate, however, that not everyone who has the qualifications intends to apply for leadership positions. This mismatch between qualified candidates and job applications has resulted in a potential shortage of candidates for these pivotal leadership roles.

At the same time, many Ontario school boards are experiencing declining student enrollment. In response, boards are reducing the number of administrative positions through school closures and senior administration attrition. Experienced administrators are finding fewer opportunities for advancement to senior administrative positions in smaller rural boards.

Given this landscape, the Institute for Education Leadership, a partnership of Ontario principals' associations, supervisory officers' associations, councils of directors of education and the Ministry of Education, commissioned the current study to review existing knowledge about succession planning in Ontario and to examine current practices and issues that school boards and schools face.

The study is based on the work of the Institute for Education Leadership, which includes the Ontario Leadership Framework, describing competencies for education leaders and the system practices that support conditions for successful leadership. Additionally, the Institute has developed a Leadership Self-Review Tool (LSRT) to assist school boards in examining how they support leadership practices in their schools. The Leadership Framework, Leadership Self-Review Tool and this *Succession Planning: Schools and School Boards* report are available on the IEL website www.education-leadership-ontario.ca. The full report is also available at the TLP website www.thelearningpartnership.ca.

The report includes:

- demographic profiles of the current cadre of Ontario's educational leaders;
- succession-planning practices in a sample of Ontario school boards, and in the literature;
- factors that motivate people to aspire to education leadership; and
- barriers that discourage people from applying for and assuming leadership roles in education.

The research examined succession planning practices by interviewing representatives from 20 school boards in the province, representing English and French, public and Catholic, urban and rural, and large and small boards. Researchers also reviewed current literature, analyzed data describing the demographic characteristics of educational leaders, interviewed representatives of organizations representing principals, supervisory officers and trustees, and consulted members of an advisory board of public and private-sector leaders and specialists in human resources. A total of 153 French-language and 1,120 English-language principals, vice-principals and supervisory officers completed online surveys rating their board's succession planning policies and practices and shared their perceptions of what motivates and discourages potential leaders.

This document summarizes the report's major observations, including advice on how schools and school boards can work together to strengthen succession planning and leadership development.

The Principal Challenge

Ontario is not alone in the challenges it faces to fill leadership roles in education. Almost 10 years ago, in 1999, the Canadian Association of Principals determined that the projected shortage of administrators was borne out across the country. In 2003, the Association published a Leadership Crisis Study that indicated the shortage predicted in 1999 had indeed become a reality. The report related anecdotes about unqualified new administrators being appointed to schools, retired principals being recruited back to work, and schools beginning their academic year without leaders because administrative vacancies were not filled. Particular challenges emerged in attracting enough candidates in geographically isolated or minority language communities.

The problem is not confined to Canada. Studies in the United States, Australia and Britain have identified a shortage of qualified candidates for principals'

jobs. The leadership deficit is evident not only in education. The Federation canadienne de l'entreprise indépendante determined in a 2006 study that over the next five years, 34 per cent of the owners of small and medium-sized businesses in Canada expect to retire or hand the leadership over to somebody else. The National College for School Leadership in Britain also puts its leadership crisis in context, citing the prospective retirement by 2014 of 40 to 50 per cent of private-sector leaders.

The difference between the leadership challenge in the private and in the education sectors is largely in the way each sector is responding to it. Many businesses have already adopted systematic succession plans to replace their departing executives. The education sector, by contrast, is just now coming to grips with the problem and considering its succession needs.

Profile of English-language Principals

- As of 2005/06, there were 4,385 principals in Ontario schools.
- Eighty-three per cent were in elementary schools, 17 per cent in secondary schools.
- On average, principals are 50 years of age.
- They have close to 25 years of experience in education.
- As of this year (2008), 37 per cent of elementary school principals are eligible to retire.
- Almost 50 per cent of secondary school principals are eligible to retire.
- By 2011, 69 per cent of Catholic secondary school principals will be eligible to retire, and 61 per cent of elementary school principals.
- Two-thirds of elementary school principals are women.
- Forty-four per cent of secondary school principals are women.
- From 2009-2017, 10-15 per cent of principals will be eligible to retire over each successive three-year period.

Profile of French-language Principals

- There were 393 principals in French-language schools in Ontario in 2005/06.
- Seventy-eight per cent were in elementary schools, and 22 percent in secondary schools.
- On average, principals are 46 years old and have 19 to 20 years of experience.
- Almost 50 per cent of these principals will be eligible to retire beginning in 2018.
- Sixty per cent of elementary school principals are women; 60 per cent of secondary school principals are men.



Motivating Factors

Being a principal has both internal and external rewards. In one study (d'Arbon, Neidhart and Carlin, 2002) principals identified their ability to make a difference, to build professional and committed teams, and the multi-faceted nature of their role as reasons for becoming administrators. They enjoyed the personal challenge of their job, their role as an agent of change, the power and authority associated with their position, the salary package, and their ability to shape the educational outcomes for children. According to the study, personal and professional internal rewards motivate these educational leaders more than external ones.

Principals in Ontario and British Columbia identified “the ability to formulate purpose, resolve values-dilemmas, and make a difference in the lives of students, teachers and parents” as the main reasons they became school administrators, according to a

2002 study (Wallace). The principals said they found their instructional leadership role the most satisfying, and their managerial role least gratifying.

School leaders who responded to the survey or were interviewed for this project chose the following terms as a reflection of what motivated them the most to become principals or vice-principals:

- contributing to student growth and achievement,
- making a difference in the lives of others,
- providing instructional leadership to staff and working as an agent of change,
- working with parents and the community, or contributing to system-wide initiatives, and
- being challenged and stretched professionally.

In Roman Catholic school boards, administrators also identified the board's vision, mission and Catholic education values as motivational factors.

Barriers

In 2001, principals and vice-principals who responded to a survey that the Ontario Principals' Council commissioned, identified three main issues that negatively influenced job satisfaction:

- managing and implementing changes the province mandated,
- availability of resources (money and people) at schools, and
- time demands of the job.

Educators who chose not to pursue leadership roles identified similar disincentives.

The Ontario Principals' Council has identified other potential barriers.

- In many school districts, principals and vice-principals who opt to leave their administrative positions to return to teaching in the classroom lose their seniority.
- Principals feel overwhelmed with administrative duties, leaving little time for them to be instructional leaders of their schools.
- Principals would benefit from courses that combine theory with practice, i.e., both management and instructional leadership components.

Members of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario chose time management as the major obstacle that prevented them from carrying out their main job, which they defined as dealing with instructional issues. The principals cited four tasks that took them away from their central role:

- supervising students during administrative and personal time, because of collective agreement issues;
- responsibilities created by EQAO, teacher recruitment, transportation, and health and safety requirements;
- carrying out new Ministry and board initiatives that do not take existing initiatives and school improvement plans into account; and
- duties downloaded from consultants or supervisory officers whose positions were cut.

Ontario's French-language school boards identified four other obstacles to succession planning.

- The requirement that candidates need to be certified limits the pool of qualified people.
- Candidates can only be selected from the field of education (except for Directors of Services).
- A shortage of qualified teachers who are available to apply for an administrative position was identified.
- Most teachers don't want to apply for a leadership job.

Interviews and surveys completed by members of the 20 boards who participated in this project identified additional barriers. Attracting candidates from other communities is difficult, since many people are unwilling to uproot and relocate their families. Teachers have an increasingly negative perception of the administrative tasks associated with the job.

In addition, the salary gap between teacher and leadership roles is diminishing. There is only a small pay increase to move from a department head position to a first-year vice-principal, for example. Many teachers are reluctant to leave their unions and lose their seniority; still others reject roles that would require them to spend 10 to 12 hours a day at work.

Additional obstacles include:

- job stress,
- difficulty satisfying parents and the community,
- poverty, lack of family supports and other societal problems that divert attention from instructional issues,
- inadequate (school) funding and resources,
- increased violence in the schools,
- limited ability to exercise autonomy,
- costs associated with earning qualifications, and
- management-union relationships.

We need to address these challenges and overcome these barriers to ensure there are enough qualified educators available to take on the leadership roles in our schools and our boards.

*“ Spending 10 to 12 hours a day at work
has begun to take a toll on my family and my health. ”*

Profile of French-language Vice-principals

- There were 99 vice-principals in French-language schools as of 2005/2006.
- Fifty per cent were in elementary schools and 50 per cent in secondary schools.
- On average, vice-principals are 44 years of age.
- They have, on average, 18 to 19 years of experience.
- Fifty-eight per cent of elementary vice-principals and 47 per cent of secondary school principals will be eligible to retire beginning in 2018.
- Fifty-eight per cent of elementary vice-principals are women, and 61 per cent of secondary school vice-principals are men.

Profile of English-language Vice-principals

- There were 2,695 vice-principals in Ontario schools as of 2005/2006.
- Sixty per cent were in elementary schools, 40 per cent were in secondary schools.
- On average, vice-principals are 45 to 47 years old.
- They have, on average, 17 to 20 years of experience in education (elementary/secondary).
- Beginning in 2018, 53 per cent of elementary vice-principals and 39 per cent of secondary vice-principals will be eligible to retire.
- Two-thirds of elementary vice-principals are women; slightly less than 50 per cent of secondary school vice-principals are women.

Succession Planning Practices

The Canadian Association of Principals' Leadership Crisis Study of 2003 found that all regions across the country recognized the need to support and encourage current and new administrators. They also recognized the critical nature of the need for a better work-life balance among school leaders, for more support from their peers and professional organizations, and the need for current leaders to advocate on behalf of the career.

The most immediate need for succession planning concerns principals. Between one-third and one-half of the 2005/2006 cohort of elementary and secondary school principals (37 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively) become eligible to retire by the end of this year (2008). That will create a critical short-term challenge.

There is a 10-year window to put succession-planning programs in place to deal with the retirement of vice-principals. Beginning in 2018, 53 per cent of elementary and 39 per cent of secondary school vice-principals will be eligible to retire.

Of particular concern is the geographic distribution of current and future leaders. Small boards, particularly in the North or more rural regions, may not have large enough pools of candidates from which to draw. Data from the College of Teachers indicates that most people with principal's and/or supervisory officer's qualifications live in the central and southcentral regions of Ontario. Board officials also indicated in interviews that the boards tend to hire from within, without looking for external candidates. In addition, people are reluctant to take jobs that require relocating their families.

School boards across the country are taking various approaches to succession planning. These include:

- recalling retired principals to fill vacancies;
- developing leadership standards/qualifications to select and hire administrators (Ontario, B.C. Alberta);
- adopting mentoring, coaching and induction programs to encourage applicants (Ontario);
- requiring potential principals to complete leadership courses (Ontario);
- giving potential leaders leadership roles within their schools and school system to develop their skills;
- granting teachers a two-year leave of absence to try leadership positions and then allowing them to return to teaching without loss of seniority (Quebec); and
- making qualified teachers vice-principals, regardless of a school's size, to give them leadership experience (Saskatchewan).

One of the succession planning priorities that school boards should consider is the need to recruit potential leaders from diverse groups that reflect their schools' populations. Currently, most of the teachers and leaders surveyed for this project (55 per cent of English respondents and 52 per cent of French respondents) do not know whether their school board has put practices in place to recruit candidates for administrative positions from communities that reflect the diversity of the student population. Boards need high-profile and transparent recruitment programs to attract leadership candidates from all cultures. These are the role models that students deserve to learn from and emulate.

Succession Planning Models

Succession planning is a critical issue across the public and private sector. The education sector can learn from the experience of other fields and try to avoid their missteps. The Conseil des ressources humaines du secteur culturel highlighted the common mistakes most organizations make in undertaking succession planning. Some of those include:

- failing to tell people they are being considered for a leadership role, so possible candidates leave before they are offered a new job;
- underestimating the talent that exists within the organization to help with succession planning;
- being close-minded about who could fill a position;
- concentrating on specialized, not general competencies;
- waiting for potential candidates to identify themselves; and

- failing to offer adequate training and professional development.

Ram Charan, a veteran in CEO succession planning, warns that traditional leadership development approaches are fundamentally flawed. He is a proponent of an apprenticeship model that helps leaders at all levels develop faster and better, accelerated by a series of challenges.

Other leadership experts agree on a fundamental requirement for developing effective leaders: the need for both public and private organizations to adopt a systematic approach and long-term view of succession planning that is aligned with its strategic goals and overall vision.

Promising Practices

Traditional succession planning reacts to leadership gaps, identifying one or two potential replacements as leadership positions become available. The best succession planning practices are proactive. They consist of systematic processes to identify and nurture pools of candidates who are evaluated on different perspectives and sources of information, not just the recommendations of superiors. Talented individuals are identified early and nurtured throughout their careers through professional development that is integrated into human resource management.

Other countries that also face challenges in recruiting and retaining leaders for public sector positions have identified some common practices to manage succession. Reporting to the United States General Accounting Office on succession in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, J.C. Mihm identified six such practices:

1. **Provide active support from top leadership.** In Ontario, for example, the heads of every government ministry attend a succession-planning retreat to plan ways to meet the anticipated leadership needs across the government. In another example, high-level RCMP executives meet quarterly to discuss the organization's succession needs and decide which staff members meet those needs.
2. **Link succession planning to strategic planning.** In 2001 Statistics Canada incorporated retirement projections for its senior executives into its strategic planning process. The organization created a development program to train, rotate and mentor assistant directors to build up the potential pool of replacement candidates.

3. **Identify talent from multiple levels of an organization early in careers.** The United Kingdom has developed a Fast Track program to identify civil servants with potential who are then rotated through jobs to gain leadership experience.
4. **Emphasize developmental assignments, not just formal training.** Canada's Accelerated Executive Development Program prepares senior executives for top public service roles by giving them new roles or placing them in unfamiliar job environments to strengthen skills and broaden experience.
5. **Address diversity, leadership capacity, and retention.** Provide incentives, as the Office of the Auditor General does in the federal government, to retain employees with high potential. Develop leaders from under-represented ethnic groups, and among men. The U.K.'s Pathways program provides executive coaching, skills training and development to develop senior managers from ethnic minorities.
6. **Facilitate broader transformation.** View succession planning as one way to transform an organization and inspire leaders and managers who champion change. The U.K.'s Modernising Government reform focused on improving the quality of and access to public services.

Ontario's education sector can learn from these corporate and public examples. School boards that have a leadership talent management program in place and who adopt succession planning and leadership development practices at the school and district level will fare better than those who merely react to vacancies.

Current Positive Practices

Ontario school boards do provide training and development opportunities for aspiring leaders, as noted by many survey respondents. However, many people felt that boards could offer more opportunities for job shadowing, mentoring, and professional development based on real scenarios, not theoretical issues.

The positive practices they cited include:

- mentoring
- internships
- leadership courses and workshops

- identification of potential leaders
- support from senior administration
- time off to attend training
- an encouraging, collaborative and collegial environment
- an equitable, fair process with clear criteria.

In both English and French-language boards, the responsibility for identifying potential candidates lies largely with principals. Few people identify themselves as being leaders-in-waiting, but occasionally a colleague will encourage or single out a future leader.

Ontario Models

In addition to the steps individual boards can take to bolster their succession planning, provincial organizations play an important role in developing leadership. They co-ordinate and deliver certification programs and encourage mentoring in individual boards. Working together to share resources can relieve some of the financial burden that is particularly pressing for smaller school boards.

The boards that participated in this project understand the importance of cultivating future

leaders. Several already have mentoring programs and internships, are releasing teachers from their classrooms to attend leadership and professional development training, and offer opportunities to lead within their schools. We are concerned, however, that generally scant resources are limiting the scope and depth of training available in Ontario, particularly given the large scale of the leadership deficit. A shift in attitude is particularly important for prudent human resources management.

“ *Some of my best learning came from reviewing and discussing case studies. We need to give candidates more opportunities to job shadow principals and vice-principals so that they can gain a deeper understanding of the job.* ”

Concluding Advice

The need to think about and plan for future leaders is evident around the world in many sectors, including education, health, government and business. The challenges of replacing an aging workforce are many in a world that is increasingly complex, diverse and demanding the highest quality. We face challenges not only in finding individuals who are willing to take on leadership responsibilities but in finding ways to transfer knowledge from one generation to the next. Given the ambitious priorities of the Ontario government which include higher levels of student

achievement, reduced gaps in student achievement and increased public confidence in publicly funded education, it is critical that serious attention be given to building leadership capacity.

We comment on four areas:

- human resources management
- the need for balancing centralized vs local leadership
- expectations of the principal’s role
- the need for more comprehensive data.

Ontario models

Huron-Perth CDSB

Early identification of leadership candidates

This board holds an annual leadership review and mentoring program. By identifying future leaders early, the Board coaches and mentors them through the certification, development and selection processes. Concentrating resources on these future leaders means the Board will be ready for looming shortages.

Simcoe Muskoka CDSB

Leadership Development Activities

This board is engaging retired school and board administrators to meet and mentor interested teachers through the early phases of certification and selection. By involving former leaders with hands-on experience, the Board is successfully identifying and recruiting new leaders.

Rainbow DSB

New Succession Processes

Traditionally, school boards post job vacancies annually, then interview selected applicants, who are placed on short-lists for potential placements. The Rainbow board has adopted a comprehensive selection process that includes portfolios, site visits and a peer-run assessment centre.

Conseil Scolaire de district catholique de Centre-Est de l'Ontario

Broadening the Selection Committee

Usually, school board trustees are involved in the process to select supervisory officers. This school board has set up a panel of experienced administrators from the public and private sectors, chaired by the Director, to choose supervisory officers.

Trillium Lakelands DSB

Mentoring and Coaching

This board uses retired administrators to mentor and coach newly appointed principals and vice-principals. Boards that invest in training and selecting mentors, as in this case, strengthen professional development.

Upper Canada DSB

Value and Mission Statement

This board has published a strategic planning document called *Staying the Course*, which includes a clear statement of its mission, vision and core values. The document defines critical leadership positions within the system, letting potential applicants know what the board stands for.

York Region DSB

Practising Skills

This board puts entry-level candidates for leadership positions through a rigorous practicum. That experience prepares them for leadership and lets the system evaluate their strengths.

Waterloo CDSB

Discernment and Feedback

This board carefully screens candidates, considering the way their professional skills and achievements align with its vision and values. Leadership candidates are expected to participate in an ongoing growth and development program that provides feedback for candidates who the Board decides aren't ready to lead. As a result, the Board has a strong and vigorous leadership pool.

Hamilton-Wentworth DSB

Human Resources Audit

Systematic evaluation of a board's succession planning process allows it to adjust factors that encourage or discourage applicants. This board completes a human resources audit every year to refine its training and development activities.

Human Resources Management

The literature is clear that one of the best succession planning strategies is the early identification and training of potential leaders. Our observation from the literature is that many organizations outside of education take a longer, more strategic and comprehensive view of the management of their human resources.

In our opinion human resources management is not just about recruitment and training for future leaders but also includes provision for maintaining and developing current leaders. Based on our projections of when current leaders will be eligible to retire, the largest number of retirements is likely to occur in the next two to three years, by 2011. We will then have in place a cadre of young vice-principals, principals and supervisory officers who will likely be in their positions for a considerable number of years. How do we ensure that we retain and motivate these leaders?

Our Advice: *Planning for the management of a board's human resources should be considered an integral part of an overall strategic planning process. In our view, a comprehensive strategic plan should include the following components: a business plan, a fiscal plan, a quality assurance plan and a human resources management plan.*

Human resources management plans should be transparent and take into account all board staff - both those responsible for business operations as well as those responsible for teaching. Human resources management plans need to provide for recruiting a diverse leadership cadre that is representative of the community served. It must give attention to a wide range of development experiences to build readiness for leadership, provide for ongoing professional learning opportunities for current leaders, and outline diverse career paths available to those within the system. Succession planning does not start with choosing the next candidate to fill a vacancy. It starts early. It is anticipatory, based on data about future needs and it reflects the vision and mission of the organization. Furthermore, as with all aspects of strategic planning, human resources plans should be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis.

Human resources management will require boards to take a more comprehensive and in-depth look at their staff, their community and their future needs. The ability to prepare and implement such plans will require human resources expertise as well as appropriate training and the provision of resources.

Based on our observations from the available data, it appears that if current trends continue, the vast majority of our administrative cadre will be female and not representative of our diverse community. While we are supportive of programs and initiatives that encourage women (and it is obvious that the field of education has been very successful in this regard) we are mindful of differences in performance between boys and girls, particularly in the area of literacy. It is equally important to ensure that there are capable and competent men to serve as role models for young male students in our schools. Similarly, without specific interventions, school boards' expressed desire to have an employee cadre reflective of the diverse student population they serve will not be achieved.

Our Advice: *We further emphasize, therefore, that in developing their human resources management plan, boards give attention to the diversity of their population to ensure that they are reaching out to hire and build capacity in young people who represent their community. We point out that such outreach strategies should include attention to providing for a balance of young men and women and to the establishment of programs to promote education as a viable career for young men. This notion applies equally to outreach to minority and particularly visible minority communities.*

There is a concern about small boards, particularly in the North or less urban regions of the province, having a sufficient administrative pool of qualified people. The College of Teachers' data indicates that the majority of those who hold principal and/or supervisory officer qualifications live in the central and south central regions of the province. Further, our interviews with board officials indicate that boards tend to hire from within. Even within a board, for family reasons, some people are reluctant to take on assignments that may require relocation.

Our Advice: *To ensure there are adequate numbers of people with qualifications in all regions of the province, attention needs to be given to providing opportunities for teachers to acquire qualifications in ways that do not require them to spend significant amounts of money or travel-time to central training facilities.*

Approaches to Leadership

Increasingly in the literature, there is reference to less hierarchical models of leadership and providing opportunities for more autonomy in decision-making. Our findings support the need to give more attention to leadership models at all levels of education – the school, the board and the Ministry of Education. Principals would like a greater level of autonomy in running their schools and in hiring staff. They are often caught between finding time to devote to their school-based areas for improvement and the need to carry out new programs initiated at other levels. There is also the need for appropriate training and resources required for implementation of new initiatives.

In our view, the government has made significant headway in identifying specific targets and strategies for improvement in the system and school boards and schools have benefited from the government's investment in resources and support to aid the improvement process. In order for the government to truly achieve its mandate, however, it is necessary to build a leadership cadre that is comfortable with a significant level of autonomy as well as accountability

for clear deliverables. There needs to be more room for flexibility and the opportunity to modify approaches to meet particular local needs.

One approach that is talked about increasingly is the notion of distributed leadership - the concept of mobilizing leadership at all levels in an organization, not just relying on leadership from the top. Given that many young teachers seem reluctant to pursue formal leadership roles, perhaps encouraging and fostering distributed leadership is a way to ensure that schools and boards benefit from their ideas as well as giving them opportunities to develop leadership capacity. Formal leaders such as principals, supervisory officers, and directors will also benefit through sharing their load of leadership responsibilities.

Our Advice: *As the paradigm shifts towards a more balanced accountability framework, leadership training focused on collegial and collaborative approaches will need to take precedence. We have noticed an intergenerational difference in approaches to leadership. Younger, newly-appointed administrators have expressed a clear preference for engagement and a more democratic work place.*

Expectations of the Role of the Principal

The work undertaken as part of this project has affirmed many key findings from the literature. Those who aspire to be educational leaders are motivated by the opportunity to have an influence on shaping educational outcomes for young people; in other words, to make a difference. Current leaders, however, report that the reality of the day-to-day operation of a school is much less inspiring and, in fact, can be discouraging. Despite defining the key role of principal as being an instructional leader and working with teaching staff to provide a nurturing learning environment for their students, principals indicate that they find themselves spending an inordinate amount of time on operational/ management issues. Principals and vice-principals who responded to our survey made it clear that while they put in long hours trying to fulfill all of their responsibilities, their jobs are increasingly stressful and they are finding it difficult to find a balance between family and work demands.

Given the increasing complexity of managing schools and the multitude of demands made on educational administrators, boards of education need future leaders who are of the highest caliber in a time when fewer young teachers are interested in becoming principals.

Board officials confirmed that there are many more challenges to filling leadership positions than there were a decade ago and that fewer people seem interested in applying for leadership positions. Not only are potential candidates considering the stresses of the job but a diminishing salary differential between teachers and administrators makes it less appealing for many people. Adding to the difficulty of making a decision to pursue a career as an administrator is the requirement to give up membership in the union and the knowledge that if they want to return to teaching they will lose seniority.

Our Advice: *Boards need to give attention to how they can balance the administrative responsibilities for managing a school so that principals feel they can devote time and resources to their key responsibility, that of instructional leader. Some jurisdictions seek to streamline operational procedure; other jurisdictions (e.g., the U.K.) have introduced additional roles in the school office to take responsibility for and manage many of the administrative tasks. Both approaches have merit and should be explored further, with this caution: attention must be given to clear delineation of the nature and scope of responsibilities; lines of authority must be established; and resources must be provided to train principals to maximize this assistance.*

Need for More Data

It was clear that the nature and extent of data that would have been most helpful in answering some of the questions for this project were not available. For example, while we could access data about principals and vice-principals in terms of factors such as age, experience, gender, and employment status, such data were not available for either supervisory officers or directors of education. Further, we could not determine the ethnic/racial composition of our administrative cadre nor whether it reflects the diversity in our student population.

***Our Advice:** There is a need to establish and maintain a comprehensive, systematic and consistent database about school and system administrators across the province.*

While it appears there should be a sufficient number of educators with the qualifications to meet provincial needs, questions continue to arise about whether those with the qualifications are “the right people” to meet particular needs. There is concern whether the talent pool is “deep enough”. Adding to these concerns is the question of whether those who have the qualifications are interested in applying for administrative positions. There is anecdotal evidence that some teachers complete the principal’s qualification course as a professional development opportunity and are not interested in applying for vice-principal or principal positions.

Our project focused on gathering data from those already in administrative positions from the vice-principal through to the director of education. While the literature and our participants talked about the many barriers to teachers moving into administrative positions and the sources of challenge and stress in fulfilling current administrators jobs, it seems to us

that it would be valuable to talk directly with two groups: those who may aspire to be principals but have not yet taken steps to acquire the qualifications, as well as those who have acquired the qualifications, seem to have the potential talent but have made a decision not to pursue an administrative career. What are the real issues that are of concern to them? Do they have advice on how some of their concerns might be addressed?

In conclusion, Ontario has made significant gains in sharpening the focus on student achievement and narrowing the gap in academic performance. We need to be proud and celebrate those successes. In order to ensure that these successes continue, there needs to be a more deliberate, consistent and long-term focus on capacity building and leadership development. This paper contributes to the knowledge that already exists and the considerable efforts that schools, school boards and government have made in this regard. It also points to some potential areas of growth that would benefit all and ensure the sustainability of Ontario’s ambitious educational goals.

At the board level there must be an understanding of the issues surrounding the attraction of qualified candidates to make sure that leadership positions in Ontario schools are filled by the best possible candidates for the job. Boards must examine their leadership development and succession practices, to make sure they adopt the best possible practices to recruit and retain the strong, effective leaders our students and our communities deserve.

The Learning Partnership would like to thank the many people in school boards, provincial organizations and the Ministry of Education who took time to share their policies and practices and to answer the researcher’s questions. The information they shared will help us to build an even stronger generation of leaders in education in Ontario.



The Institute for Education Leadership's Actions and Next Steps

The Institute is committed to providing supports to boards to enhance their succession planning and leadership development practices. In the past year, the Institute developed the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) and is currently providing provincial training for its use. The Framework describes a set of core skills and leadership practices for principals and vice-principals and for supervisory officers.

The Institute has also developed a Leadership Self-Review Tool (LSRT), to help leaders rate their board's leadership development practices against suggested practices. Using this tool will help school board staff determine the effectiveness of their succession planning practices and programs, and allow them to make changes if necessary. Education leaders can consult the Institute for Education Leadership's website: www.education-leadership-ontario.ca for these and additional resources.

With the release this fall of the provincial government's Ontario Leadership Strategy boards have been provided funding to support recently promoted principals and vice-principals with mentoring and coaching. The Institute's partner principal organizations have taken the lead in developing support materials for this initiative.

The Institute is developing strategies to further assist boards in transferring the research into practice. Upcoming initiatives will align with the Ontario Leadership Strategy and will put in place exemplars of promising practices. Boards will be able to access the support documents on the Institute for Education website at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca.

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About the Institute for Education Leadership

Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership is a unique partnership among the principals' associations, supervisory officers' associations, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, and the ministry. The institute believes a collaborative team approach is essential in supporting effective leadership and it operates within a tri-level structure with school, board and provincial leadership. The mandate of the institute is to support effective leadership through opportunities for professional learning based on research, effective practice and sound policy. Ultimately, its aim is to improve student achievement.

As part of its work on research into practice, the institute has adopted a set of leadership tools that describe effective practices and competencies for principals and vice-principals and for supervisory officers and the effective system practices and procedures that support conditions for successful leadership.

In addition, the institute, in collaboration with the ministry, has piloted and launched a Leadership Self-Review Tool (LSRT) to assist school boards in examining how they support leadership practices in their schools. The LSRT can be found at: <http://www.education-leadership-ontario.ca>.

Institute for Education Leadership Partner Organizations

- Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes
- Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne
- Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario
- Council of Ontario Directors of Education
- Ministry of Education
- Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association
- Ontario Principals' Council
- Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association

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