

**Principals in Transition: A Guide for Lutheran Principals**

by

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### **Abstract**

Each year, hundreds of call transitions occur within the network of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregations and schools. Although smaller in number than teacher and pastor calls, many principals transition to new calls each year. Each congregation and school is unique, and there are many differences from one principal call to another. A smooth transition and clear understanding of a new call is essential to increasing principal efficacy and potential for success. This project examines the feedback provided by 17 principal research participants who have transitioned into a new call within the past three years. Their feedback, in addition to research and personal experience, aided in the development of a guide for principals deliberating a new call or those who have recently moved into a new principalship.

### **Acknowledgments**

I give thanks and praise to our Almighty God, who created us in His image. By His grace and the sacrifice of His Son, we are free from the bonds of sin and will one day spend eternity with Him in heaven.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Identify the issue**

Each year, administrators, teachers, and students head back to school for the opening of a new academic year. Among the fresh textbooks, sharpened pencils, and pristine classrooms are new faces, the faces of new school leaders. Many administrators step into new principal calls every year with their own experiences, but what about the existing congregation and school environments? How does a principal best transition into a new call? Learning the identities of new students, families, and church members is a daunting enough task, but that is only the beginning of the transition into a new call. Transitioning principals face new policies, boards, cultures, communication styles, personalities, curriculum, and expectations. There may also be extenuating circumstances surrounding the exit of one principal for another. Research indicates that administrators play a large role in student achievement, second only to classroom teachers (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Transition in leadership requires smooth, timely change to ensure that students and the school do not suffer through a learning curve.

### **Importance of the project**

Transition and change within our Lutheran schools are not new topics. Every year, over one hundred of Martin Luther College graduates are assigned to schools around the country and beyond. According to the 2018-2019 WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools School Statistic Report, a total of 2,822 teachers currently serve 457 schools. According to the WELS CLS, 959 total calls were extended during the 2018-2019 school year (J. Rademan, personal communication, August 1, 2019). Of the 959

extended calls, 424 were accepted, meaning there could possibly be 424 new transitions in the fall.

During my nineteen-year career as an educator, I've made four major transitions, three into school administration. Each transition carried its own nuances and particular traits, but many commonalities existed from one place to the next. The role of 21<sup>st</sup> century principals has changed from school manager to an agent of change, pushing a culture of learning and student achievement to the top of the priority list. According to the Institute for Educational Leadership (1999), the job of the principal "simply is not doable" based on the number of work hours, low pay, lack of respect, and local accountability measures. What training and essential components are necessary to ensure principal success?

Principals are called and expected to be the leaders within their schools and congregations. As stated by Willems (1999), "Our call is a serious undertaking. Just as we have not been forced to believe, so we have not been forced to accept a call into the public ministry." The serious undertaking of transitioning into a new call could be made easier through a unified process of information gathering and standardized guidance.

### **The project purpose**

The purpose of this project is to develop a guide for Lutheran principals in transition to a new call. The guide will be used to assist principals adjusting to a new call and surroundings. Although an experienced principal enters a new call with background knowledge and developed abilities, there is much to learn about a new setting. A principal in transition may have more experience as an administrator, but there is still the question of efficacy in a new call and setting. Leaders with a greater sense of confidence



can and will motivate those around them. According to Wahlstrom et. al. (2010), teacher efficacy is impacted by motivation, capacity, and work setting characteristics, all of which can be impacted by an effective leader. The guide will dig into the following questions. How do transitioning principals best understand the commitments and time requirements associated with their call? What specific training and preparation is necessary for transition success? What information should be communicated to best assist a principal in transition? What level of support is necessary for principals to complete their duties and fulfill responsibilities?

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Background

Institutions of higher learning have implemented new models of teacher training, specifically models that acclimate new teachers to the field. In 2016, WELS leadership acknowledged the need for more thorough training for school administrators and implemented the Principal Training Program (PTP) and Principal and Director Apprentice Mentoring. Through these programs, new principal and director candidates receive on the job training, shadowing, and ongoing education opportunities. The PTP is a three-year program to help newly licensed teachers train for and gain experience in the principalship before considering a permanent administrative calling. Both programs provide great training opportunities and real-world experience for new graduates, existing principals must find their own way to advance in skills and understanding of their ministry. Gerlach (2015) records that mediocrity has no place in our schools and that the congregation served has the right to expect that called workers continue to educate themselves according to their call. Principals are neither excluded nor exclusive of the need to further knowledge and experience. A successful transition in leadership requires steady succession and deliberate planning before, during, and after a change. McMahon stated (as cited by Barker, 2006) “the transition from one head to another is in itself a major innovation for the school that should be carefully planned, managed, and supported.”

In 2010, Ferrari et al., examined the changing of clergy to lay leaders within DePaul University. The governing authorities saw the necessity in maintaining organizational and spiritual values throughout a major shift in educational leadership. As

stated by Wilhelm (2011), “The ‘passing of the torch’ of leadership is a critical juncture at which upward momentum can either benefit from a new spurt of energy, or grind slowly toward a halt.” (p. 10). Barker (2006) stated that there is a dire need for agencies, local authorities, and school leaders to work towards a better understanding of the complex internal and external components of relationships among leaders. Russell & Sabina (2004) conducted a sub study of district-based succession-planning programs based on five themes: systematic attention to candidate identification and assessment; primary focus on development of high-potential candidates through job-embedded activities; align succession planning with organizational goals; create explicit roles for line management, human resource departments, and top management; periodic evaluation of programs. The main findings of the study indicate that principal succession is most effective when mentoring or coaching was included as a means of induction. Although many of these themes fall under the hierarchy and organization of public districts, there is applicability to WELS and ELS school organization and structure.

Barker (2006) described the transition process at Felix Holt School over a 12-year period. His research followed the change in culture, environment, and expectations through three major shifts in educational leadership. During each transition, all of which were unique, a common bond was discovered- above all things, leadership was tied to both internal and external factors. Internally, leadership had to overcome rapid growth challenges, existing personnel reluctant to accept new leadership, and employee turnover. External factors included managing aging physical facilities, top-down policies, and high-stakes testing requirements. Barker’s (2006) research demonstrates how leadership

departure and replacement, described as a leader's life cycle, effect the ability to improve and initiate change.

### **Application**

When considering transition in educational administration, one must consider not only the brevity and amount of change that occurs, but new expectations and prior experiences of the administrator. For example, Wilhelm (2011) notes key considerations for a new principal. He cautions that new principals must be mindful of the school culture, that small things can become big things without experience and prior knowledge, and that data must be gathered before taking action. Furthermore, new leaders must be supported in leadership matters to help alleviate missteps. In his study, Oplatka (2017) delves into the heavy workload that falls on principals. In interviews with 50 principals, Oplatka (2017) identified five consequences of heavy workloads: unclear boundaries between work and leisure time; a lack of time for family; fatigue and stress; negative work attitudes; and loss of control at work. Schaefer (2015) states that WELS teachers spend more time on school activities than any other group of teachers. Gerlach (2015) writes that there must be a limit to what a congregation can expect of its called workers. Similarly, Lawrenz (n.d.) states that congregations sometimes over-burden called workers with additional duties and responsibilities. Expectations of newly called workers must be thoroughly explained and understood by everyone involved. As Schaefer (2015) states, "mutual understanding is necessary to ensure a successful ministry."

Principals in transition must be prepared for their role in a new setting. Through their study, Shoho & Barnett (2010) identified challenges and areas of strength and weakness in new principals. Primarily, new principals identified communication and

conflict resolution as the most challenging scenarios for which they were least prepared.

Additionally, study participants indicated that student-oriented issues were among the top aspects that provided job satisfaction, while adult-oriented issues created the least amount of satisfaction. Efficacy plays an enormous role in the success and job satisfaction of transitioning principals (Barker, 2006; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Wahlstrom et al., 2010).

A principal in transition must be prepared to assume his new role.

### **Conclusion**

Of course, the work that accompanies a divine call is not to be measured the same as secular careers. Lutheran teachers are prepared for the public ministry (Meyer, 2018). Lutheran teachers are public ministers because of their call, not because of their training, degrees, or accomplishment (Mueller, 2004; Willems, 1999). In their calling, Lutheran principals must be properly trained for their call and ministry. Learning and understanding the dynamics of a new setting are of the utmost importance in acclimating to a new school, faculty, students, and community. Principals must be prepared for the heavy workload and coping strategies to manage time, family, every day work tasks, and planning. Although they are not new to the principalship, teaming up with mentors and developing middle management positions with other faculty members would allow principals more time to focus on instructional leadership (Oplatka, 2017).

## **Chapter Three: Implementation**

### **Introduction**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Lutheran principal carries a great deal of responsibility. The principal is not just the person in charge who manages the operation of a school. The principal is the educational leader who assists in framing, guiding, and enhancing the culture and Christian learning environment. The purpose of this project was to research principal transition from one call to another and provide guidance to involved stakeholders. Although the call process is similar from congregation to congregation, no two calls nor places are the same. Varying information and expectations can have a tremendous impact on smooth transitions and enduring success of the ministry. The goal is to develop a unified, standardized process to assist a principal who is considering or has recently transitioned into a new call.

### **Procedures**

Step 1: March, 2020- Collaborated with the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools and developed a list of all principals who transitioned into a new administrative role within the last two years. The following demographic information was collected: name, age, school served, years of teaching experience, years of administrative experience, email address, and phone number.

Step 2: October, 2020- Using a Google Form (Appendix A), conducted a survey of all Lutheran principals who transitioned into a new call within the last two years. The survey included questions on principal workload, amount of administrative release time, average number of hours worked per week, level of fatigue, positive and negative emotions, sense of control over workload, level of efficacy, challenges, areas of

administration best/worst prepared for, most and least enjoyable aspects of ministry, and perceived level/examples of congregational and synodical support.

Step 3: April, 2021- Synthesized collected survey data to identify themes and patterns within the data using coding. After coding the original data set, identified themes and patterns within responses, establishing relationships and developing explanations from the data to form a narrative analysis.

Step 4: November, 2021- Using collected data and narrative analysis, determined the most common factors that contribute to principal success in transitioning to a new call. Data was used to develop a guide identifying the most notable changes that occur during principal transition, collective challenges, areas in need of address and improvement, adjustment to new environment, and support systems.

Research subjects included Lutheran school principals that have transitioned to a new call within the last two years. The researcher coordinated with the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools to gather demographic information for contact purposes and baseline data. To ensure validity, a minimum response rate was calculated based on the number of potential participants. Initially, a minimum response rate of 30% was desired. To avoid bias, all participants that met the research criteria were included in the survey, and to ensure anonymity, names of survey participants were neither included in the research data nor collected by the researcher.

### **Artifacts**

A 15 question Google Form survey was disseminated to 33 principals who began a new administrative call beginning in July of 2018. 17 surveys were completed, or a return rate of 51%, during November of 2020. To preserve the integrity of the data and

eliminate bias, no names or identifying information were collected in the survey.

Collected data, in addition to literature research, was used in the development of a transition guide.

## Results

Lutheran principals serve at schools and congregations of varying sizes. Survey participants were asked the enrollment of their school. Responses are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Student Population*

Number of Students	Number of Responses
< 50	1
50-75	3
75-100	6
100-150	5
150-200	2

Survey respondents were asked the average number of hours worked per week, including time spent completing schoolwork at home. Response figures can be found in Table 2.



**Table 2***Average Number of Hours Worked per Week*

Number of Hours	Number of Responses
51-55	1
56-60	8
61-65	4
66-70	3
> 70	1

Although the size of school varied, the time commitment required was not proportionate. The principal serving the smallest school reported working an average of 61-65 hours per week. Principals were also asked if their congregation or school provided administrative release time. Little correlation was found between the amount of administrative release time and the number of hours required to complete work. Two principals reported no release time and 56-60 or 61-65 hours worked per week. Two reported between 6-12 hours of release time and 61-65 spent working per week. Five principals have half-time release and work 56-60, 56-60, 66-70, 66-70, and more than 70 hours per week. Half of principals surveyed invest the same number of hours per week regardless of the amount of granted release time.

In addition to hours worked and amount of release time, principals were asked about other duties that fall under their direct supervision. Results varied from individual to individual with some commonalities. Eight listed coaching or athletics as part of their

responsibilities, four listed church or school music, and three included technology or technology coordinator. Other responses included NTI Mentor, School Choice Administrator, head of PTO, Spiritual Growth Leader, curriculum development, forensics, marketing/advertising, summer camp, and teaching Bible/Catechism classes.

Participants were asked what type of congregational support is offered to assist in completing administrative duties, and what type of district or synodical support is provided. Seven principals responded that either no additional support is offered or there is no push from the congregation to seek additional support. Three cited administrative release time as support from their congregation. Three regularly meet with other principals in their district or make use of triads. In regard to district or synodical support, principals reported their districts and the synod provide support for teacher growth, calling of teachers, and staying updated on educational issues, or as a reference resource. Four principals reported they have secretaries or administrative assistants available to support their administrative roles.

Principals were asked which administrative tasks bring the most joy and which present the most challenge. Results varied by individual with little commonalities between responses in regard to joyful tasks. Respondents reported tasks bringing the most joy as: supervision of instruction, counseling, school improvement, meet and greet every morning, meeting new families, developing new programs, professional growth, student support, vision casting, supervision of instruction, outreach event planning, parent communication, creating digital and print materials (flyers, websites, newsletters, schedules, handbooks), sharing the Gospel message, and none. Adversely, responses to challenging tasks were very similar. Participants reported the following administrative

tasks present the most challenge: dealing with parents, writing handbooks and policies, state and synod compliance requirements, overseeing building upkeep, curriculum, culture/climate, advertising, finances, differentiating instruction for various learners, and all.

Transitioning principals were asked to rate their level of fatigue (1- exhausted to 10- full of energy), sense of control over their workload (1 no control to 10 total control), and level of efficacy to complete their duties (1- most tasks beyond capabilities to 10- enjoy challenges and regularly set high personal goals). Results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Respondent Self-Rating*

Level of Fatigue	Sense of Control Over Workload	Level of Efficacy
7	9	9
7	8	8
4	8	8
8	9	9
6	3	10
4	7	9
6	5	8
7	3	9
3	4	8
7	3	4
5	8	9
5	9	9

**Table 3** continued

Level of Fatigue	Sense of Control Over Workload	Level of Efficacy
5	6	8
7	8	9
8	7	6
2	6	8
3	4	3

Efficacy ratings were consistently reported higher than expected, considering the level of fatigue reported and responses to ministry challenges. The survey results indicate that participants, overall, are confident in their abilities to complete their tasks.

Principals were asked after assuming their new position, what areas of administration were they best and least prepared for. In the category of best prepared, respondents listed: supervision of instruction, day to day operations, working with faculty towards school improvement, delegating, executing policy, formalizing processes and updating policies, updating technology and digital presence, school climate, finances, paperwork, and school improvement objectives. More commonalities surfaced in areas principals reported they were least prepared for: budgeting, long-range planning, special education, relationships, school finances, state compliance, burden of responsibility, building committee work, curriculum, facilities, handling staff complaints, supervision of instruction, and discipline challenges. Three participant responses fell into the outlier category. One principal stated that the congregation's view of what was going on and

reality were quite different; something the respondent was not prepared for, and that roles and responsibilities were unclear. One participant noted that their preparation for administration was limited to a semester class over 25 years ago. One contributor was unclear of the definition of administration and did not provide a response.

Principals were asked what information they were given during deliberation, prior to accepting their new call. Surprisingly, only a minority of respondents reported receiving high-quality information from the calling body. 23% of respondents reported they were given very clear information including expectations, vision plan, duties, challenging situations, and time commitments. 29% reported they were given a moderate amount of information including: handbooks, current accreditation reports, individual input from congregation members, basic duties, and vision ideas. 48% of the participants indicated they received minimal information from the calling body. Responses included: primary focus- lead the school, conflicting state of affairs from reality, some extra duties and general expectations, accreditation deadline, minimal, form and call letter, and inconsistent expectations of duties from reality. It should be noted that part of the burden of receiving clear information lies with the individual considering a call.

The next question of the survey asked what information and guidance each participant would share with someone deliberating a call to replace them. One-third of principals stated they would be as open and honest as possible, sharing clear pictures and accurate portrayals of expectations, community, workload, and challenges. One-third shared they would provide direction and guidance on procedures, files, local assistance and resources, and contact information. Two respondents would share specifics about the joy of ministry and working with their faculty. Other responses included: moving the

principal position to full-time administrator, sharing philosophy of ministry, mission field opportunities, unique state accreditation requirements, visibility at events and activities, communicate via multiple means. One participant stated that, in their experience, people currently serving do not usually give information to the person coming in.

The final survey question asked newly transitioned principals what they considered necessary to have to complete their work. An overwhelming majority, 82%, stated that the proper amount of time, or release time, is necessary to complete their work. Of that 82%, half also indicated the need for proper administrative support staff. Additional responses included: accommodating administrative meeting times during normal work hours, an active Board of Education, principal support network, and funding for continuing education.

## Chapter Four: Reflective Essay

### Introduction

Transitioning to a new leadership role is not an easy task. The successful, Lutheran principal requires the proper guidance, resources, and support, especially when transitioning to a new congregation and school. How do transitioning principals best understand the commitments and time requirements associated with their call? What specific training and preparation is necessary for transition success? What information should be communicated to best assist a principal transition? What level of support is necessary for principals to complete their duties and fulfill responsibilities? My personal experiences in various school settings and administrative positions have taught me there are multiple, complex facets to consider, including many of the topics addressed through the survey distributed to newly transitioned principals throughout WELS schools.

### Conclusions

**Time Commitment and Workload** A 2021 Gallup poll found that the average American full-time employee works 47 hours per week. Forbes magazine published a similar finding: during the school year, teachers work an average of 47 hours per week, one in four exceeds 60 hours, and one in ten exceeds 65 hours per week. Educators are not likely surprised by either finding. In my study, I was surprised to see there was little correlation between school enrollment size and working hours. According to survey results, and personal experience, there is little direct connection between school size, release time, and average hours worked. None of the principals included in my research reported a work week less than 50 hours, regardless of school size, direct support, or release time.

In addition to administrative duties, Lutheran principals are often assigned or responsible for additional tasks such as coaching, athletic director, technology coordination, and music. These findings are consistent with Schaefer's (2015) statement that WELS teachers spend more time devoted to activities than any other group of teachers. Twelve of the seventeen survey participants are responsible for additional tasks and activities beyond administrative and teaching duties. Many factors can be considered for the addition of tasks to principal workload such as faculty size and training, level of financial support, and diminished number of field candidates.

Survey results matched Oplatka's (2017) findings of indicating fatigue connected with a principal's work. It is no surprise that principals are fatigued with additional duties, responsibilities, and above average number of working hours. It is necessary that both the called individual and congregation clearly understand the time commitments necessary to successfully adapt and grow in a new call. Congregations should plan for accommodating the principal workload by avoiding the addition of duties and responsibilities that could be performed by other faculty and staff members or lay members. Is there a point when principals are no longer able to be as effective in their ministry due to fatigue that is tied to long hours and added responsibilities?

**Training and Preparation** The public ministry is inherently full of joy and challenges, the foremost joy coming from the ability to share Christ. When asked which administrative tasks bring the most joy and which present the most challenge, far more commonalities were present in the latter. Transitioning principals, and perhaps far more than included in this study, struggle with many of the same tasks. Principals reported parent concerns and student discipline issues at the top of their challenges ranking.



Overall survey results concerning the joys and challenges of ministry did not entirely match with reviewed literature. Shoho & Barnett's (2010) findings indicated that student-oriented issues were among the top aspects that provided job satisfaction, which were not consistently reported by respondents. However, adult-orientated tasks were consistently listed as challenging areas. As a veteran teacher, I can attest that navigating these challenges requires a level of experience and time. However, could more focused management training that be provided to ministerial education candidates prior to their placement in the field? Principals also reported state compliance among their top challenging tasks. Requirements and participation vary from state to state, making it more difficult to navigate differences considering the vast network of WELS schools. Several participants listed the use of principal triads as a form of support. Could a more established principal or network of triads help ease the burden of transitioning to a new state and set of compliance requirements? School finances and budgeting was listed as a common struggle among survey participants. MLC's Graduate Studies course School Business Administration is an excellent course that would benefit any principal, director, or church treasurer. Efficacy plays an enormous role in the success and job satisfaction of transitioning principals (Barker, 2006; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). Further training would support increased efficacy among transitioning or new principals.

The CLS and MLC have developed the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Lutheran Principal Initiative* to train individuals for the principalship. The goal of the initiative is to equip every Lutheran school with a properly trained principal. In addition to training, principals will be equipped with appropriate time to fulfill duties and compensation to reflect the importance of the principalship. I have faith this program will better prepare future

leaders and schools. However, what can be done to bring this same mindset change to congregations at the present time? Principals that entered administration under the old system are leaving their positions at a faster rate than they can be replaced due to many of the same reasons reported my study.

**Communicating Information** In my study, I was not surprised to discover varying amounts of information shared with candidates while deliberating a new call. I have deliberated many calls and have yet to receive equally comparable information from one congregation and school to the next. Nonetheless, it is disheartening that more study participants received moderate to minimal amounts of information prior to their transition. However, part of the responsibility of soliciting information lies with the call candidate. I feel this is an area that could easily be addressed and rectified by a Synod initiative to unify post-call procedures. For example, a document from the Synod or CLS that outlines specific information all congregations must give candidates in addition to formal call documents. Such a document should include the following list of items (if applicable): full listing of duties, clear expectations of time commitments, handbooks, accreditation reports, vision plan, challenging situations, annual budget, most recent church council and board of education minutes, school and church periodicals or newsletters. Moving to such a process would at least provide continuity and unified communication between congregations and call candidates.

When asked what information and guidance a principal would share with someone replacing them, the results were as expected. I would expect a current principal to share as much about their experiences, joys, and challenges with a potential candidate. A call should never be packaged or presented in a way that “sells it”. I was surprised by

one respondent's answer that, in their experience, the individual leaving does not usually give information to the person coming in. I sincerely hope this is an anomaly experience. I have been on both sides discussing a principal call, coming or going, and have had excellent experiences.

A final thought on information. It is vitally important that a principal candidate get quality information prior to accepting a call. The principal candidate should have communication with the pastor(s), president of the congregation, chairman of the board of education, and at least some faculty members. A clear understanding of duties, expectations, challenges, and growth opportunities, will greatly benefit the new principal during their transition. Additionally, it is in the best interest of the calling body to properly communicate and share information with candidates to aid in a smooth transition and adaptation to new ministry.

**Level of Support** Principal support can take a number of forms, from administrative release time to personnel to outside resources. All study participants spend more than 50 hours per week for work responsibilities, with 47% working more than 60 hours per week. Interestingly, there was very little difference between working hours and the amount or type of principal support. Principals with release time worked comparable weekly hours to those without release time. There is not sufficient evidence in this study to delve into rationale, but it could be assumed that added duties and responsibilities contribute to the increase in working hours.

Survey feedback varied widely. Seven participants indicated they have no additional administrative support from their congregation, and two are not provided with administrative release time. Additionally, the same participants spend an average of 62.5

hours per week fulfilling their responsibilities and administrative duties. Administrative release time must be a part of every principal's call. Release time allows for the principal to complete administrative tasks outside of additional duties and responsibilities that are part of the call while not adding additional hours to every work day. Meyer (2016) conducted a survey of all WELS principals and teachers. Meyer's (2016) findings concluded that 92% of participating principals consider administrative release time important. However, only 8% reported being given the appropriate amount of time.

Five principals reported receiving support from an administrative assistant or secretary, three of which indicated their support was shared between church or an early childhood director. I was surprised that more responses did not include the support of an administrative assistant, especially considering eight of the respondents serve in schools with an enrollment over 75 students. At a time when the supply of called workers is limited, especially principals, hiring additional support staff could alleviate some of the time demands on a newly transitioned principal. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation (WELSSA) standards indicate that 10 hours of weekly administrative release time should be provided for every 75 enrolled students. The congregation I serve has 1000 members and 216 students in grades kindergarten through eighth. In addition to two full-time pastors and a full-time principal, the congregation employs two full-time administrative assistants.

Congregations must place a higher level of importance on proper levels of support for administrators, especially those transitioning into a new call. The load of many day-to-day tasks can be delegated to support staff, leaving more time for the principal to focus on their responsibilities, and hopefully reduce the number of working hours.

Additionally, congregations should provide the proper amount of administrative release time to alleviate the time constraints on the principal.

### **Recommendations**

Further research must be conducted into the amount of time principals spend working, how much of their time is dedicated to tasks outside administration, and how much support can be provided. The principal is responsible for many operational aspects of the school and must be afforded the proper time and resources to successfully fulfill their obligations and responsibilities. Additionally, the burden of extra hours completing added tasks and duties takes time away from reflection, improvement, family, and self-care (Lawrenz, n.d.; Schaefer, 2015). Burnout is a real factor that must be considered in a time when Synodically trained called workers are in high demand and short supply.

Participants in my research identified people management and finance as two of the most common challenges facing principals. Principals are in need of more in-depth training in people management (parents, students, and faculty) and school business administration. In the past, most principals had all their people management and finance training through experience on the job. However, today's school dynamics and demands require principals to be better equipped when entering the ministry. Additional training should be provided to principal candidates during their undergraduate work at Martin Luther College through required courses in people management and school business administration.

Principals need the support of their congregation, faculty, district, and synod. Congregations must have the proper mindset towards the principalship. Principals must be provided with the proper amount of release time, support, and most of all, realistic

expectation of duties Gerlach (2015). Following the WELSSA guidelines of 10 hours of release time per 75 students should be the baseline. Each of these topics must be thoroughly discussed during deliberation of a new call, after transitioning to a new call, and regularly reviewed by stakeholders. Principal triads are a great resource for principals in similar regions to stay connected and collaborate with one another. Principals in transition to new states would benefit being paired with an established principal who could assist in navigating state compliance questions and issues. Teaming up with mentors would allow principals more time to focus on instructional leadership (Oplatka, 2017).

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Survey Questions

#### Principals in Transition: A Guidebook for Transitioning Principals in Lutheran Schools Survey

Adam Pavelchik- M.S. Educational Administration Candidate

##### Principal Workload

1. What is the enrollment at your school?

*Mark only one oval.*

- 1-50  
 50-75  
 75-100  
 100-150  
 150-250  
 > 250

2. What is your average number of hours worked per week, including time spent completing schoolwork at home?

*Mark only one oval.*

- 40-45 hours per week  
 46-50 hours per week  
 51-55 hours per week  
 56-60 hours per week  
 61-65 hours per week  
 66-70 hours per week  
 More than 70 hours per week

3. Are you granted administrative release time?

*Mark only one oval.*

- No  
 Yes, 2-6 hours per week  
 Yes, 6-12 hour per week  
 Yes, Half-time  
 Yes, Three-fourths time  
 Yes, Full-time

4. During an average week of school, how many hours do you commit to completing your administrative responsibilities?

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- 5. In addition to administration, what other duties fall under your direct supervision (i.e. coaching, music, Sunday school, etc.)?

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- 6. What type of congregational support is offered to assist you in completing your administrative duties? What type of district or synodical support is provided?

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**Personal Perspectives**

- 7. What administrative tasks bring you the most joy?

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- 8. What administrative tasks present the most challenge?

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- 9. On a scale of one (lowest) to ten (highest), what would you rate your level of fatigue?

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Utterly exhausted            Full of energy

- 10. On a scale of one (lowest) and 10 (highest), what would you rate your sense of control over your workload?

*Mark only one oval.*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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I have almost no control over my workload           I make nearly all the decisions concerning

11. On a scale of one (lowest) and 10 (highest), what would you rate your level of efficacy (confidence) in your ability to complete your duties?

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Most tasks are beyond my capabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	I enjoy challenges and regularly set high per

12. After assuming your new position, what areas of administration do you feel you were best prepared to complete? Worst prepared?

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13. In preparation for your new call, what information were you given during deliberation (i.e. expectations, extra duties, difficult situations, etc.)?

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14. If someone were currently deliberating a call to replace you, what information and guidance would you share?

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15. In your opinion, what is necessary for you to have to complete your work (ex. given the proper time, resources, support, etc.)?

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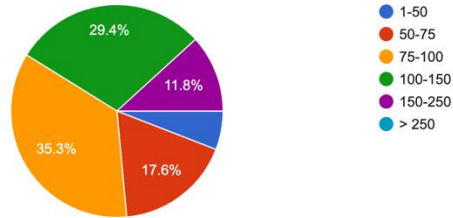
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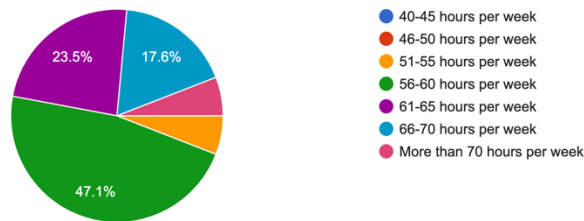
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## Appendix B Survey Results

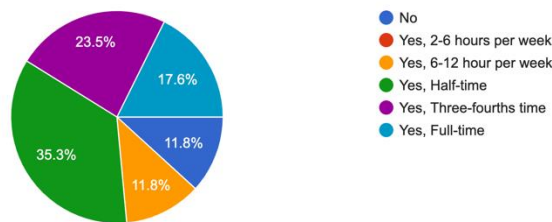
What is the enrollment at your school?  
17 responses



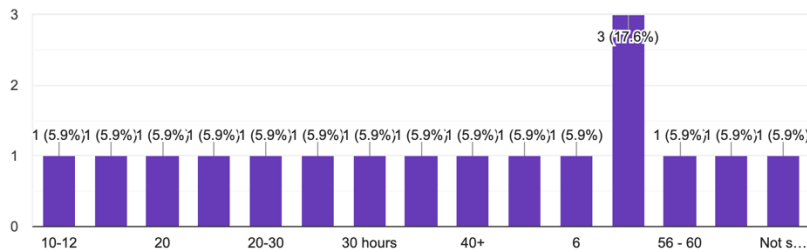
What is your average number of hours worked per week, including time spent completing schoolwork at home?  
17 responses



Are you granted administrative release time?  
17 responses



During an average week of school, how many hours do you commit to completing your administrative responsibilities?  
17 responses



**In addition to administration, what other duties fall under your direct supervision (i.e. coaching, music, Sunday school, etc.)? 16 responses**

None  
 Athletic Director, Choice Administrator, Coach  
 Teaching math, coaching  
 None - my position description is broad - I am the school administrator so I do "whatever it takes" or whatever comes up  
 Athletic Director, School Choice Administrator, School Safety Officer, Head of Parent/Teacher Organization  
 music for church once a month; building committee; seasonal coaching; technology coordinator; WELS New Teacher Induction Lead Mentor  
 Spiritual Growth Leader on Church Council, Coach  
 Church music, technology  
 Coaching, Church Music Director, Church Organist, Athletic Director, NTI Mentor  
 Basketball coach, student council  
 Athletic director, organ, technology director, music (just for school, not church)  
 Curriculum Development, Forensics, Accreditation, Marketing/Advertising, Various school and district events throughout the year.  
 Summer Camp  
 coaching, teaching Bible/Catechism classes

**What type of congregational support is offered to assist you in completing your administrative duties? What type of district or synodical support is provided? 15 responses**

I do have the church secretary available  
 The congregation is committed to having a full time principal that teaches no more than one class period a day. I am meet regularly with other WELS principal's to get advice on a variety of topics. I have an admin assistant and an Early Childhood Director. In our district we have "principal triads" who meet monthly via Zoom to discuss our ministries and to hold each other accountable with personal wellness - spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, and social wellness. My District President is supportive of the work I get to do at the congregation I serve.  
 The congregational leadership is open to getting help, but no one is active in getting in taking ownership of finding a solution. It falls on my shoulders. District is there as a reference resource.  
 Congregational support - none comes to mind; District/synodical support - support for teacher growth and development, support for calling teachers, support for staying up-to-date on educational issues  
 Our academy is self-supporting. My church supports me by providing me with spiritual care. My district is small and the principals are very close. We do a good job of sharing resources with each other.  
 I do not teach full time. My teaching load varies between part time and 2/3 time. The congregation supports this schedule and is working to provide additional release time.  
 None as far as administrative duties are concerned.  
 None  
 NA... high school  
 Don't know  
 Administrative Release Time  
 Shared administrative assistant with Pastor and the Preschool Director  
 secretary, LES board input  
 We have a Parish Administrator that handles some of the administrative work needed at the church and school.

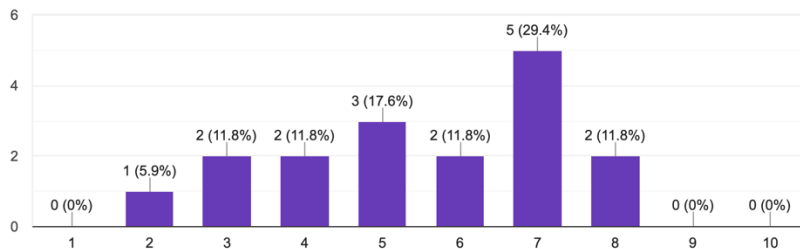
**What administrative tasks bring you the most joy? 16 responses**

Supervision of Instruction; Counseling  
 Completing the many tasks brings me joy.  
 Working with the faculty toward school improvement  
 meet and greet each morning  
 Meeting new families and being in the classroom  
 Developing new programs for our school  
 Professional Growth, student support  
 Vision casting, supervision of instruction, outreach event planning, parent communication  
 Creating digital flyers, websites, newsletters, schedules, handbooks, Curriculum Standards  
 Talking with parents  
 School Improvement Plans  
 Getting items prepared/ working to make things run smoothly  
 Marketing/Advertising and developing relationships with students and families.  
 Planning outreach opportunities  
 Working on curriculum and instruction to support student learning. Working with teachers and students. Sharing the Gospel message as the main motivation in all things.  
 None

**What administrative tasks present the most challenge? 15 responses**

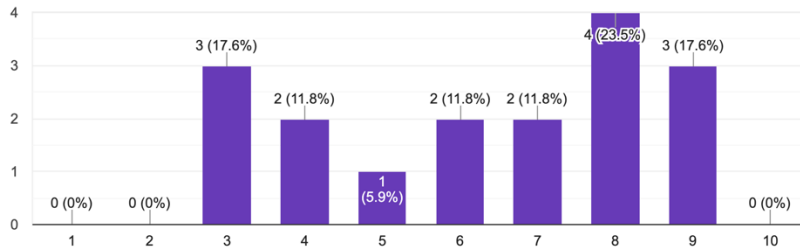
Dealing with parents is the most challenging.  
 writing handbooks/policy documents  
 compliance for state and synod, mostly state stuff  
 All the administrative "piles" of paperwork that needed to get taken care of.  
 Student disciplinary matters  
 Overseeing building upkeep  
 scholarship compliance, various Title requirements, tuition account management  
 Dealing with state departments, Title Services, Parents (at times) etc.  
 Curriculum  
 Culture and climate  
 Advertising and working on drawing new families to preschool/ school  
 Student discipline and parent concerns.  
 budget - finance  
 meeting the needs of all types of learners. Trying to differentiate instruction for Special education children.  
 All

On a scale of one (lowest) to ten (highest), what would you rate your level of fatigue?  
 17 responses



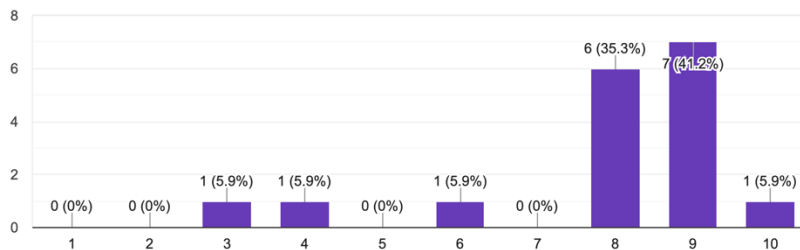
On a scale of one (lowest) and 10 (highest), what would you rate your sense of control over your workload?

17 responses



On a scale of one (lowest) and 10 (highest), what would you rate your level of efficacy (confidence) in your ability to complete your duties?

17 responses



**After assuming your new position, what areas of administration do you feel you were best prepared to complete? Worst prepared? 16 responses**

Supervision of Instruction; Budgeting  
 Best- the day to day operations Worst- long range plans  
 Best prepared to work with the faculty towards school improvement, least prepared was in the area of special education  
 Best - Relationships, Supervision of Instruction, Knowing how to delegate Worst - Relationships (difficult after financial discoveries), School finances (ours was a mess) and state compliance (fortunately my admin assistant was awesome)  
 Coming to my new ministry, the congregation's view of what was going on and the reality were quite different. I wasn't prepared for that. The congregation at large loves to make decisions without having someone to follow through with it. It always falls to the Called-worker leadership (pastor and principal)  
 Executing school policy; Building committee work  
 I was confident in the every day administration of the school. The challenge was getting to know a completely new team of teachers, students, and parents.  
 Best: formalizing processes and updating policies; Worst: learning new state requirements for finance and scholarship administration  
 Best Prepared- Revamping digital presence and updating technology with school Worst Prepared- Dealing with a new state when previous leaders avoided and didn't keep things up-to-date as needed  
 Most: Setting the climate Worst: Curriculum  
 Best - finances, planning Worst - facilities, fundraising  
 Worst: handling staff complaints Best: paperwork and deadlines

Most prepared - School improvement objectives ( Develop a brand and culture). Least prepared - Supervision of Instruction and knowledge about state regulations/requirements.

MLC had a one semester class on administration when I graduate over 25 years so there wasn't much preparation - only the Parish Schools administrative handbook

Organizational aspects of a school's operation and day to day preparation for instruction and learning among the faculty and staff were fine. Role and responsibilities were unclear. The way we always have done things is hard when no direction/instruction is provided. There were discipline challenges that were not previously handled.

I don't know. Using the word administration has made it difficult to answer any questions about administration. Different people mean different things when it comes to administration. If the working definition was clarified, maybe I could answer this question.

### **In preparation for your new call, what information were you given during deliberation (i.e. expectations, extra duties, difficult situations, etc.)? 16 responses**

I was given my primary focus- lead the school

They gave me a detailed vision plan, an honest idea of what they were looking for in an administrator, my amount of administrative release time, and other duties.

expectation, basic duties, current challenges (as they saw them)

Expectations, Handbook, input from some individuals at the calling congregation

Similar answer to previous question, information shared with the state of the congregation was quite different than that reality when I arrived. The actual problems and challenges that are here were not shared honestly.

All of the above. I held the call for five weeks and got as much information as I could. I don't feel like there have been any notable surprises. The only new thing was that I became the preschool director after one year, but that was no one's fault, and I agreed to do it.

list of duties, monthly breakdown of principal duties, a pastor who was very supportive and involved in the school.

Ministry plan, current WELSSA reports, handbooks, personal commentary on working relationships, vision for the future

Some extra duties, and general expectations

Accreditation was coming due.

I was presented a clear evaluation of the blessings and challenges

Not as much as I would have liked. I knew coming in there would be extra items, but definitely turned out to be a bit more.

Expectations were clearly laid out for what they needed in the principal role. I knew how much time I would be given and what tasks were expected. From having served as a principal in the past I also had an idea of what other items needed to be addressed that I would add to the list.

Minimal

Letter and call letter

All of the above

### **If someone were currently deliberating a call to replace you, what information and guidance would you share? 17 responses**

Philosophy of ministry; Enough time to complete admin tasks

I would tell the person about the great staff in my present call. I would let them know what type of ministry is going on. I would let them know the direction this congregation is going.

The community in which we are surfing as a lot to do with the direction of the school. There are some challenges in trying to meet the needs of the community and the needs of the children in our congregation.

I would give them the entire story about our ministry, especially the finance piece, which was not shared accurately with me



I would be very open with them about the demands of my position, what I was working on, and what would need to be left to do.

We are planning to make the principal position a full-time administrative position next year.

General idea of what tasks and responsibilities I have to accomplish

Honest and direct feedback is essential. I would share what blessings exist but also seek to paint a very clear picture of what challenges exist now and in the future.

Where things currently are, what direction the faculty is looking to go at the moment. Files that are/have been created. A schedule of when things need to be completed and submitted to synod and state that may be different from where they were coming from.

We have a ripe mission field.

Things unique to South Dakota accreditation

Be willing to be visible at events and congregations; communicate often through a variety of means

Try to give them a better overall picture of everything expected of the principal here.

I would provide them with a list of duties and resources, including where to find local assistance to support their work in the principal role. I would also meet with them to answer questions and provide ongoing support as needed.

It is a joy to serve in both an administrative and teaching role - never a dull moment. Remember who you are ultimately serving. Be humble and give the glory to God. Most of all - the goal sharing His love with others so more are in Heaven.

Handbooks, policies, contact information for school families and congregational members, budgets.

People currently serving don't usually give information to the person coming in...at least not in my experience.

### **In your opinion, what is necessary for you to have to complete your work (ex. given the proper time, resources, support, etc.)? 17 responses**

Proper Time

A significant amount of release time is a must to complete all the tasks that are now required of a principal.

Time is most important. If I were teaching half the day, the school would not be moving forward in a positive way.

Time and Admin Support - otherwise the principal becomes a highly paid admin assistant  
proper time, stronger church lay leadership - so that I could focus on my actual tasks and not others to keep ministry moving.

Proper time and fellow staff members who understand their roles and execute them well.

A supportive team - I have one!

Time is the biggest factor. In order to improve this, responsibilities need to be shifted to other additional (new) called workers and support staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE RELEASE TIME

More time

All of the above

Servant's heart

Proper time by myself and with pastor & preschool director to meet about ministry during the "normal" working hours.

Time, a strong administrative assistant, and an active BOE that lays out their expectations.

Administrative time - and an excellent administrative assistant

Release time, support network for principals in the WELS, funding for additional classes and workshops.

Time, support, education