The Changing Nature of Vice-Principals' Work

Final Report

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Dr. Katina Pollock,

With Dr. Fei Wang and Cameron Hauseman

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Executive Summary

This study examines the changing nature of vice-principals' work in Ontario public schools. After the publication of the *Principals' Survey* in 2013, nearly 400 vice-principals inquired about participating in a similar study; the present study was designed in response. We sought to develop a more comprehensive understanding of vice-principals' work in changing times. This included determining the types of duties, activities, and practices vice-principals engage in on a daily basis, as well as the challenges and possibilities they face in their current work.

Data collection included focus groups and an online survey. The online survey consisted of 77 questions that covered 12 aspects of vice-principals' work. The survey remained open online for 28 days in September 2016, and we received a total of 1,232 responses from Ontario Principals' Council vice-principal members. After eliminating incomplete surveys, there were 862 surveys available for analysis, which represented a response rate of 35.6%.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected within each of the 12 categories. In terms of how vice-principals spend their time, findings revealed on average, vice-principals reported working 54.5 hours per week, with 97.3% of the sample consistently working more than the standard 40 hours per week. Vice-principals spent their time mainly in five areas: administration and human resources, instructional leadership, relationship management, school management, and community and professional learning. Student discipline and internal school management were two significant predictors to the average amount of time vice-principals spent working each week. The vast majority of vice-principals wanted to spend more time on tasks and activities associated with instructional leadership. Only 10.3% of respondents thought they were spending enough time on instructional leadership.

We explored why vice-principals are motivated to pursue the position, what roles and responsibilities they engage in and what policies influence their work. Vice-principals indicated that a variety of job duties at least partially motivated them to pursue this role. The ability to have a greater impact on students was the highest motiving factor for entering the vice-principalship, followed by having an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and thinking the position would allow them greater ability to affect change. Policies have a significant influence on what vice-principals actually do at work. The participating vice-principals cited Growing Success (69.0%), the Safe School Act–Bill 212 (68.9%), and Regulation 274/12 (66.4%) as having significant influence on what they do on a daily basis.

The top three stakeholders to whom vice-principals indicated they feel most accountable are students, staff, and parents. Of the various stakeholders in education, most elementary and secondary vice-principals also indicated feeling *respected* or *very respected* by students, teachers, parents, community members, their principal, and other vice-principals.

Vice-principals in this study indicated that they are satisfied with many aspects of their job, even though they face a number of challenges in the workplace. For example, most vice-principals feel supported by their principal, and 88.3% of the sample agree that they know how to get their job done. Further. 85.7% of participating vice-principals indicate that their school is a good place to work and 83.4% feel that their job makes a difference in the school community.

Overall, 74.6% of the sample are satisfied with their job most of the time. However, the survey findings also indicate that vice-principals face multiple challenges in the workplace. This study revealed that vice-principals' work-related challenges are manifested in six areas: community environment, political environment, principal leadership, staff management, students'/parents' influence, and teacher influence.

Faced with these multiple challenges, approximately 72.3% of the vice-principals reported their work often and/or always puts them in emotionally draining situations, especially the secondary school vice-principals. Approximately 46.4% of participating vice-principals highlighted how mental health issues among students often lead to emotionally draining workdays. Vice-principals employed a number of strategies to cope with these challenges, including spending time with family, friends, or pets (70.9%); engaging in physical activities or exercise (62.8%); watching television/movies (56.5%); talking with colleagues (56.4%); and sleeping (53.3%). From our analysis of vice-principal responses it would appear that they do not believe they have any external supports and reported that their main work support is their school principal.

Vice-principals who completed the survey rank emotional intelligence/relationship building, communication skills, and skills connected to concerns surrounding mental health as the top three skills they have needed to develop and refine over the past two years to better perform the duties, tasks, and practices in their daily work. Vice-principals also indicated that there was a growing need for them to develop skills necessary to support student and teacher wellbeing. In terms of how they engage in professional learning, a total of 62.36% of participating vice-principals indicated that they were involved in professional learning communities at the time of the survey. Participants also expressed varied levels of satisfaction with their professional learning communities.

Overall, our data suggests that while there are similarities between the work of vice-principals and principals, there are also differences. As vice-principals play an important role in schools, they require a greater level of support to deal with the changing nature of their daily work—especially since over 66% of participants have fewer than five years of experience in their roles as vice-principals. The recommendations posed for both education stakeholders, as well as aspiring and practising vice-principals are intended to ensure that vice-principals receive the necessary supports to succeed in the role.

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

In 2013, the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) commissioned our research team to conduct a study about the changing nature of principals' work.[1] Members responded positively, and the survey obtained a response rate of over 50%. After its publication, almost 400 vice-principals inquired about participating in a similar study unique to their role. In response to this interest, we launched a second survey targeting vice-principals in October 2016. The aim of this study was to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Ontario public school vice-principals' work in changing times, including determining the types of duties, activities, and practices vice-principals engage in on a daily basis, and how they spend their time at work. Our research also explored the challenges and possibilities vice-principals face as part of their current work.

Specifically, this report aims to:

- Provide a comprehensive understanding of the changing nature of vice-principals' work;

- Detail the duties, tasks, practices, and responsibilities that comprise what contemporary vice-principals engage in as part of their daily work activities;

- Develop an increased awareness of the challenges and possibilities vice-principals encounter in contemporary times;

- Inform prospective administrators about the work and workload involved in the vice-principalship; and

- Document new understandings about vice-principals' work, so that the OPC can better support its membership and provide effective professional learning opportunities for both prospective and current vice-principals.

Organization

This report contains five sections. The first section is the introduction, which includes the purpose of the study and the rationale for conducting a survey inquiring about vice-principals' work. The methodology used to design the survey, recruit participants, and analyze the survey data can be found in the second section. The third section reports the survey findings, including a description of how vice-principals spend their time, documenting the duties and responsibilities of contemporary vice-principals and highlighting the challenges and possibilities involved in their work. Recommendations for education stakeholders, as well as prospective and current vice-principals, are found within the fourth section. The conclusion is featured in the fifth and

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[1]The final report from the principals' survey is available at:

http://www.edu.uwo.ca/faculty_profiles/cpels/pollock_katina/OPC-Principals-Work-Report.pdf

final section, which includes a short discussion of the implications this study has for practice and future research into the work and role of vice-principals in Ontario, across Canada, and internationally.

Background and Rationale for Research

Contemporary school administrators are employed within a context of *work intensification* (Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2015; Starr & White, 2008). Extended work hours, increased complexity and volume of work tasks, and an expansion of responsibilities are all associated with work intensification (ATA, 2012; Allan, O'Donnell, & Peetz, 1999; Green, 2004). A decrease in the time allotted for completing one's work, increased levels of student diversity, working within bureaucratic organizations, and a high reliance on email and other forms of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to work remotely, also fuel the work intensification that contemporary principals and vice-principals face (ATA, 2012; Allan et al., 1999; Green, 2004; Starr & White, 2008).

While scholars have found that the work of vice-principals is becoming more complex than ever before, there is a dearth of information about how vice-principals spend their time at school (Armstrong, 2009; Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012; Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002). Much of the research conducted on vice-principals often groups them with principals (e.g., Leithwood & Azah, 2014), further obscuring vice-principals' role(s) and the work they are expected to perform. The actual daily work of vice-principals can vary greatly from school to school, because the duties and responsibilities of the role are not well-defined and often negotiated with the principal (Armstrong, 2006, 2009; Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2014; Kwan, 2009; Williamson & Scott, 2012). Vice-principals have often indicated that their work is extremely unpredictable and characterized by tasks and activities that present themselves throughout the school day, such as managing student discipline concerns as they arise (Celiktan, 2001; Nanavati & McCulloch, 2003; Hausman et al., 2002). Scholars have consistently cited student discipline as a key aspect of vice-principals' work over the past 25 years, especially at the secondary school level (Brien, 2002; Hausman et al., 2002; Mertz & McNeely, 1999; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993; Weller & Weller, 2002). How vice-principals conduct their work in relation to student discipline is also informed by the proliferation of cyber-bullying, as well as legal and regulatory frameworks and accountabilities (Brien, 2002).

Three years ago, the OPC-commissioned study, *The Changing Nature of Principals' Work*, found that principals have little autonomy in their work, and that they struggle to achieve work–life balance while working long work hours and meeting the demands associated with increased layers of accountability. Findings from the principals' survey also revealed that implementing provincial initiatives and managing mental health concerns in the school community present challenges for contemporary principals. Participating principals reported coping with these challenges in different ways.

The literature suggests that vice-principals may experience similar challenges, especially in terms of compliance with increasing accountability measures, managing stress, and feeling little autonomy in determining the content of their work (Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013). Vice-principals have also previously expressed uncertainty regarding whether their current work adequately prepares them for eventually becoming a principal (Armstrong, 2014; Niewenhuizen & Brooks, 2013). In September 2016, the OPC distributed an online survey to their vice-principal

membership to develop a better understanding of vice-principals' work and the challenges they encounter in their daily work.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design consisting of focus groups and an online survey. The focus group sessions helped refine the survey and establish reliability and validity. The online survey included both Likert-type and open-ended questions: The survey questions in the format of the five-level Likert scale measured either positive or negative responses to a statement. Some questions included a *non-applicable (N/A)* response option for added measurement accuracy; we posed these questions as even-point scales. Each methodological component of the study is described in greater detail below.

Data Collection Methods

Focus groups. During the development phase, we held two focus group sessions to increase the reliability and validity of the survey. The first focus group was conducted in June 2015 with eight vice-principals, and the second in October 2015 with a different set of nine vice-principals. The focus group meetings lasted over two hours. Vice-principals were asked to discuss their work during the first hour. This discussion concentrated on the influence of policy and how the vice-principals spend their time at work, and the participants identified the challenges and possibilities inherent in their work. The second hour involved participants piloting a draft version of the online survey and providing meaningful feedback on the design and content of the survey questions and response scales. This information helped us refine the survey tool and ensure that it represented the work vice-principals engage in on a daily basis.

Online survey. We designed the survey to develop a better understanding of contemporary vice-principals' work. Accordingly, survey development focused on ensuring the questions and response scales accurately represented the range of duties, tasks, activities, and practices the OPC vice-principals engage in as part of their work responsibilities. Survey development also involved two large-scale literature reviews, which focused on studies exploring how contemporary vice-principals spend their time. We also reviewed recent changes to policy and legislation that impact vice-principals, such as PPM 158–School Board Policies on Concussions. All of this information was used to develop a draft version of the online survey. At this stage, we asked the OPC to review the draft survey before pilot-testing a revised version in the focus group sessions. The survey was launched to all OPC vice-principals in September 2016 and was open for 28 days.

The final survey contained 77 questions, and focused on vice-principals' work in the following 12 areas:

- How they spend their time;
- Duties and responsibilities;
- Accountability and external influences;
- Challenges and possibilities;

- Well-being and job satisfaction;
- Work and life balance;
- Supports;
- The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF);
- Professional learning and mentoring;
- School-level partnerships;
- Personal information; and
- Information about their school.

Most survey questions were Likert-type in nature, involving a question-and-response scale. The survey also included open-ended questions, and many survey questions had comment boxes. Participating vice-principals were also encouraged to provide additional comments at the end of the survey, which allowed respondents an opportunity to qualify their responses to certain questions or provide contextual information that could inform our analysis. These additional responses produced qualitative data, adding depth to the quantitative survey data. Some of the open-ended questions received enough responses to conduct meaningful qualitative analysis. For example, participating vice-principals:

- Offered advice to new vice-principals about achieving work–life balance (617 unique responses);

- Described the role of the OLF in their daily work (591 unique responses);

- Provided information about the skills necessary to conduct their work (552 unique responses);

- Discussed what is missing from the current version of the OLF (413 unique responses);

- Described their level of satisfaction with their professional learning community (388 unique responses); and

- Highlighted the challenges associated with having a dual role as a teacher and a vice-principal.

The additional comments section at the end of the survey also received 330 unique responses. We have included qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions throughout the report to support and strengthen the quantitative survey data related to each of the areas mentioned above.

Sampling

Participants representing all 31public Ontario district school boards participated in the survey. We included all Members of the OPC who were working as vice-principals in Ontario in our study sample. Prior to launching the survey, we were provided a list of 2,419 email addresses of current OPC vice-principal Members, and we sent a unique survey link to all of them. A number of strategies were used to encourage vice-principals to share their insights and opinions about

their work. In addition to sending weekly email reminders to all potential respondents, updates were posted to the OPC website and tweets were sent from the OPC's official twitter account to encourage participation. Due to the effectiveness of these strategies and the continued efforts of OPC staff, the survey achieved a response rate of 35.6%.

Description of the sample. A total of 2,419 OPC vice-principals were invited to participate in the online survey. It was live for 28 days and a total of 1,232 responses were collected during this period. However, 517 responses were incomplete and excluded from analysis. As a result, the response rate for the survey was 35.6%, based on 715 completed surveys and an additional 148 partially completed surveys, where respondents completed over two thirds of the questions. The sample includes a diverse group of vice-principals working in 31 different school districts, located within a broad range of different school and community contexts. For example, the average school size for participating vice-principals was 712 students, with school sizes ranging from 14 to 2,040 students. Both elementary and secondary school vice-principals participated in the survey: 46.17% of respondents work in elementary schools, while 36.77% of the sample were secondary school vice-principals. *Table 1* also indicates that only 1.28% of participating vice-principals work in schools that include both elementary and secondary students. An additional 15.78% of vice-principals who responded to the survey declined to share the type of school they work in.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics: School Type

School Type	#	%
Elementary Vice-Principals	398	46.17%
Secondary Vice-Principals	317	36.77%
Elementary/Secondary Vice-Principals	11	1.28%
No School Type Indicated	136	15.78%
Ratio of Secondary Vice-Principals to Elementary Vice-Principals	80/100	

Both male and female vice-principals participated in the survey. This question was open-ended, allowing for respondents to indicate their gender identity. As displayed in *Table 2*, a total of 68.3% of participating vice-principals self-identified as *female*, with the other 31.7% of respondents self-identifying as *male*. No participants self-identified as *transgender*.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics: Gender

Gender	%
Male	31.7%
Female	68.3%

    As displayed in *Figure 1*, 50.1% of participating vice-principals indicated that a bachelor's degree was the highest level of formal education they have completed. A total of 46% of respondents have obtained a master's degree at the time the survey was conducted. Smaller numbers of participating vice-principals have obtained other formal qualifications, such as the 2.4% of respondents who indicated they had earned a professional degree (e.g., MD, LLB, JD, etc.), and the 1.5% who had obtained a doctorate or other terminal degree.
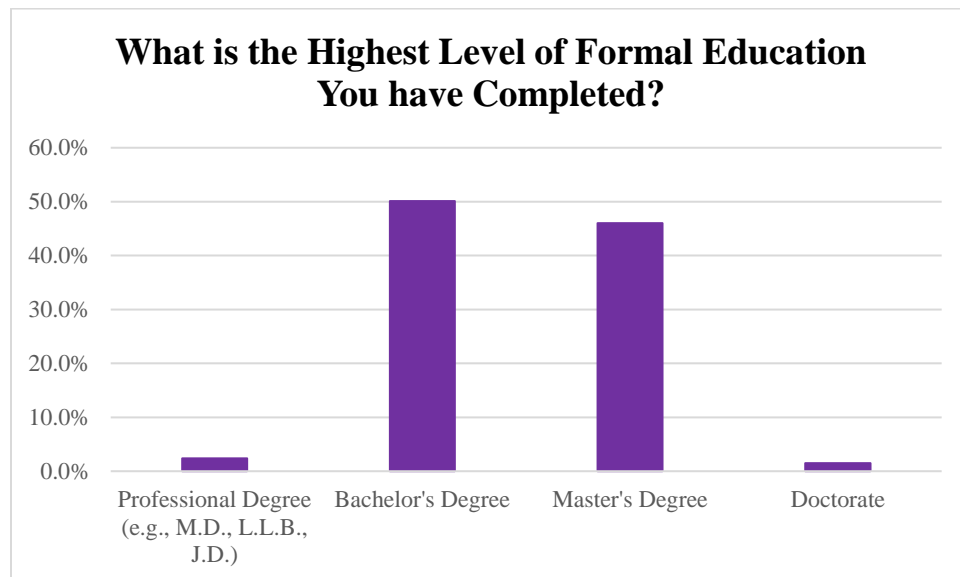

Figure 1. Participant characteristics: Level of education.

    Figure 2 displays the years of experience that the participating vice-principals bring to their work. Respondents had between less than a year and 20 years of experience in the role of vice-principal, with an average of 4.9 years of experience across the total sample. Almost two thirds of the sample (66.2%) had fewer than five years of experience as a vice-principal. Vice-

principals with between six and 10 years of experience were the next largest group, accounting for 25.4% of the sample. Only 6.8% of participating vice-principals indicated being in the position for 11 to 15 years. Smaller number of vice-principals reported having more than 16 years of experience in the role. The analysis shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the years of experience working as a vice-principal between elementary and secondary school vice-principals: (t (629) = -5.71, p = 0). Secondary school vice-principals tend to have more years of experience (M =5.8, SD = 3.99) than elementary school vice-principals (M = 4.2, SD = 3.46). There is also a significant difference in the years of experience vice-principals have working at their current school between those in the elementary and secondary panels: (t (604) = -4.01, p = 0). Secondary school vice-principals tend to have more years of experience at current schools (M =2.2, SD = 1.74) than elementary school vice-principals (M = 1.7, SD = 1.43).
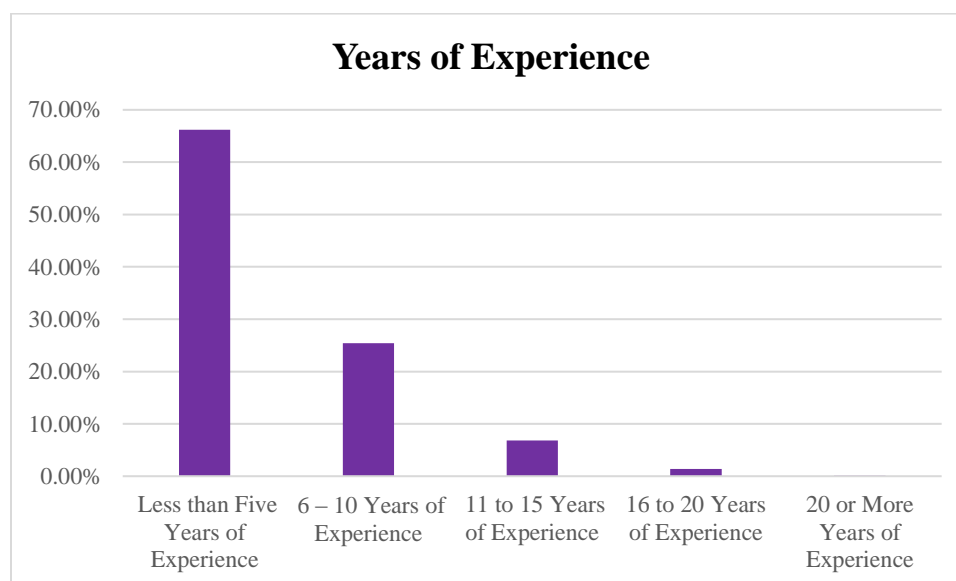

Figure 2: Participant characteristics: Years of experience.

Figure 3 graphs the ages of the participating vice-principals by group. For example, 28.3% of the sample were between the ages of 45 and 49 when the survey was conducted. A total of 25.4% of vice-principals who responded to the online survey were between 40 and 44 years of age. Vice-principals aged 50–54 accounted for 19.1% of responses, with an additional 13.6% of vice-principals between ages 35 and 39. Another 8.7% of the vice-principals indicated they were between 55-59 years of age. Smaller numbers of participating vice-principals reported they were 30–34 (2.4%), 60–64 (2.4%), or 65 years of age or older (0.1%).
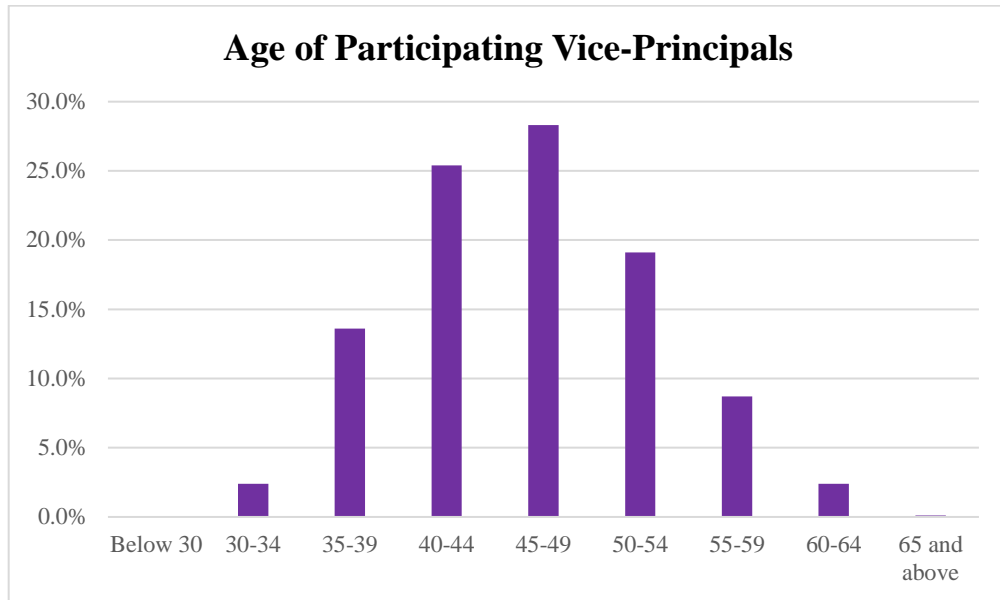
Age of Participating Vice-Principals

Figure 3. Participant characteristics: Age of participating vice-principals.

OPC Member vice-principals are tasked with working in a variety of different demographic contexts. The clear majority of those who responded to the survey (42.6%) work in cities ranging from 100,000 to approximately 1,000,000 people. As displayed in *Figure 4*, an additional 22.8% of participating vice-principals work in large cities with populations over 1,000,000 people. Vice-principals who work in towns with populations between 15,000 and 100,000 accounted for 17.1% of the sample, and 10.6% of respondents were employed in schools located in communities with between 3,000 and 15,000 people. An additional 6.4% of vice-principals who participated in the online survey work in rural schools, with a further 0.5% of participants indicating that their school(s) was in other types of population centres.
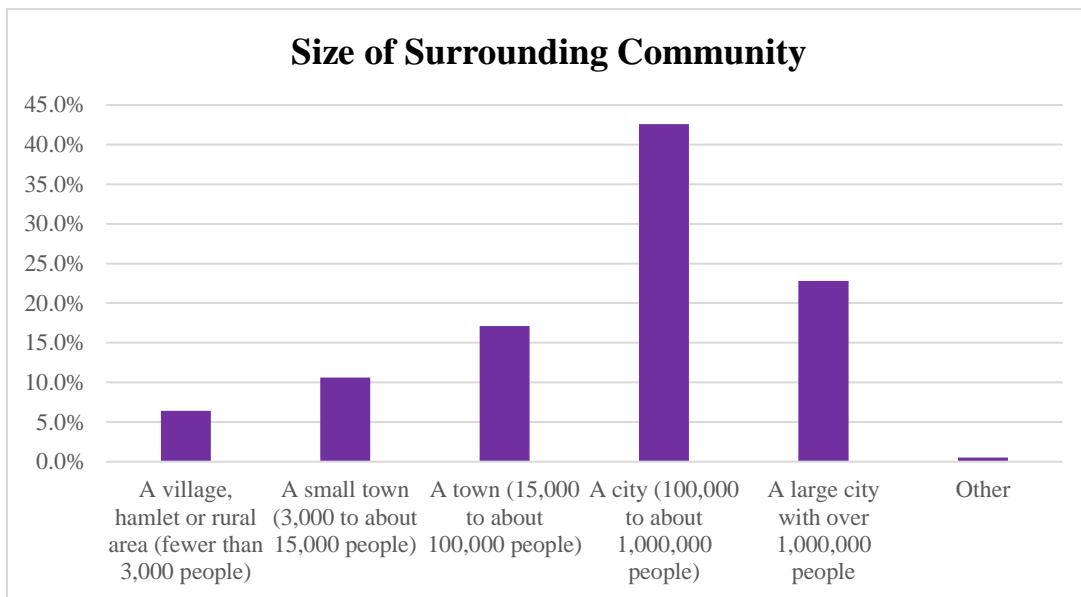
Size of Surrounding Community

Figure 4. Participant characteristics: Size of surrounding community.

Both full-time vice-principals and those who had been assigned teaching duties at their current schools participated in the survey. Displayed in *Figure 5*, 68.5% did not have teaching duties assigned to them. However, 31.5% of participants were assigned teaching duties in addition to their roles and responsibilities as vice-principals.
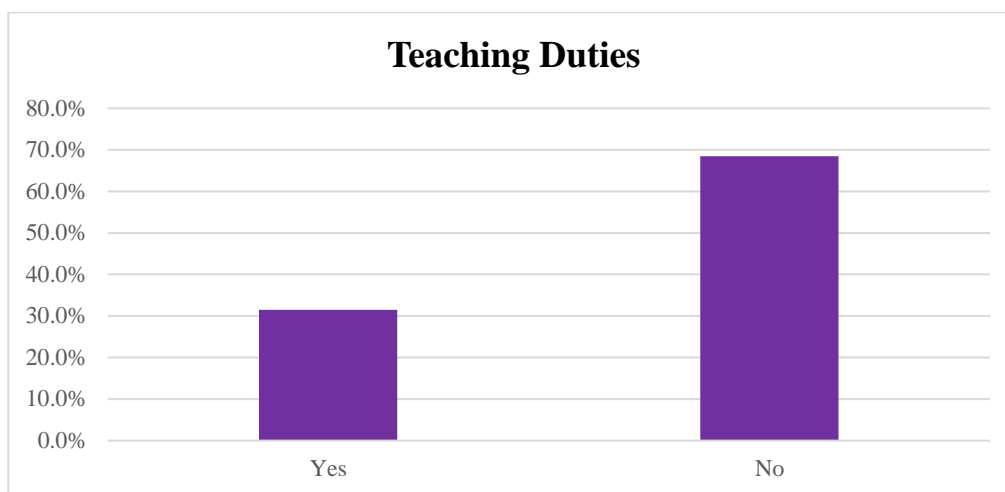

Figure 5. Participant characteristics: Whether VPs were assigned teaching duties in their roles.

A chi square test was conducted to see if there is a statistic association between school type (elementary vs. secondary) and vice-principals with teaching duties. Among elementary school vice-principals, 50.8% reported having no teaching duties and 49.2% reported having teaching duties. In all secondary school vice-principals, those with or without teaching duties are 12.3% and 87.7% respectively. These differences are statistically significant ($X2$ (1) = 109.15, p = 0). A follow-up t-test shows that among teaching vice-principals, there is a significant difference in the amount of teaching they do counted in full-time equivalents (FTEs) between elementary and secondary school vice-principals (t (46.8) = 3.07, p = 0). Elementary school vice-principals (M= .52, SD = .18) tend to have more teaching FTEs than secondary school vice-principals (M = .40, SD = .25). A similar difference is also found in the amount of teaching vice-principals do counted in hours per week between elementary and secondary schools (t (114.2) = 9.28, p = 0). Elementary school vice-principals (M = 16.37, SD = 10.22) are likely to spend more hours per week teaching than secondary school vice-principals (M = 6.34, SD = 4.62).

Only 7.1% of the survey sample indicated they serve as a vice-principal at more than one school site.

The survey sample displays differences in terms of gender, years of experience as a vice-principal, the level of education brought to the role, the types of schools in which they worked, and whether teaching was included in their duties. However, the sample is less diverse in terms of sexual orientation and ethnic background. For example, *Figure 6* depicts how 92.3% of participating vice-principals self-identified as *heterosexual*. A total of 3.9% of the sample self-identified as *lesbian* or *gay*, with 3.6% indicating they would prefer not to disclose this information. A smaller number of participants self-identified as *bisexual* (less than 1% of the sample).
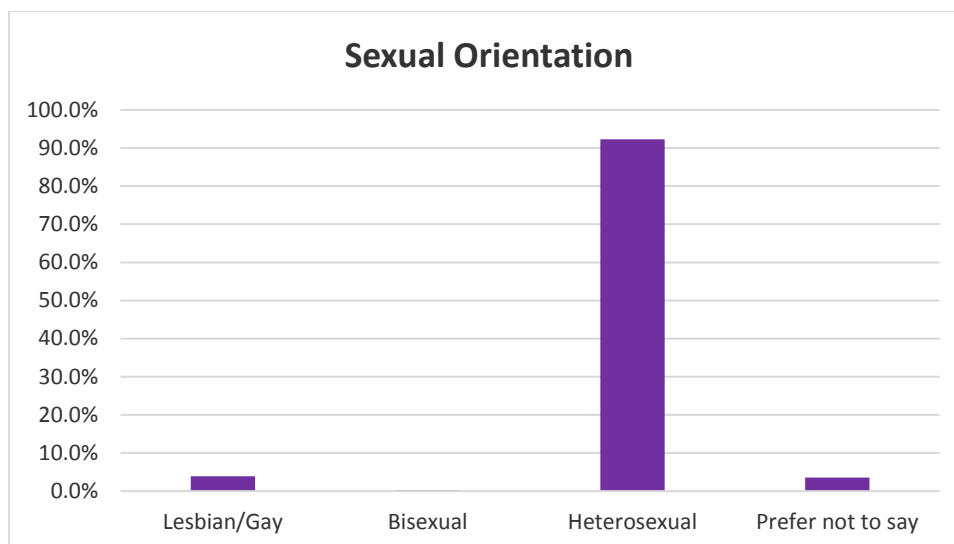
Figure 6. Participant characteristics: Sexual orientation.

In terms of ethnic background, 81.5% of participating vice-principals described them-selves as *Caucasian*. An additional 3.5% of the sample self-identified as *South Asian*, with a fur-ther 3.1% self-identifying as *Black*, and *First Nation*, *Métis*, *or Inuit* (FNMI) vice-principals rep-resenting 1.6% of the sample.[2] A total of 4.9% of vice-principals answered this question by se-lecting *other*, and 3.0% indicated that they would prefer not to disclose this information.

A similar lack of diversity was represented in the language that participating vice-princi-pals speak at home. Presented below in *Table 3*, 98.4% of the sample speak English at home. Only 0.5% of vice-principals specified speaking French at home and 1.1% of the sample speak a language other than English or French when at home.

Table 3

Participant Characteristics: Language Spoken at Home

Language Spoken at Home	
English	98.4%
French	0.5%
Other	1.1%

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[2] A variety of other ethnic backgrounds were represented in the sample, though the numbers were quite small.

Listing them could have potentially compromised anonymity for some participants.

Data Analysis

We designed the study survey to gather information about vice-principals currently working in Ontario's public school system and the duties, tasks, practices, and activities they engage in as part of their daily work. Data has been aggregated to provide a snapshot of vice-principals' work in contemporary times, including how they spend their time, and the challenges and possibilities they face on a daily basis.[3]

We analyzed the study data using SPSS 23. We used descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and cross tabulations, to determine the central tendencies of the variables, including the mean, median, and mode. We used inferential statistics, such as correlations, *t*-tests, multiple regressions, and factor analysis, to compare group means, make predictions on dependent variables, and reduce dimensions to further explore latent variables and their relationships. We occasionally rounded calculations to the nearest decimal, and as a result the calculations may not always add up to 100%.

Findings

In this section, we discuss the key findings that emerged from the survey data. The findings are reported across seven subsections, organized according to the aspects of contemporary vice-principals' work included in the survey. The subsections are as follows: (a) how vice-principals spend their time; (b) the duties and responsibilities that contemporary vice-principals perform; (c) accountability and external influences; (d) vice-principals' responses concerning well-being and job satisfaction; (e) the level of support vice-principals currently receive from external organizations; (f) vice-principals' professional learning needs; and (g) the influence of school–community partnerships on their work and workload.

How Vice-Principals Spend Their Time

Vice-principals who responded to the survey indicated spending, on average, 54.5 hours working per week, with 97.3% of the sample consistently working more than a standard 40-hour work week. The number of hours these vice-principals work per week ranges from eight to 80. Some vice-principals did report working more than 80 hours per week, but those responses were filtered out of the dataset prior to analysis as they seemed unrealistic.

We conducted a factor analysis to explore underlying patterns in how vice-principals spent their time on work-related activities. Results of the factor analysis are depicted in *Table 4*. The analysis results show that vice-principals spend their time mainly in five areas: *administration and human resources* (14.2%), *instructional leadership* (11.8%), *relationship management* (11.3%), *school management* (9.7%), and *community and professional learning* (7.6%). The time vice-principals spend on *administration and human resources* accounts for 14.2% of the total

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[3] Confidentiality of all individual school responses is guaranteed. Only aggregated data are released and included in this report.

variance. In total, 54.6% of the total picture (of all the work-related activities) is accounted for or explained by the five factors identified. The following table shows the five factors and their loadings—the amount that each variable contributes to the factor in question. For example, the variable *student academic needs* contributed the most to the factor *instructional leadership*, with a factor loading of .758; this factor loading indicates that among the five work-related activities associated with instructional leadership (including *student academic needs*, *curriculum & instructional leadership*, *visibility & supervision*, *supporting special education students*, and *classroom walkthroughs*), vice-principals spend more time on student academic needs than any other activities.

Table 4

Factors on How Principals Spend Their Time

Work-related Activities	Administration & Human Resources	Instructional Leadership	Relationship Management	School Management	Community & Prof. Dev.
Budget	**.691**	.209	.118	-.006	.310
DSB Office Committee	**.661**	.127	.170	-.015	.125
Building Maintenance	**.617**	.076	.036	.064	.477
Personnel	**.527**	.074	-.032	.499	.055
Substituting for the Principal	**.478**	.076	.202	.039	-.027
Student Academic Needs	-.071	**.758**	.112	-.070	.153
Curriculum & Instructional Leadership	.339	**.681**	-.190	.040	.051
Visibility & Supervision	.101	**.612**	.213	.330	-.031
Supporting SE Students	.337	**.577**	.372	.132	.104
Classroom Walkthroughs	.205	**.575**	.116	.338	.226
Student Discipline	.058	.082	**.735**	.191	.078
Student Attendance	.123	.008	**.733**	-.199	.155
Working with Parents	.340	.340	**.522**	.317	.031
Managing Conflict	.442	.131	**.521**	.151	-.108
Responding to Emergencies & Crisis	.478	.117	**.503**	.193	-.022
Student Transportation	-.006	.073	.016	**.747**	.273
Student-Related Activities	-.035	.240	.279	**.612**	.126
Internal School Management	.485	.017	.037	**.513**	-.036
Community	.047	-.012	.210	.148	**.738**
Participating in Prof. Dev.	.074	.236	-.165	.271	**.555**
Occupational Health & Safety	.309	.235	.092	-.002	**.422**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

We conducted a linear regression analysis to further explore how different work-related activities and tasks predict the amount of time principals spend per week. The results show that student discipline ($\beta = .13$, $p = 0$) and internal school management ($\beta = .10$, $p = .02$) are the only two significant predictors to the amount of time vice-principals spend each week. For every one hour rise in the time spent on student discipline and internal school management, there are approximately .13 and .10 hour rises, respectively, in the amount of time vice-principals spend each week. A similar test shows that a linear combination of emails, evening events, webinars, and other modes of communication were significantly related to the average time vice-principals spend per week, F (13, 717) =2.97, p =0. Vice-principals spend a great deal of their time on emails ($\beta = .11$, $p = .03$), evening events ($\beta = .11$, $p = 0$), and other modes of communication ($\beta = .12$, $p = 0$). However, the time vice-principals spend on webinars ($\beta = -.17$, $p = 0.02$) negatively predicts the average amount of time they spend each week on communication. This means that the more time vice-principals spend on webinars, the less time they spend on average per week on communication.

We conducted further analysis by looking into some social and contextual factors (e.g., gender, school type, size, etc.) that could impact how vice-principals spend their time. The results show that gender, educational backgrounds, panel, school size, and years of experience as a teacher and vice-principal are not significant predictors to the average amount of time vice-principals spend at work per week.

The findings also provide greater understanding of the duties, tasks, and activities vice-principals engage in as part of their daily work. As displayed in *Figure 6*, the vice-principals spend most of their time engaged in management-focused activities. For example, participating vice-principals spend 8.3 hours per week managing *student discipline concerns*, the largest amount of their time. At 42.7%, almost half of the sample indicated they would prefer to spend less time engaged in student discipline. Further, vice-principals in this study spend 5.7 hours per week being visible and supervising students, an area that 52.8% of participating vice-principals would like to increase. On average, vice-principals spend 5.3 hours per week engaged in activities that *support student academic needs*. However, 66% would like to spend more time supporting students' academic needs, while 29.8% feel they are spending an appropriate amount of time in this area. Participants reported being involved in *supporting students with special needs* for 4.3 hours per week. An additional 4.1 hours per week is spent working with parents, and being involved in other management-related tasks (*internal school management*) for 3.9 hours each week.
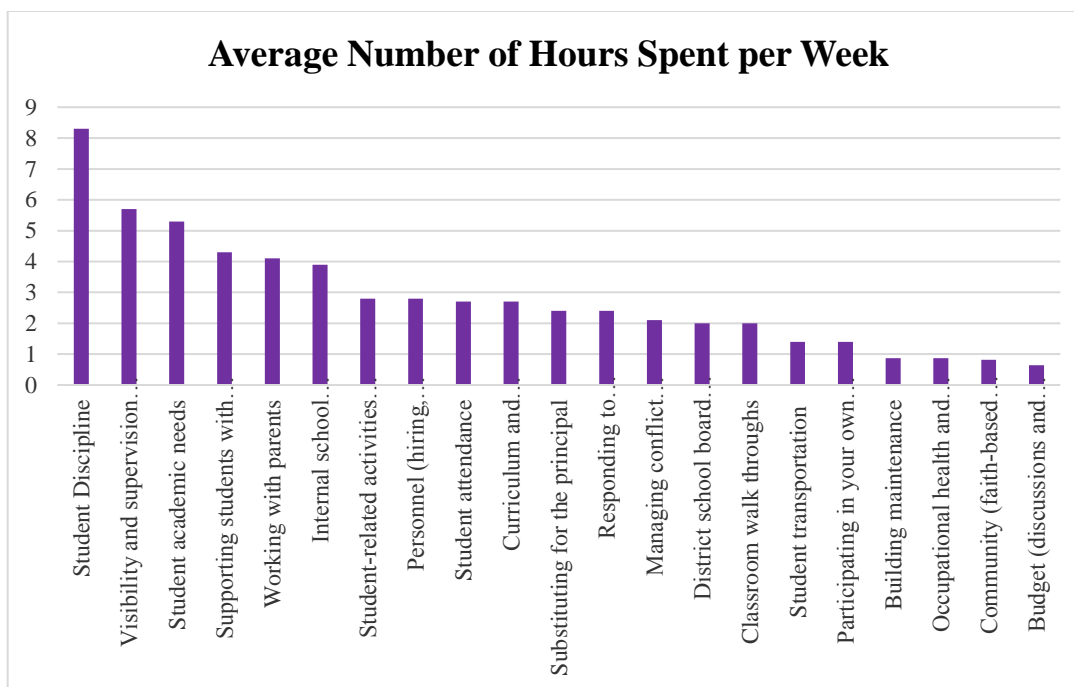
Figure 7. Hours VPs spend on different tasks, duties, and responsibilities: Per week.

Participating vice-principals indicated they would like to be more engaged in duties, tasks, and activities rooted in instructional leadership. On average, vice-principals indicated being involved in *curriculum and instructional leadership* for 2.7 hours per week. Instructional leadership was the 10th most frequent task in which participants engaged. At 88.1%, the vast majority of vice-principals indicated wanting to spend more time on tasks and activities associated with instructional leadership. Only 10.3% of respondents thought they were spending enough time on instructional leadership, and 1.3% indicated wanting to spend less time in this area. Similarly, participating vice-principals spent an average of two hours per week on *classroom walkthroughs*, an area where 86.9% would like to spend more time. Another area that vice-principals indicated that they would like to spend more time is *their own professional learning*. These vice-principals engaged in their own professional learning for an average of 1.4 hours per week, providing little opportunity to be involved in a sustained professional learning plan or program.

A t-test suggests that there exists a statistically significant difference in the number of hours vice-principals spend on student attendance (t (412.32) = -.3.66, $p = 0$) and professional development (t (722.49) = 4.91, $p = 0$) between vice-principals with more or less than 5 years of experience. Vice-principals with more than 5 years of experience ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 5.28$) tend to spend more time on student attendance than those with less than 5 years of experience ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 4.0$). However, vice-principals with more than 5 years of experience ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 1.38$) tend to spend less time participating in professional development than those with less than 5 years of experience ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 2.23$).

The vice-principals who indicated they are employed at more than one school site displayed no statistically significant differences compared to those who work at one school in terms of the number of hours they work each week: (t (790) = -.77, $p = .45$). However, similar tests show that there is a significant difference between vice-principals working on one site vs. those working on more than one site in time spent on student academic needs (t (72.99) = 2.91, $p = .0$)

and substituting for the principal (t (55.24) = -2.32, p = .02). Vice-principals who work at one school site (M =7.05, SD = 6.77) tend to spend more time on student academic needs than those who work at more than one site (M = 5.20, SD = 4.25). Similarly, vice-principals who work at one school site (M = 3.41, SD = 5.32) tend to spend less time substituting for the principal than those who work at more than one site (M = 6.80, SD = 10.22).

Similar to the principals' survey, the qualitative data also highlights the tension vice-principals experience when balancing their dual management and instructional responsibilities. For example, one of the respondents stated that they have instructional expertise, but do not feel the vice-principalship is a managerial position, providing opportunities to mobilize or share that knowledge:

> I enjoyed being an instructional coach and hoped I'd have more opportunity for that, but the managerial tasks, paperwork, meetings, and daily problem-solving of conflict or crises leave little time for instructional rounds and support. Sometimes I cannot get to important items and I often worry this can make me seem less competent than I am to others. When trust/respect are key, this is a very challenging reality.

Managerial tasks, such as paperwork and daily problem-solving, prevent this vice-principal from engaging in instructional leadership responsibilities. For vice-principals to have more opportunities to engage in instructional leadership activities, their workload needs to decrease. For example, one vice-principal described how they always aim to improve classroom practice, but get caught up in other tasks:

> If we believe that administrators are instructional leaders, then I hope that we will be provided the opportunity to improve student learning where it is most effective, in the classroom. Either the workload expectations need to be decreased or more administrators need to be hired to build a bigger and stronger team. I will do everything needed to make sure the school is safe and supportive but the hours are often ridiculous. The result is that improving classroom practice, while in the front of my mind and on the top of my list, is always on the back burner.

While many vice-principals have an instructional focus, this respondent highlighted how competing priorities made it difficult for them to carve out time for instructional leadership activities. Vice-principals with teaching responsibilities also indicated that it is extremely difficult to be engaged in instructional leadership while simultaneously serving in a teaching role. For example, one vice-principal asserted: "In order to maintain the instructional leadership component of the role, VPs shouldn't be teaching." Participants also emphasized that their relationship with the principal and how the principal assigned their duties determined whether they were even tasked with instructional leadership. For example, one vice-principal indicated that it can be challenging for vice-principals to stay current with the latest instructional strategies and engage in professional learning:

> We need a recognition that while instructional leadership is important, and in an ideal world we'd be able to do it all the time, the amount of time spent on ensuring safety and a positive environment, [and] dealing with conflict and crisis is where the bulk of the job is

spent. Depending on the principal, it may be very challenging for VPs to work on professional development or be involved in committees and, therefore, very difficult to try to move forward as a principal.

Vice-principals find it difficult to engage in their own professional learning. As a result, it can be challenging for them to develop the skills, abilities, and dispositions they need to eventually become a successful instructional leader and move forward in their careers.

The online survey also asked vice-principals to document the total number of hours they spend using different forms of communication as part of a normal work week. On average, participating vice-principals indicated that they spend the most time on email, which takes up 8.75 hours per week. The time spent on email ranged between one and 40 hours per week, and 59.2% of the sample responded that they would like to spend less time on email. As displayed in *Figure 8*, vice-principals also spend ample time in meetings, including 7.59 hours per week in informal meetings and 4.6 hours per week engaged in formal, prescheduled meetings. Vice-principals spend a total of 3.67 hours per week on the telephone and 2.16 hours per week involved in evening events at their schools or in the community. A total of 26.5% of participating vice-principals indicated that they would like to spend less time attending evening events. Text messaging accounted for 1.57 of vice-principals' weekly work hours, with 1.08 hours spent on other modes of communication. On average, participants also spend less than one hour using social media, developing the school newsletter, updating the school website, participating in conference calls and webinars, and maintaining the school sign.

Figure 8. Hours vice-principals spend on different forms of communication: Per week.

The contemporary vice-principalship is a mobile position: The duties and responsibilities require vice-principals to spend time in many different locations both on and off the school site. For example, as displayed in *Figure 9*, vice-principals indicated spending 27.21%, or just over one quarter, of their time working in their office. Participants reported spending a total of

12.99% of their time in the hallways of the school, and an additional 12.48% in the main office. Participating vice-principals also reported spending 10.34% of their time in various classrooms and 9.86% of their time in the principal's office. Vice-principals are often expected to complete work tasks at home, which explains why respondents indicated spending 7.78% of their time working in their home office. Supervising students can also be part of vice-principals' work, which explains why they spent 7.56% of their time in the school yard or the parking lot. Participating vice-principals indicated spending approximately 2.5% of their time or less in their car, the school conference room, the gym, cafeteria, board central office, staff room, and the lunch room.
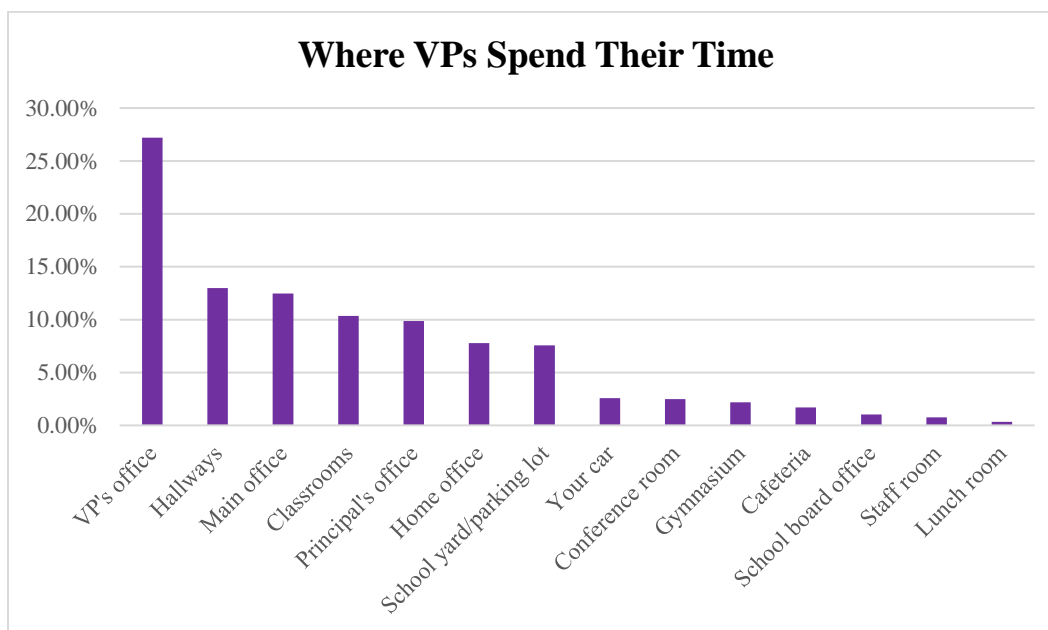

Figure 9. Where vice-principals spend their time: Location.

Vice-principals' work involves different levels of interaction with a variety of stakeholders. For example, *Table 5* displays the level of interaction vice-principals had with stakeholders who were both internal or external to the school. In terms of school-based stakeholders, participating vice-principals had the highest level of interaction with the principal, students, their administrative assistants, specialist teachers, classroom teachers, parents/guardians, and educational assistants. A total of 87.4% of the sample reported *high* or *very high* levels of interaction with their principal. This finding highlights the importance of strong administrative teams and the relationship vice-principals have with their principal. Students were the second highest stakeholder group with whom vice-principals spend time interacting, as 82.6% of the participants reported having high or very high levels of interaction with students. A total of 79.8% of vice-principals also report having high or very high levels of interaction with classroom teachers, while 75.15% report high or very high levels of interaction with specialist teachers. Of the sample, 75.1% indicated that they have high or very high levels of interaction with their administrative assistants, which highlights the important role of administrative assistants in supporting contemporary vice-principals. The vice-principalship also involves working with parents/guardians, a stakeholder group with whom 50.3% of vice-principals have high levels of interaction.

Table 5

Interaction with School-Based Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
The Principal	0.7%	2.4%	7.8%	16.5%	70.9%
Students	0.2%	2.0%	14.9%	30.5%	52.1%
Administrative Assistants	1.4%	3.7%	17.2%	37.1%	38.7%
Specialist Teaching Staff	0.6%	5.1%	18.7%	38.5%	36.6%
Classroom Teachers	0.5%	4.1%	25.6%	40.2%	29.6%
Education Assistants	5.0%	19.6%	34.8%	22.9%	16.4%
Parents/Guardians	0.8%	7.9%	40.5%	35.2%	15.1%
Other VPs	32.3%	22.6%	12.4%	10.2%	13.3%
Custodian	4.5%	18.4%	46.3%	20.5%	10.3%
Professional or Paraprofessional Staff (e.g., social workers, speech pathologist, child and youth workers)	5.7%	24.2%	39.1%	19.9%	10.0%
ECEs	15.7%	11.7%	20.5%	12.8%	6.8%
Other	10.2%	7.5%	12.1%	8.8%	5.6%
Crisis Workers or Teams	27.1%	30.8%	22.5%	9.7%	3.6%
Volunteers	27.6%	30.1%	23.7%	7.2%	2.9%
Union Steward	26.8%	38.2%	24.7%	5.9%	2.2%
Occupational health and safety committee or representative at your school	35.7%	31.9%	20.7%	4.8%	1.9%

We used *t*-tests to investigate whether the extent of vice-principals' interaction with different stakeholders differ by gender. The results, displayed in *Table 6*, show there is a significant

difference between male and female vice-principals in their interactions with the following stake-holders: classroom teachers ($t(781) = -2.80$, $p = .01$), specialist teaching staff ($t(782) = -2.97$, $p = 0$), other vice-principals ($t(531) = 2.81$, $p = .01$), educational assistants ($t(515.10) = -4.89$, $p = 0$), administrative assistants ($t(438.36) = -2.71$, $p = .01$), and professional or paraprofessional staff ($t(741) = -2.32$, $p = .02$). Male vice-principals were less likely to interact with most of the above stakeholders, but they are more likely to interact with other vice-principals than are female vice-principals.

Table 6

Interactions with School-Based Stakeholders by Gender of Vice-Principal

Interaction	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Interact with Classroom Teachers	Male	248	3.8387	.85733	.05444
	Female	535	4.0206	.83998	.03632
Interact with Specialist Teaching Staff	Male	248	3.9274	.89690	.05695
	Female	536	4.1343	.91338	.03945
Interact with Other VPs	Male	167	3.0659	1.54506	.11956
	Female	366	2.6557	1.57256	.08220
Interact with EAs	Male	236	3.0890	.96565	.06286
	Female	511	3.4775	1.09857	.04860
Interact with Admin. Assistants	Male	247	3.9312	1.06273	.06762
	Female	533	4.1463	.96029	.04159
Interact with Paraprofessionals	Male	229	2.9913	.96877	.06402
	Female	514	3.1732	.99667	.04396

As depicted in *Table 7*, similar tests show that significant differences exist between elementary and secondary school vice-principals in their interactions with the following school-based stakeholders: classroom teachers ($t(651.92) = -4.07$, $p = 0$), specialist teaching staff ($t(705.45) = 7.62$, $p = 0$), other VPs ($t(460.24) = 15.26$, $p = 0$), educational assistants ($t(672) = -11.28$, $p = 0$), custodians ($t(659.01) = -3.50$, $p = 0$), administrative assistants ($t(703) = -2.69$, $p = .01$), early childhood education personnel ($t(581.21) = -36.21$, $p = 0$), occupational health and safety committees ($t(310.09) = -3.53$, $p = 0$), the principal ($t(632.95) = -3.20$, $p = 0$), volunteers ($t(294.35) = -12.91$, $p = 0$), and professional and paraprofessional staff ($t(584.88) = 2.23$, $p = .03$). The results indicate that secondary school vice-principals are more likely to interact with specialist teaching staff, other vice-principals, and professional and paraprofessional staff, but are less likely to interact with classroom teachers, educational assistants, custodians, administrative assistants, early childhood education personnel, occupational health and safety committees, the principal, and volunteers than are elementary school vice-principals.

Table 7

Interactions with School-based Stakeholders Based on School Type

Interaction	School Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Interact with Classroom Teachers	Secondary	317	3.8170	.87401	.04909
	Elementary	393	4.0763	.80766	.04074
Interact with Specialist Teaching Staff	Secondary	316	4.3449	.72463	.04076
	Elementary	394	3.8629	.96054	.04839
Interact with Other VPs	Secondary	270	3.6296	1.33158	.08104
	Elementary	213	1.7934	1.29751	.08890
Interact with EAs	Secondary	282	2.8440	1.01437	.06040
	Elementary	392	3.7041	.94838	.04790
Interact with Custodians	Secondary	299	3.0970	.85174	.04926
	Elementary	382	3.3351	.91518	.04682
Interact with Admin. Assistants	Secondary	312	3.9551	1.06293	.06018
	Elementary	393	4.1578	.93707	.04727
Interact with Early Childhood Education Personnel	Secondary	217	.2627	.78772	.05347
	Elementary	384	3.1667	1.17117	.05977
Interact with Occupational Health and Safety Committees	Secondary	191	2.1466	1.22667	.08876
	Elementary	266	2.5075	.82527	.05060
Interact with the Principal	Secondary	317	4.3849	1.01733	.05714
	Elementary	392	4.6173	.89128	.04502
Interact with Volunteers	Secondary	173	1.5491	1.12279	.08536
	Elementary	343	2.8280	.93166	.05030
Interact with Paraprofessionals	Secondary	297	3.2155	1.05940	.06147
	Elementary	371	3.0431	.90838	.04716

As mentioned above, vice-principals' work involves working with stakeholders and personnel who are not employed by their school or otherwise directly affiliated with the school. As displayed in *Table 8*, it appears that vice-principals had little interaction with, and received little support from, individuals located outside of the school. Participating vice-principals indicated having *high* or *very high* levels of interaction with law enforcement officers, who were the external stakeholder group they interacted with most often. Vice-principals reported varied levels of interaction with other external stakeholder groups. Based on these findings, vice-principals were also provided minimal opportunity to interact, collaborate, and network with peers or colleagues.

Table 8

Vice-Principals' Interaction with Stakeholders and Professionals Outside of the School

	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

The School Board (Central Office Personnel)	19.0%	40.0%	33.9%	5.9%	1.0%
Superintendent	36.1%	42.5%	18.2%	1.7%	0.9%
Other Vice-Principals	32.6%	40.4%	21.2%	3.7%	1.7%
Psychologists	35.7%	37.5%	20.2%	3.4%	0.9%
Public Health Nurses	52.0%	30.0%	10.8%	1.9%	0.1%
Community Representatives	58.8%	24.8%	7.8%	0.7%	0.5%
Law Enforcement Officers	29.9%	28.8%	25.1%	10.8%	4.2%
Mental Health Agencies	37.3%	33.1%	20.9%	4.9%	2.2%
Community Service Agencies (e.g., Children's Aid Society)	23.7%	35.6%	30.1%	7.9%	1.6%
Settlement Workers in Schools	45.8%	21.9%	10.8%	3.0%	1.3%
Rental Groups	60.1%	16.0%	4.3%	1.4%	0.3%
Other	24.5%	3.4%	4.7%	1.6%	1.3%

Duties and Responsibilities

This section of the report focuses on why vice-principals were motivated to pursue the position, as well as the duties and responsibilities they engage in on a daily basis. Vice-principals are tasked with many different duties and responsibilities. As displayed in *Figure 10*, just over half (51.5%) of participating vice-principals indicated that the variety of job duties at least partially motivated them to pursue the role. However, the ability to have a greater impact on students was the highest motivating factor for entering the vice-principalship among 78.5% of the sample. A further 72.9% viewed the vice-principalship as an opportunity to demonstrate leadership, and 71.6% thought the position would allow them greater ability to affect change. A total of 71.2% of the sample were motivated to pursue a career as a vice-principal because they had been encouraged to apply for the position. Creating equitable and inclusive schools motivated 54.3% of vice-principals to pursue the role, while 52.8% wanted the increased responsibilities that come with involvement in administrative roles.
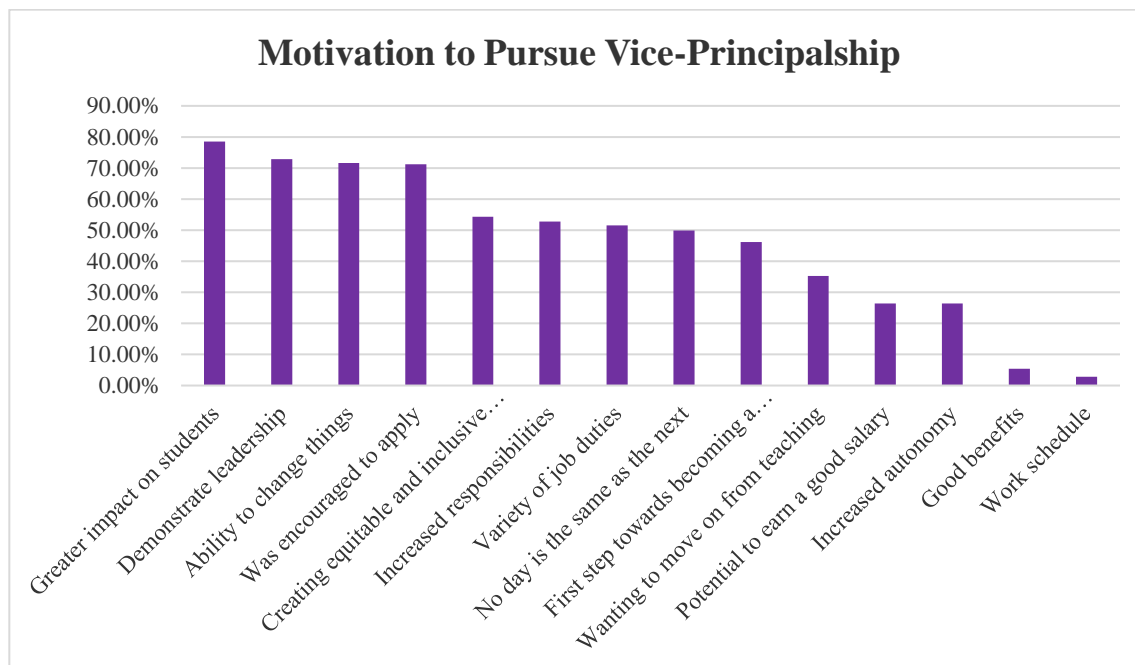
Figure 10. Participants' motivations to pursue a career as a vice-principal.

The duties and responsibilities associated with the vice-principalship are quite different from those of classroom teachers, and even department heads. As displayed in *Figure 11*, participating vice-principals reported mixed reactions when asked if the job was what they expected it to be. For example, 49.2% of the sample indicated that being a vice-principal was *somewhat* what they had expected, with an additional 8.9% of vice-principals reporting the job was *not at all* what they expected. However, 35.0% of participating vice-principals felt the position aligned *very much* with their expectations and 3.7% indicated that the vice-principalship was *exactly* what they expected. An additional 3.2% were not sure.
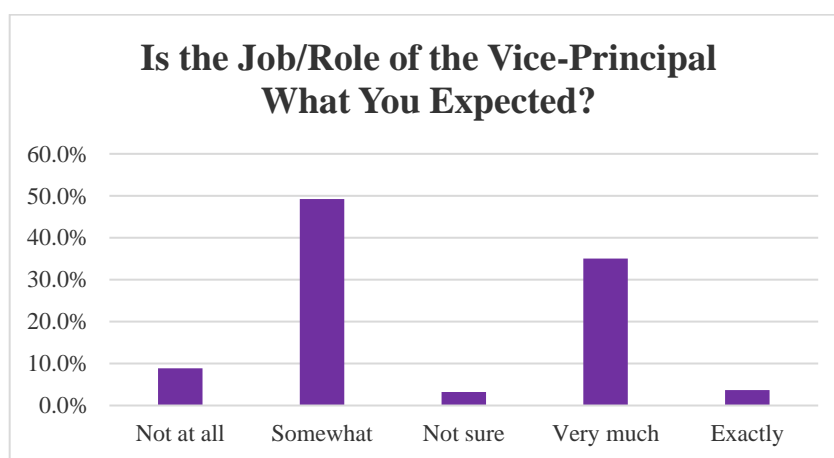

Figure 11. Whether participants' job expectations align with their reality.

A total of 778 vice-principals responded to an open-ended question asking them to explain why their job is, or is not, what they expected. Some participants used this as an opportunity to

explain that they had a good understanding of the position prior to taking the job. For example, one vice-principal stated, "The job is as I expected it to be." Similarly, another participant mentioned that, "Although there are some aspects of the role which I was not expecting, the role is for the most part similar to my expectations." However, several themes emerged from this data, which help explain why so many vice-principals felt the job did not align with their expectations:

- **The workload is intense and unmanageable**: "Impossible workload; feel like you have to manage all aspects (facility manager, health and safety manager, attendance manager, human resources manager in the school) …expected to be the supervisor of all areas, impossible task at times, [with] no proper qualifications."

- **The role can involve little opportunity to engage in instructional leadership**: "I wish I had more time to work on Instructional Leadership. I spend a lot of my time dealing with parents (we have a highly engaged parent community) and managing a full portfolio. The volume of emails is out of control."

- **Vice-principals often spend less time with students than classroom teachers**: "I had hoped it would be more focused on working with students."

- **Vice-principals are doing more mediation of conflict and concerns among staff than expected**: "The amount of time spent navigating the staff, dealing with staff conflicts, and supporting them to be in compliance was not what I expected."

- **Vice-principals with a dual teaching role experience unique challenges**: "It is a custom in our board for vice-principals to also be teaching as part of their work day. Regardless of the percentage of time assigned to teaching responsibilities, it increases the workload and stress load so significantly for vice-principals, that it effectively feels like having two full-time equivalent jobs. The management and teaching roles both demand so much of the individual on a daily basis, that one seems to undermine the other, in any attempts one makes to be effective in both."

The nature of vice-principals' work is complex and influenced by many different factors. *Figure 12* displays some of the key factors that influence how vice-principals spend their time. A total of 99.1% of respondents indicated that their daily activities are negotiated with their principal. According to 96.4% of respondents, the central office mandates their daily activities. Further, 98.8% of respondents reported that their work is also self-directed in nature.
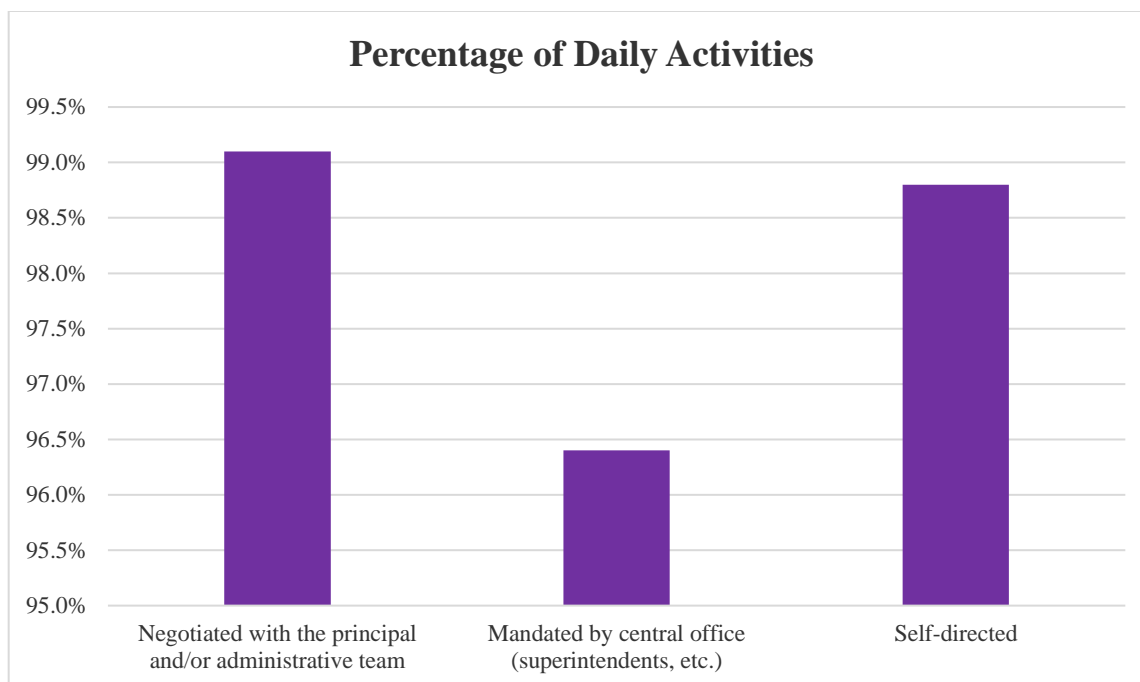
Figure 12. Factors influencing how VPs spend their time.

Participating vice-principals were also asked to identify recent policy changes that influence the work they do on a daily basis. *Table 9* displays a list of recent provincial policies that influence the work of contemporary vice-principals. More than half of the vice-principals identified five recent policies as having *a lot* of influence on their work. Growing Success, a policy outlining assessment, evaluation, and reporting in Ontario schools has a lot of influence on the work of 69.0% of participating vice-principals. A total of 68.9% of vice-principals in this study pointed to the Safe Schools Act as having a lot of influence over their work. A total of 66.4% of the sample indicated that their work is heavily influenced by Regulation 274/12, a recent policy that augments hiring practices in Ontario's public schools. Bill 13, a piece of provincial anti-bullying legislation, has a lot of influence on the work of 59.6% of vice-principals in the study, while 54.9% indicated that the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy has a large impact on what they do a on daily basis.

Table 9

Provincial Policies that Influence Vice-Principals' Work

	A Little	Some	A Lot	N/A
Growing Success–Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools	5.3%	25.0%	69.0%	0.2%
Safe School Act–Bill 212 (Progressive Discipline and School Safety)	4.0%	25.2%	68.9%	1.1%
Regulation 274/12 (Hiring Practice)	10.7%	18.7%	66.4%	1.2%

Bill 13 (Anti-Bullying)	7.5%	32.1%	59.6%	nil
Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy	7.0%	36.6%	54.9%	0.1%
PPM 158–Board-Level Concussion Protocol	22.2%	36.3%	34.8%	1.1%
Full Day Kindergarten–Full Day Early Learning Statute Amendment Act	6.1%	15.4%	29.0%	29.6%
Bill 3 (Sabrina's Law) Act to Protect Anaphylactic Pupils	31.0%	34.9%	26.1%	1.2%
Student Success School Support Initiative (SSSSI)	16.5%	26.6%	26.0%	13.7%
Fluctuating Enrolment/School Closures (ARC)	17.7%	23.4%	24.1%	9.0%
Occupational Health and Safety Act (Including Bill 168 Changes—Workplace Harassment and Violence)	28.0%	41.8%	23.4%	0.8%
Bill 135 (Ryan's Law)–Ensuring Asthma-Friendly Schools	35.4%	35.4%	19.1%	1.4%
Other	3.3%	6.5%	15.3%	60.5%
Aboriginal Education Strategy/FNMI Policy Framework	35.0%	30.1%	13.0%	1.3%
Youth Criminal Justice Act (S. C. 2002, c. 1)	26.1%	24.3%	10.7%	13.4%
Parents in Partnership: Parent Engagement Policy	34.3%	39.8%	10.6%	2.5%
Urban Priority High Schools Initiative	11.4%	4.4%	4.4%	37.8%

Many vice-principals directed their additional comments at the end of this question toward Regulation 274/12. Introduced in 2013, Regulation 274/12 modified teacher hiring practices throughout the province. Three key themes emerged when the survey participants discussed the impact Regulation 274/12 has on their work:

- **It compels administration to hire teachers who may not be a good fit for the school context or culture:** "Regulation 274 is making it very difficult when working in an inner-city school. Not all teachers can handle the demands of inner city schools and clearly do not want to be there, making it very difficult to connect with students and meet their needs."
- **Following Regulation 274/12 takes too much time:** "Regulation 274 is more like 24/7. It takes too much time to follow those hiring practices."

- **It takes time away from instructional leadership and student learning:** "Re-interviewing in a school with a large staff is time away from student and teacher needs."

One respondent highlighted how Regulation 274/12 is serving its intended purpose by assisting long-time occasional teachers find meaningful work, but argued that it has unintended consequences that impede student learning:

> Regulation 274 hurts children. It only helps supply teachers who have been on the hiring list the longest. Principals and VPs are not able to hire the teacher who wants to be in the building, and in high-needs sites, teachers are placed and often end up leaving. You can end up with four to five teachers in one classroom in one year with this regulation.

Although vice-principals cited Regulation 274/12 as the third most influential policy, it does appear that many vice-principals believe the policy both expanded their workload and has a detrimental impact on students and student learning. As one respondent simply stated, "274 is a disaster!"

Accountability and External Influences

Vice-principals were asked to rank the nine stakeholder groups to whom they feel the most (1) to least (9) accountable in their daily work. The complete rankings are listed below.

1. The students
2. Their staff
3. Parents
4. Community
5. Employer
6. Ministry of Education
7. Themselves
8. Family
9. God/church/synagogue/mosque.

Our findings related to these stakeholder rankings are very similar to those who completed the OPC principals' survey conducted in 2013. For example, principals also indicated that the top three groups to whom they feel most accountable in their daily work are students, their staff, and parents.
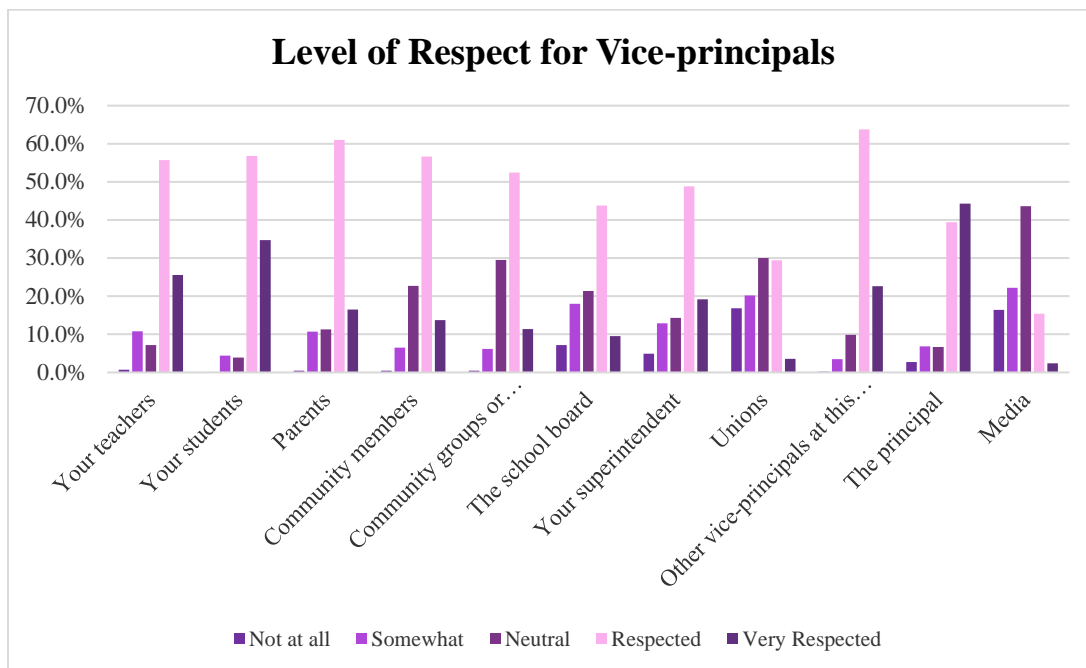
Figure 13. Vice-principals' perceived level of respect from stakeholder groups.

Figure 13 displays the level of respect vice-principals feel they receive from different stakeholder groups. Most elementary and secondary vice-principals who responded to this survey question indicated feeling *respected* or *very respected* by students, teachers, parents, community members, their principal, and other vice-principals. However, 16.8% of participating vice-principals indicated that they do not feel respected at all by the teacher unions. Further, 16.4% of participants indicated that they do not feel respected at all by the media, and 7.2% of the sample indicated they feel no respect from their school board. For example, one vice-principal explained, "The lack of respect we receive can be demoralizing at times." Another respondent, who expressed that principals receive more respect at the school board level, stated, "Administrators should be treated equally and fairly. There seems to be quite a discrepancy between the respect given to a principal versus a VP." Smaller numbers of vice-principals who responded to this survey question also cited receiving no support from their superintendent (4.9%) and the principal at their school (2.7%).

Challenges and Possibilities

The survey also asked vice-principals to identify some of the key challenges they face in their work. Displayed in *Table 10*, a factor analysis shows that their work-related challenges are related to the following six areas:
- community environment;
- political environment;
- principal leadership;
- staff management;
- students/parents influence; and
- teacher influence.

These six factors accounted for 61.1% of the total variance, which implies that they significantly affect vice-principals' work. The following table shows how each variable correlates with each of the six factors mentioned above. In *Table 10*, the factors are displayed across the first row, and the variables associated with each of the factors are displayed in the left column. The number beside each variable indicates the strength of correlation, and the minus sign indicates when correlations were negative. For example, the variable *the principal supports me* was significantly connected to the factor *principal leadership* (factor loading = .90), which indicates that support from the principal can have a very positive impact on vice-principals' work and relationship with their principal. Next to support from the principal, *the principal includes me in decision-making* (loading = .90), and *the principal grants me approval for new programs* (loading = .88), are also strongly correlated, suggesting that these activities also have a positive impact on vice-principals' work with their principal. The only variable associated with the *principal leadership* factor that produced negative correlations is *the principal overturns my decisions* (loading -.83).

Table 10

Factor Analysis Results on Challenges and Possibilities

	Factors					
Variables	Principal Leadership	Community Environment	Teacher Influence	Student/Parent Influence	Staff Management	Political Environment
The Principal Supports Me	**.902**	-.010	-.047	.030	-.043	-.028
The Principal Includes Me in Decision-Making	**.900**	-.023	.032	-.003	.046	-.025
The Principal Grants Me Approval for New Programs	**.876**	-.006	.021	-.007	.034	-.024
The Principal Overturns My Decisions	**-.830**	.026	.075	-.029	.118	.037
Negative Stereotypes about the School Community	.002	**.805**	.063	-.007	.068	.150
Social Problems in the School & Community	.014	**.776**	.081	.225	-.022	.099
Racial/Ethnic Tensions in the School & Community	-.050	**.677**	.009	-.126	.161	.284
Parents Limited Involvement in Their Children's Education	-.032	**.672**	.122	.349	.059	-.122
Level of Support from the School Community	-.026	**.597**	.197	.147	.183	-.023
Teacher Underperformance	-.004	.077	**.750**	.131	.143	.059
Teacher Resistance	-.009	.110	**.701**	.071	.085	.382
Teacher Mental Health	.051	.067	**.677**	.212	.289	-.004
Limited Trust Between Teachers–Administrators	-.204	.184	**.531**	-.075	.077	.484
Limited Trust Between Teachers–Parents	-.071	.227	**.517**	.101	.202	.323
Students' Mental Health	.078	.184	.208	**.741**	.069	.026
Lack of SE Support	-.041	.039	.064	**.703**	.154	.057
Parents' Mental Health	.017	.373	.304	**.589**	.074	-.023
Constantly Adopting New Programs	.030	.031	-.056	**.571**	.132	.411
Working with Teachers in NTIP	-.040	.008	.022	.109	**.798**	.007
Lack of Time to Evaluate Teachers	-.115	.125	.175	.175	**.628**	.053

Staffing with Appropriate Teachers	.039	.109	.282	.100	**.583**	.106
Teacher Turnover	.043	.152	.160	-.003	**.565**	.263
Labour Unrest	-.020	.136	.145	.061	.143	**.770**
Union Concerns	-.048	.051	.347	.193	.112	**.686**

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Well-being and Job Satisfaction

The World Health Organization (2013) defines mental health as, "A state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community." Our understanding of well-being is consistent with this definition.

Our survey results warrant concern about the increasing work demands vice-principals face in schools. A total of 72.3% of vice-principals reported their work *often* and *always* puts them in emotionally draining situations. A follow-up *t*-test ($t(713) = 2.69$, $p = .01$) indicated that secondary school vice-principals ($M = 4.02$, $SD =.79$) are more likely to report that their work puts them in emotionally draining situations than their peers in elementary schools ($M = 3.86$, $SD =.78$). We found no difference between male and female vice-principals in their perceptions of work demands. Similarly, vice-principals' age, work experience, and school size were not significant predictors on whether they perceived their work as putting them in emotional draining situations.
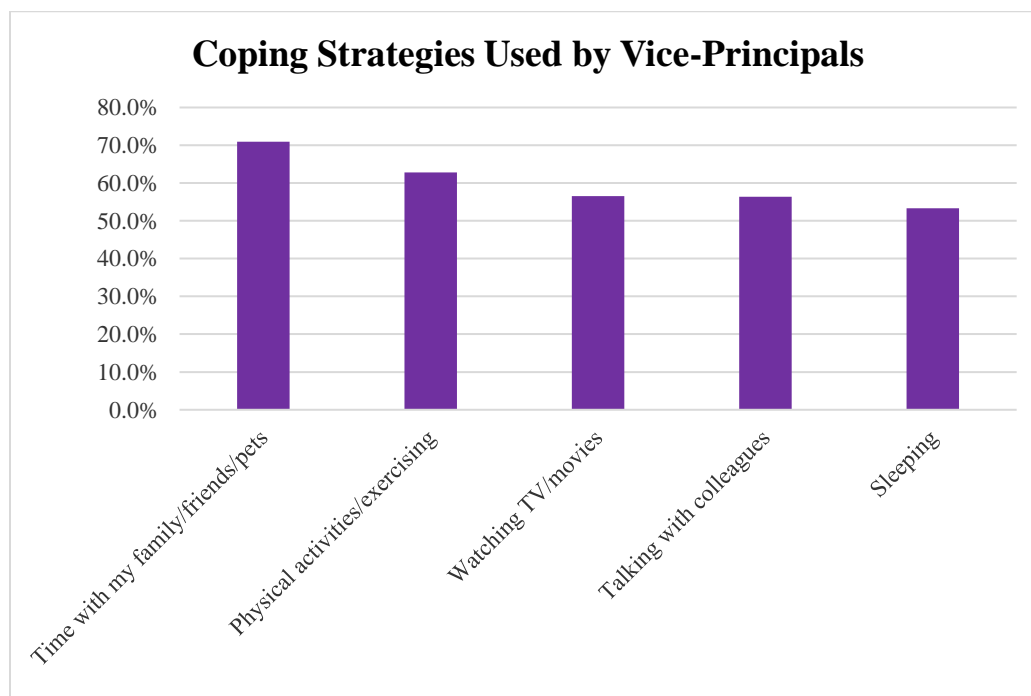

Figure 14. The different coping strategies vice-principals use.

Figure 14 displays the variety of coping strategies that vice-principals reported using to cope with emotionally draining days. The most common coping strategies included: spending time with family, friends, or pets (70.9%), engaging in physical activities or exercise (62.8%), watching television/movies (56.5%), talking with colleagues (56.4%), and sleeping (53.3%). Other popular coping strategies included: eating (46.3%), seeking solitude (38.9%), and listening to music (32.3%).

Table 11

Coping Strategies Used by Vice-principals by Number of Hours Worked per Week

Coping strategies	Less than 40 hours/week	More than 40 hours/week
Physical activities/exercising	47.8%	62.8%
Eating	43.5%	46.3%
Sleeping	52.2%	53.3%
Spending time with my family/friends	56.5%	70.9%
Talking with colleagues	60.9%	56.4%
Talking with supervisor	39.1%	30.4%
Reading	17.4%	31.2%
Listening to music	17.4%	32.3%
Watching television or movies	47.8%	56.5%
Participate in professional counselling	13.0%	7.0%
Meditating/practicing yoga	43.5%	17.8%
Seeking solitude	39.1%	38.9%

Shopping	26.1%	21.8%
Going to Church/Synagogue/Mosque	8.7%	11.1%

Table 11 displays how vice-principals who reported working more than 40 hours per week are engaging in different coping strategies than their peers who work less than a 40-hour work week. For example, vice-principals who work longer than 40 hours each week are more likely to cope by engaging in exercise or physical activity, spending time with friends and family, reading, listening to music and watching television or movies. However, vice-principals who reported working less than 40 hours per week are more likely to cope through meditating or practicing yoga, speaking with their supervisor, participating in professional counseling or going shopping.

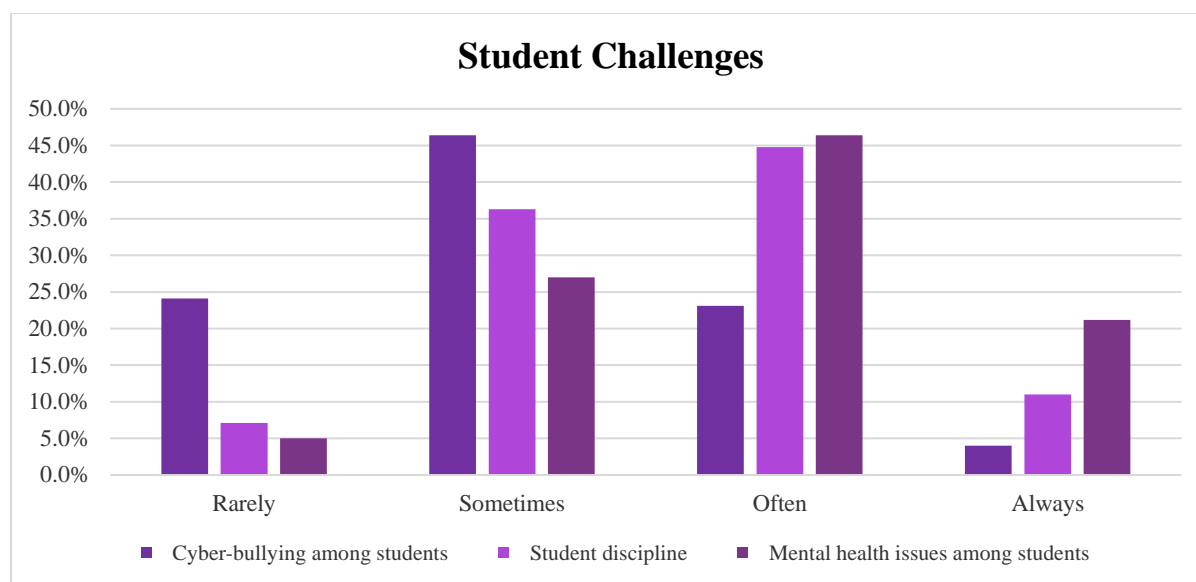**Situations that Contribute to Vice-Principals Experiencing Emotionally Draining Days**

Figure 15. The frequency of student challenges that lead to emotionally draining days for VPs.

Vice-principals can experience emotionally draining days caused by concerns related to students, teachers, the principal or school board, the community surrounding the school, as well as an unrelenting and unpredictable workload. *Figure 15* displays some of the concerns with students that contribute to vice-principals experiencing emotionally draining days. A total of 46.4% of participating vice-principals highlighted how mental health concerns among students often lead to emotionally draining days. Managing mental health concerns among students was also cited by a further 21.2% of the sample. Another issue with students that leads to emotionally draining days is discipline. For example, over half of respondents indicated that managing student discipline *often* (44.8%) or *always* (11.0%) led to emotionally draining days. Cyber-bullying among students was another issue, but not as often as student discipline or mental health concerns among students.
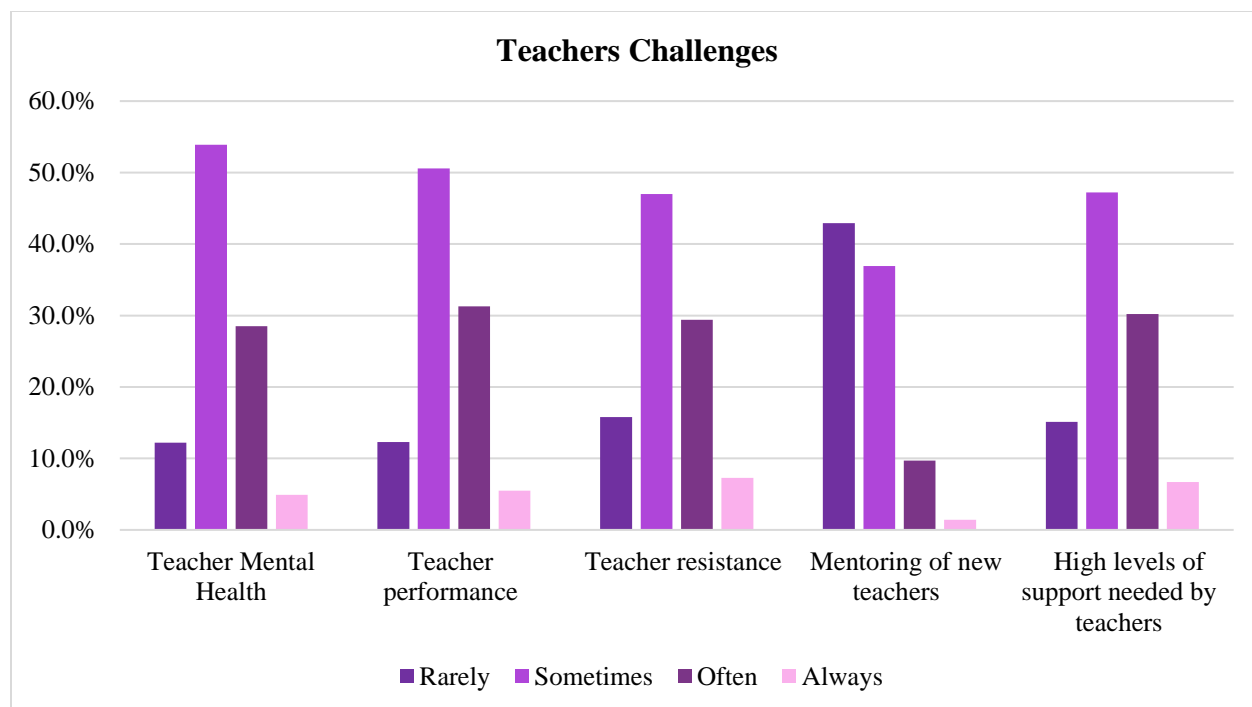
Figure 16: The frequency of teacher challenges that lead to emotionally draining days for VPs.

 Figure 16 depicts how vice-principals also encounter emotionally draining situations when working with teachers, which mostly centre on providing high levels of support for teachers, dealing with concerns about teacher performance, and teacher resistance. Teachers requiring high levels of support *always* cause emotionally draining situations for 6.7% of participating vice-principals and *often* cause emotionally draining situations for 30.3%. A total of 31.3% of vice-principals in this study often experience, and 5.5% always experience, emotionally draining situations when addressing concerns about teacher performance. A further 7.3% of the sample responded *always* when asked if teacher resistance leads to emotionally draining situations, while 29.4% of the sample often shared that experience. Mental health concerns among teachers also leads to emotionally draining situations for the vice-principals who participated in this study. For example, 4.9% of the sample indicated that teacher mental concerns always lead to emotionally draining situations, while 28.5% selected *often*.
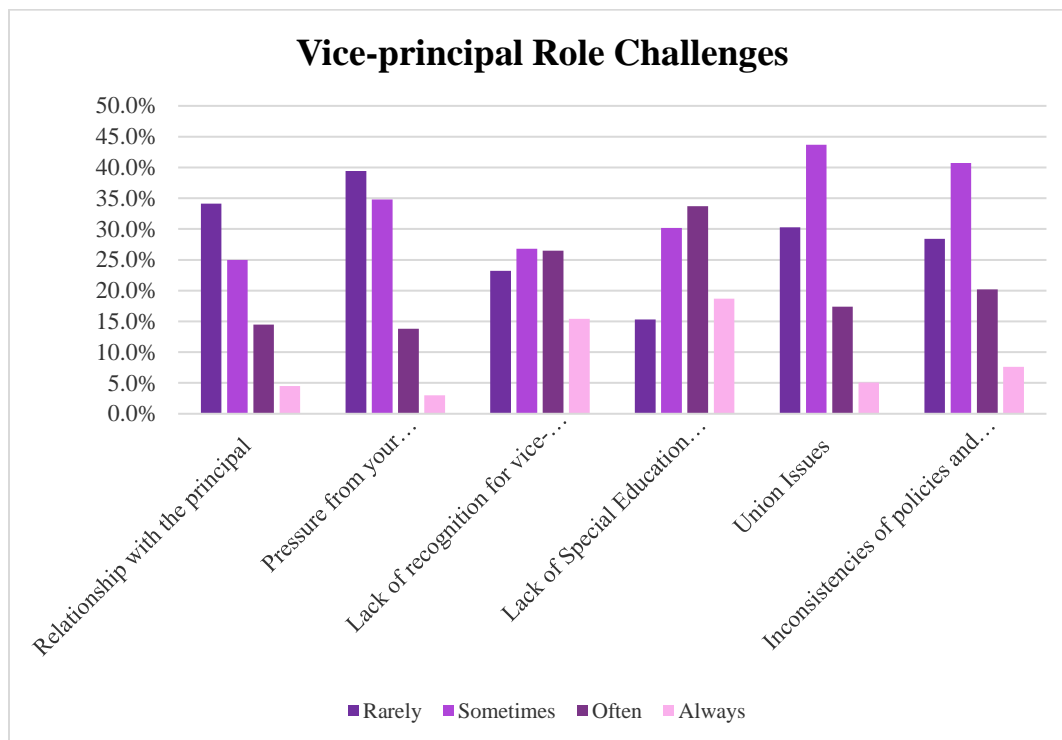
Figure 17. The frequency of vice-principal role challenges that lead to emotionally draining days for VPs.

Vice-principals are part of a larger school system where relationships and policy can influence their work, workload, and emotional health. *Figure 17* charts how frequently vice-principals have experienced challenges working with their principal or school board that led to emotionally draining situations. Vice-principals in this study reported that the relationship they had with their principal (34.1%), pressure from their superintendent and school board (39.4%), and union concerns (30.3%) *rarely* led to emotionally draining situations in their work. However, vice-principals in this study indicated that they *often* (33.7%) or *always* (18.7%) experience emotionally draining situations due to a lack of special education supports and resources. Respondents also acknowledged a lack of recognition for vice-principals through the school system, which *often* (26.5%) or *always* (15.4%) leads to emotionally draining situations for over 40% of respondents.
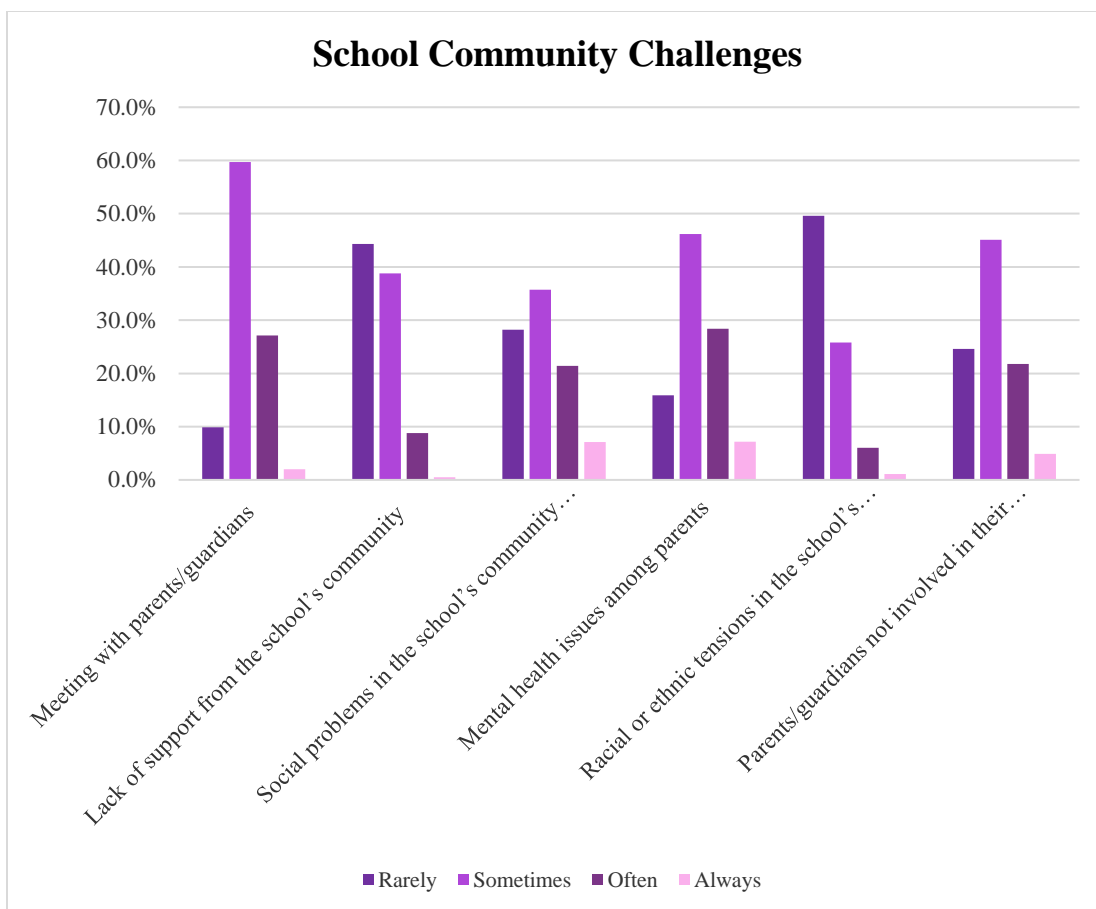
Figure 18. The frequency of concerns in the school community that lead to emotionally draining days for VPs.

Schools are part of larger communities, which means that vice-principals also navigate challenges associated with the communities in which they work. As displayed in *Figure 18*, 49.6% of vice-principals indicated *rarely* facing emotionally draining situations arising from racial or ethnic tensions within the school community and 44.3% *rarely* felt a lack of support from the school community. However, there were some concerns vice-principals indicated facing with the school community that led to emotionally draining situations more often. For example, 28.4% of vice-principals in this study *often* associated mental health concerns among parents with emotionally draining days. Further, 21.8% of the sample cited parents/guardians not being involved in their child(ren)'s education as often leading to emotionally draining situations. An additional 21.4% indicated they often experience emotionally draining situations because of social problems in the school's community, such as poverty, gangs, and drugs.
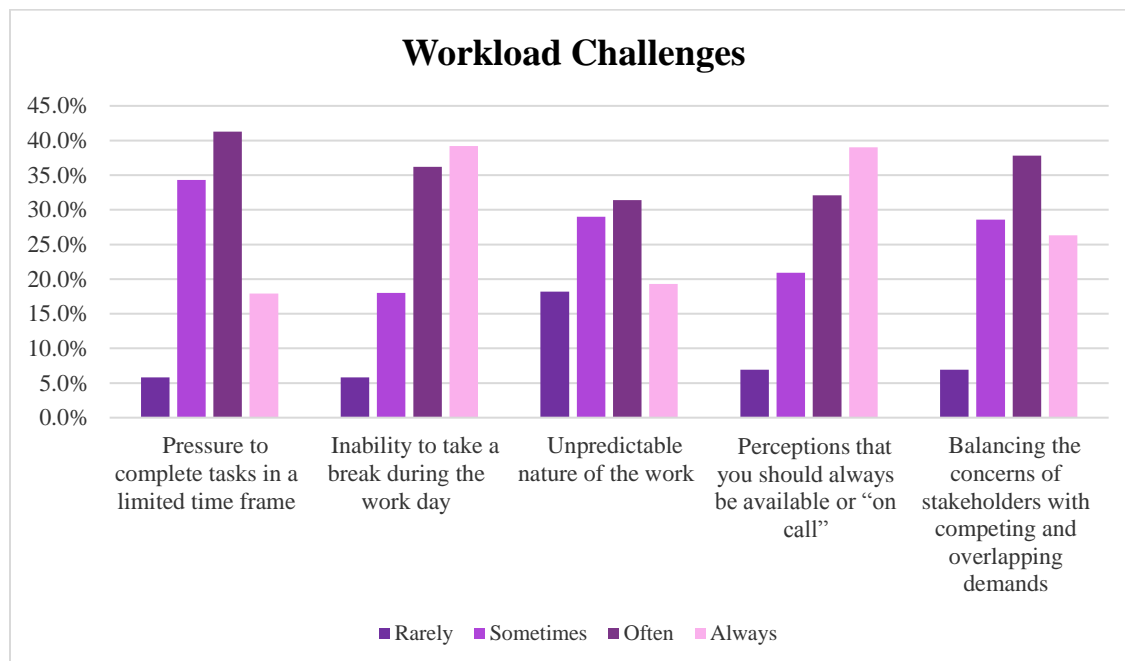
Figure 19. The frequency of workload concerns that lead to emotionally draining days for VPs.

Figure 19 demonstrates how participating vice-principals struggle to adapt to work intensification and an expanded workload. For example, 75.4% of participating vice-principals indicated *often* (36.2%) or *always* (39.2%) experiencing emotionally draining situations because the nature of their work does not allow them to take breaks during the work day. Further, for 71.1% of participating vice-principals, emotionally draining situations are often (32.1%) or always (39.0%) caused by their perceptions that they should always be available or "on call." A total of 64.1% of participating vice-principals reported that balancing the concerns of stakeholders with competing and overlapping demands always (26.3%) or often (37.8%) leads to emotionally draining situations. Finally, slightly over 50% of the sample indicated that they often or always experience emotionally draining situations due to the unpredictable nature of their work.

Although vice-principals' work involves emotional labour and various situations that can incite negative emotions, it also involves joy, hope, happiness, affirmation, and a range of other positive emotions. For example, *Table 11* highlights some positive findings—88.3% of vice-principals who responded to the survey reported knowing how to get their job done, while 85.7% agreed that their school is a good place to work. Further, 83.4% of the sample agreed that their job makes a difference in the school community. However, 78.5% of participating vice-principals indicated that they never seem to have enough time to get their work done, and 60.8% indicated feeling pressured to work long hours. Further, 44% of vice-principals in this study agreed that the pace of their work is too fast. These findings provide further evidence that Ontario vice-principals are suffering from the effects of work intensification.

Table 12

Vice-Principals' Perceptions of Their Work

	Disa-gree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
My school is a good place to work.	3.6%	9.6%	56.5%	29.2%
I have a choice in deciding what I do at work.	21.8%	20.4%	44.0%	9.3%
I never seem to have enough time to get my work done.	8.6%	11.9%	35.4%	43.1%
I can decide when to take a break during my working day.	36.9%	11.2%	15.5%	2.2%
I feel pressured to work long hours.	17.7%	18.9%	38.7%	22.1%
I can make my own decisions about how I do my work.	14.1%	23.4%	53.3%	5.5%
The pace of my work is too fast.	24.5%	29.2%	30.6%	13.8%
I know how to get my job done.	2.7%	8.8%	59.5%	28.8%
I have the appropriate resources to do my job.	20.9%	23.4%	47.9%	4.2%
My job makes a difference in the school community.	2.9%	13.2%	57.2%	26.2%

Other questions in this section of the survey asked vice-principals about job satisfaction. *Table 13* displays that a total of 74.6% of vice-principals indicated that they are satisfied with their job most of the time. Although this finding is encouraging, it indicates that 25.4% of participating vice-principals are dissatisfied with their job. Further, 24.5% of participating vice-principals indicated that if they could do it again, they would have remained a teacher instead of becoming a vice-principal. Other areas that tempered vice-principals' job satisfaction included 83.9% of respondents feeling bogged down by managerial tasks and feeling they cannot give instructional concerns the attention they deserve. Also, 59.6% of participating vice-principals agreed that they are not provided with the necessary training or professional learning to fulfill their job responsibilities.

Table 13

Vice-Principals' Job Satisfaction

	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most of the time I feel satisfied with my job.	11.2%	12.3%	61.8%	12.8%
I feel responsible for making this school successful.	3.8%	7.9%	60.8%	27.0%
If I had to do it again, I would remain a teacher rather than become a vice-principal.	32.0%	18.4%	13.8%	10.7%
If I had a choice, I would work in another industry/sector other than education.	32.6%	17.0%	11.6%	7.0%
My success or failure as a vice-principal is due primarily to factors beyond my control.	37.6%	21.9%	20.6%	7.4%
I have an appropriate amount of time for teacher evaluation.	51.2%	16.3%	14.3%	0.4%
I have received appropriate training by my employer to enable me to fulfill my responsibilities.	31.8%	27.8%	29.3%	3.0%
I have been too busy dealing with managerial tasks to give instructional concerns the attention they deserve.	5.7%	9.3%	47.9%	36.0%
I wouldn't want to work in any other school.	34.4%	30.9%	17.1%	7.7%
(If I had a child) I would recommend this school to parents/guardians seeking a place for their child.	11.3%	20.4%	44.1%	17.9%

Work and Life Balance

Achieving balance between their work and personal life can be a difficult undertaking for many vice-principals. For example, only 1.7% of vice-principals reported having work–life balance *all the time*. *Figure 20* also shows that an additional 13.9% of vice-principals in this study indicated they *often* achieved an appropriate balance between their work and personal life. However, 41.5% of the sample *sometimes* reported being able to balance work and their other responsibilities and achieving work–life balance. A total of 30.4% of the sample *rarely*, and 12.5% *never* felt that they could balance work and responsibilities in their personal life. This finding indicates that approximately 80% of the vice-principal population could be suffering from a lack of work–life balance at any time during the school year.
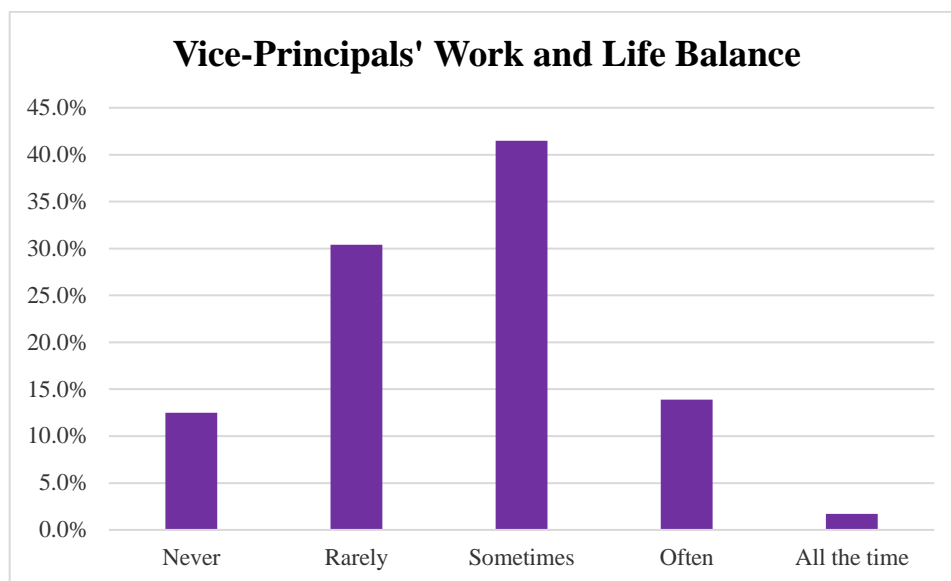
Figure 20. Vice-principals' ability to balance their work and personal life.

Table 14 provides additional data about work-life balance amongst participating vice-principals. A total of 59.5% of vice-principals who responded to this question felt that their principal and administrative team understand the importance of maintaining work–life balance. However, based on other findings, the extent to which vice-principals and their administrative teams use this knowledge about work–life balance is unclear. For example, 62% of respondents reported that their work *always* or *often* infringed upon their home life. Further, 53.9% did not feel their school climate supports maintaining/developing work–life balance, and 51.6% have had to miss something at home because of their work concerns or responsibilities.

Table 14

Vice-Principals' Work and Life Balance

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
My work life infringes upon my home life.	3.5%	33.9%	42.9%	19.1%
My home life infringes upon my work life.	54.8%	22.3%	4.8%	0.1%
I had to miss something at work due to home life concerns/responsibilities.	52.3%	24.7%	1.7%	Nil
I had to miss something at home due to work life concerns/responsibilities.	8.0%	39.0%	42.6%	9.0%

The environment at my current school supports a balance between work and home life.	20.2%	43.7%	24.5%	5.4%
My principal and administrative team understand the importance of maintaining a balance between work and home life.	8.3%	28.9%	35.5%	24.0%
My teaching staff understands the importance of maintaining a balance between work and home life.	7.8%	30.6%	49.9%	11.0%

This section of the survey also asked current vice-principals to provide advice about work–life balance for new vice-principals. 677 vice-principals responded to this question. Three key themes—the ability to prioritize, developing and maintaining a support system outside of the school, and being prepared to work long hours—emerged from these responses. Participating vice-principals indicated that the ability to prioritize was key to achieving work–life balance. For example, one participant stated that new vice-principals need to, "Establish the important things to focus upon. Recognize when to say you cannot do any more than what has already been asked of you."

The second key theme in the qualitative data on vice-principals' work–life balance advice was the importance of developing and maintaining a support system outside of the school, such as relationships with friends and family. According to one respondent, new vice-principals need to be reminded, "That it is important to be selfish and keep family first... not to sacrifice family for work. Too much stress from work creates tension in home life. Find time and activities for self." For this vice-principal, placing work responsibilities above family and other important aspects of their personal life created additional stress and tension. Another vice-principal highlighted how incoming administrators need to set boundaries between work and home early in their tenure as it can be hard to change bad habits: "When starting this position, set timelines that separate work and home. Once you devote more time to work than home, it almost becomes an expectation to follow that model, making it hard to change. The work will always be there so make sure to keep a focus on yourself and family." If vice-principals do not focus on balancing work and their personal life when they enter the position, it can be difficult to create balance later in their career.

Participating vice-principals also suggested that new vice-principals need to be prepared to work long hours to do the job effectively. For example, one vice-principal described his job as very rewarding, but emphasized that vice-principals need to work more than 60 hours a week to perform at a satisfactory level: "If you want to do even a decent job you must expect a work week of 60 plus hours." Further, another vice-principal stated:

> The advice I would give is to prepare for a steep learning curve and to be prepared to work long hours. It is a very rewarding job, however, one is not fully aware of the long hours and the time that the job demands.

Though the position can be quite rewarding, this respondent described how many incoming vice-principals are not aware of the long hours needed to perform all of the roles and responsibilities

associated with the position. Because of the time demands of the vice-principalship, many respondents warned their colleagues to hold off pursuing administration if they have, or are planning to start, a young family. For example, one vice-principal described the challenges associated with raising a family and working as a contemporary vice-principal:

> Ensure you have a supportive family, that they are aware that you will be at every dance, formal, evening event, [and] many sports events after school hours. This will lead to a lack of time [at the] end of [the] school day to do things for your younger children. I waited until the kids could handle themselves after school to move to [an] admin role.

This vice-principal described waiting until their children were older before pursuing the vice-principalship, because of the time demands associated with the position. Some vice-principals did report being able to effectively balance work and their personal life. However, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they struggled to achieve balance, their work infringed upon their home life, and they missed events at home because of work responsibilities.

Supports Available to Vice-Principals

During the focus group sessions, vice-principals indicated that support from OPC was a given. As such, the survey did not inquire about supports from OPC. However, the survey findings suggest that vice-principals also tended to seek support from a variety of organizations across the province, including their district school board, the Ministry of Education, professional associations, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), and their school council. However, as displayed in *Table 15*, it was rare for vice-principals to access significant supports from any one organization. For example, only 4.4% of participating vice-principals indicated relying on their district school board for significant support and 2.1% depended on significant support from their school council. A total of 2.0% of participating vice-principals indicated receiving significant supports from their church or other faith-based organizations.

A further 6.8% of the sample selected -*Other* when asked to indicate if they received significant supports from any of the organizations listed in *Table 15*. Vice-principals who selected *Other* tended to highlight the significant level of support they have received from organizations such as the OPC and the police liaison officers who have worked with their school. It is also worth mentioning that many vice-principals looked within their school when responding to this question, describing supports they have received from their principal, specific colleagues, or school-level volunteers. For example, one respondent stated that, "If you mean, as a VP, if I receive support—that's a big 'no.' The only people who support a VP is a principal and other VPs in my limited experience." Another vice-principal reiterated this sentiment, asserting, "The most support I receive is from my own research/professional learning and other colleagues." While vice-principals in this survey clearly valued support from these individuals, these responses were outside the scope of the question.

Table 15

Vice-Principals' Perceived Level of Support from Organizations

	None	A little	Some	A lot	Signifi-cant
District school board	4.5%	20.6%	47.3%	23.2%	4.4%
Ministry of Education	34.0%	39.4%	22.4%	3.3%	0.9%
Ontario College of Teachers	51.7%	32.4%	14.0%	1.6%	0.4%
Education Quality and Accountability Office	34.0%	42.0%	20.6%	2.7%	0.7%
Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat	41.1%	30.9%	23.1%	4.2%	0.7%
Ministry of Labour	60.1%	30.3%	8.7%	0.6%	0.2%
Teachers' Union	51.8%	34.6%	12.5%	1.0%	0.1%
Other Unions (e.g., CUPE)	57.2%	31.4%	10.2%	1.1%	nil
Church/Faith Org.	73.4%	14.1%	6.2%	4.4%	2.0%
School council	17.7%	29.3%	34.2%	16.8%	2.1%
Community Org.	26.4%	31.8%	34.5%	6.3%	1.0%
Other	69.4%	7.5%	9.5%	6.8%	6.8%

Other than accessing supports available through their district school board, participating vice-principals reported receiving little or no supports from many of the organizations involved in their work. Vice-principals feeling unsupported by external organizations was a key theme to emerge from the qualitative data, and is explained well by the following vice-principal:

> I think I receive a lot of support from my principal. I also receive moral support from other VPs, but it is a very isolated job. No one really understands it. And the people at [the district school board] … have no idea [about] the reality of a school routine and pace.

This vice-principal indicated receiving significant supports from the principal and other vice-principals, but expressed that others rarely understood the routines and the pace involved in contemporary vice-principals' work. Similarly, another vice-principal stated, "I am highly accountable, but I am not given the tools to accomplish my mandate." The clear majority of vice-principals who responded to this survey question indicated that they received little to no support from many of the educational organizations in the province. For example, over 50% of vice-principals in the sample reported receiving no support from the following organizations:

- Church/Faith Organization (73.4%);
- Ministry of Labour (60.1%);
- Other Unions (57.2%);
- Teachers' Unions (51.8%);
- Ontario College of Teachers (51.7%).

Further, more than one third of the sample reported receiving no support from the following organizations:

- Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (41.1%);
- Ministry of Education (34%);
- EQAO (34%).

The data indicates that external organizations, other than OPC, do not play a large role in supporting vice-principals. Either these organizations may not consider vice-principals' needs as part of their mandate or vice-principals are not accessing supports available to them, because they are either too busy or simply unaware that these supports exist.

Professional Learning

Vice-principals who completed the survey were asked to rank the top three skills they have needed to develop and refine over the past two years to better perform the duties, tasks, and practices involved in their daily work. The frequency with which participating vice-principals selected each of the skills they have had to develop or refine is displayed below in *Figure 21*.
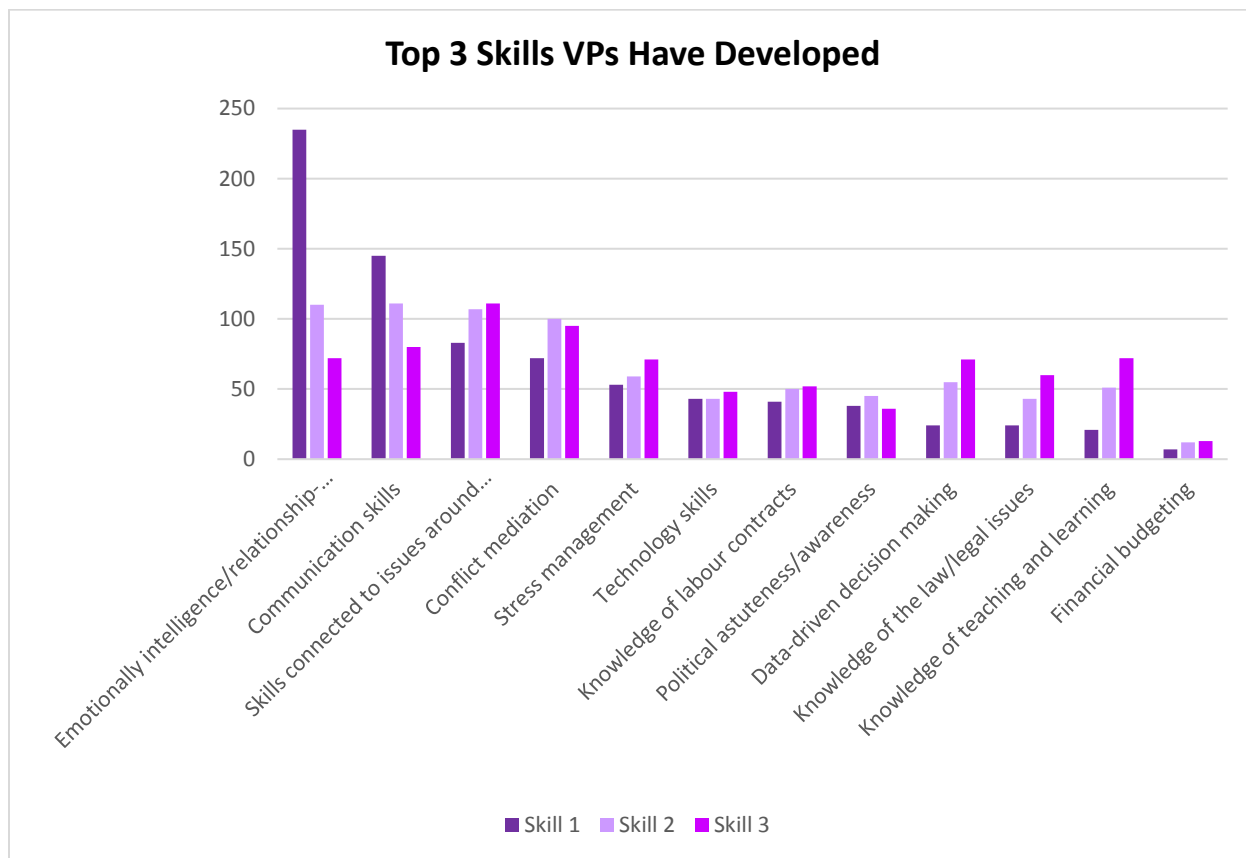
Figure 21. Top three skills VPs have developed to succeed in their role

Vice-principals reported having to develop these top three skills/areas over the past two years to succeed in their role: emotional intelligence/relationship building, communication skills, and skills connected to concerns surrounding mental health. Vice-principals who offered additional comments at the end of the survey related to professional learning focused on developing skills related to managing mental health concerns with students, as well as themselves. For example, one vice-principal discussed how his role involved working with students struggling with mental health concerns, and how his school did not have the resources needed to deal with these concerns:

> I deal mostly with students struggling with mental health and/or substance abuse concerns. My role is connecting them with the resource most effective for them, whether in school or an outside agency. I also spend a great deal of time educating teachers and parents on what their student/child is dealing with. There needs to be so many more resources to deal with mental health concerns in the school.

This vice-principal expressed that his school did not have the necessary resources or training around mental health for him to adequately do his job. The prevalence and severity of mental health concerns in contemporary schools are too complex for some vice-principals to manage in an effective manner. For example, one participant stated they felt ill-prepared to meet the mental health needs of students at their school:

> Even as a VP with 13 years of experience, I am overwhelmed by the mental health concerns and the complexity, and number, of crisis situations that must be dealt with on a regular basis. I feel ill-prepared to meet these demands appropriately. There are not enough supports in schools to meet these needs.

Vice-principals can find the complexity and number of mental health crisis situations they are tasked with when managing school sites to be overwhelming. They must manage the mental health concerns of students while seeking out professional learning to better manage their own mental health. For example, one vice-principal stated that they expended so much energy dealing with the mental health concerns of others at the school that their own mental health began to suffer:

> The stress and mental health concerns of individuals working in schools is incredibly high. I found myself working very hard to keep everyone else together and feeling well that my own mental and physical health became a concern.

This vice-principal noticed that their efforts to maintain and support others' mental health began to take a toll on their own mental and physical health. Another respondent indicated they were looking for a way out of the vice-principalship because of how the role was affecting their mental and physical health:

> The job keeps getting more and more demanding every year. It is hard to be expected to do so much with so little on a daily basis. It is seriously affecting my physical and mental health.

Based on this evidence, vice-principals clearly feel they need to develop skills in terms of emotional intelligence/relationship building, bolster their communication skills, and access more effective professional learning and support when it comes to mental health concerns in schools. Another area where participating vice-principals expressed mixed sentiments in terms of their professional learning was through their membership in professional learning communities, such as formal and informal vice-principals' networks and/or mentoring/coaching programs. A total of 62.36% of participating vice-principals indicated that they were involved in professional learning communities at the time of the survey.
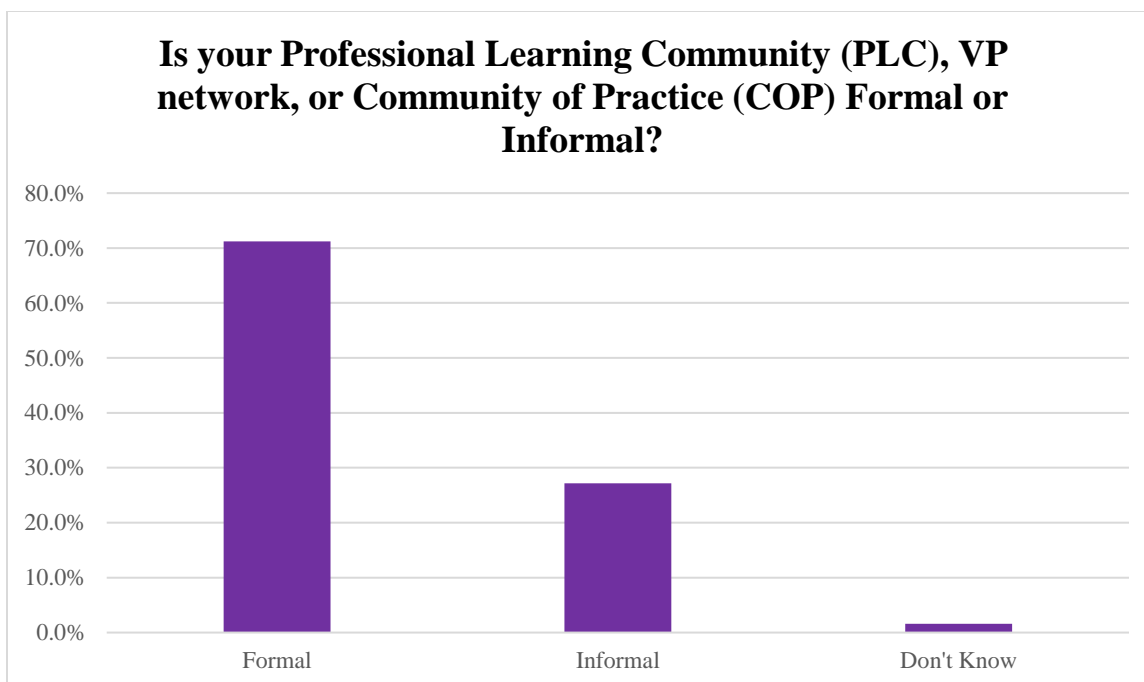
Figure 22. Nature of VP's professional learning communities.

Vice-principals indicated that they participated in both formal and informal PLCs. As displayed in *Figure 22*, 71.17% who were involved in PLCs did so within *formal* programs, while 27.24% of those who responded to this question were involved in *informal* PLCs. A further 1.59% of respondents were unaware if the PLC they were involved in was formal or informal in nature.
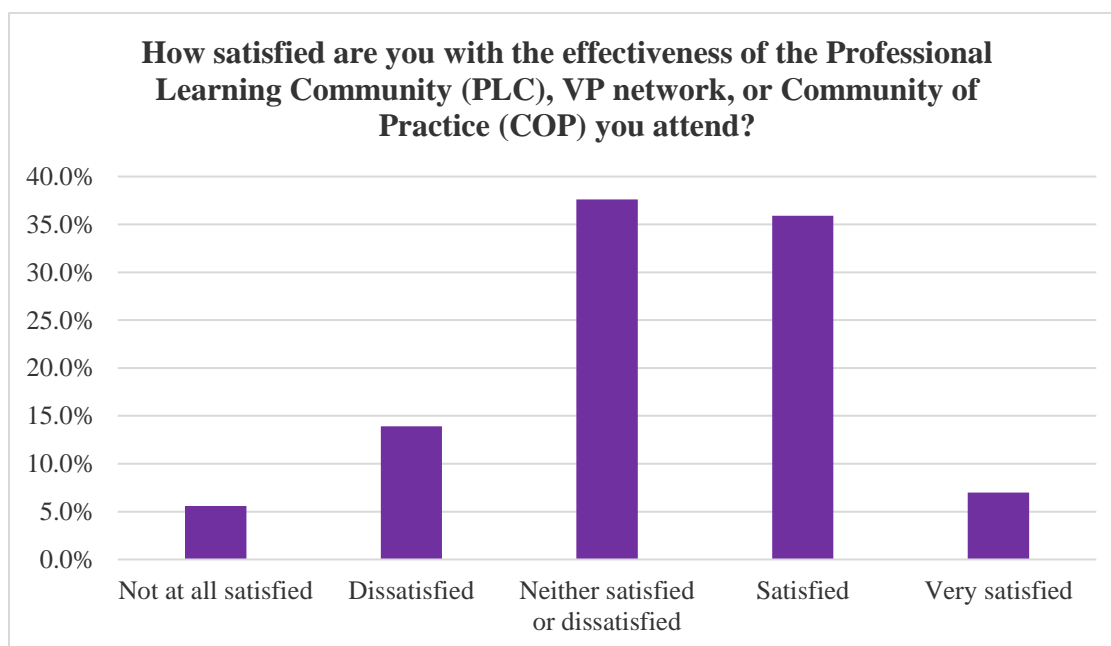

Figure 23. VPs' level of satisfaction with their professional learning communities.

Participating vice-principals expressed varied levels of satisfaction with their PLCs. *Figure 23* depicts that only 7.0% of the respondents to this question felt *very satisfied* with their PLC, while 35.9% were *satisfied*. At 37.6%, most vice-principals indicated they had mixed feelings about their PLC, feeling *neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*. A further 13.9% were *dissatisfied* and 5.6% of vice-principals were *not at all satisfied* with their PLC. The qualitative data indicates that vice-principals had these mixed feelings about their PLCs because some of them had not felt fully supported when participating in these programs. For example, one vice-principal described a situation where their district school board attempted to set up a mentoring program, but provided few opportunities for vice-principals to meet with their mentors:

> The board attempted to set up mentor programs, however no lieu time was given to meet up with your mentor, so [that] made it very difficult to establish relationships and contacts.

Because this vice-principal was not provided any dedicated time to meet with their mentor, it became difficult to establish a mentoring relationship. Other vice-principals who offered additional comments at the end of the survey shared that they felt vice-principals need more mentoring and professional learning opportunities. For example, when discussing professional learning, one respondent stated, "New VPs should have more mentoring and training… [they are] dumped into the job that is vastly different from teaching with no transitions. There is a great deal of treading water in the first few years just to get the hang of things." More effective professional learning opportunities are needed for vice-principals to effectively transition into administrative roles.

School-Level Partnerships

As part of their role, vice-principals in Ontario develop and maintain partnerships between their school and community groups and/or agencies in the surrounding community. Vice-principals indicated that they are involved in an average of 3.14 partnerships across the sample. The number of school community partnerships at the vice-principals' respective schools ranged from zero to 25. As displayed in *Figure 24*, 88% of participating vice-principals are involved in fewer than five partnerships between their school and community groups or agencies. A total of 9.7% of vice-principals in this study reported participating in six to 10 partnerships, while 2.0% of the sample reported engaging in 11 to 20 partnerships. Only 0.3% of the participating vice-principals indicated being involved in more than 20 partnerships at their school. We conducted a *t*-test to determine whether the numbers of community groups and/or community organizations varied between elementary and secondary schools. The results yielded no statistically significant difference. However, a similar test showed there was a significant difference between male and female vice-principals reporting the number of community groups and/or community organizations ($t(363.39) = 2.18$, $p = .03$). Male vice-principals ($M=3.45$, $SD=3.75$) were involved in more school–community organizations than their female colleagues ($M=2.84$, $SD=3.02$).
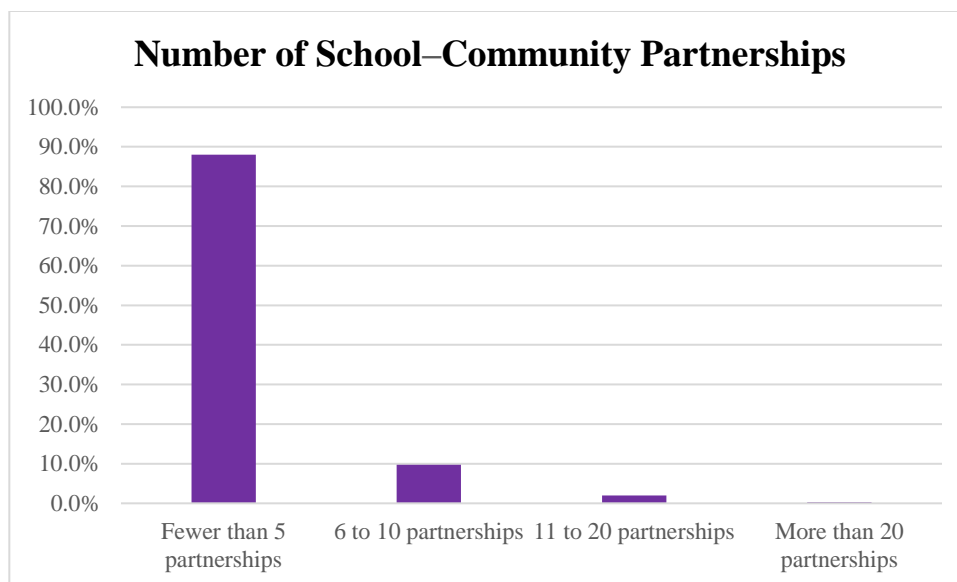
Figure 24. Number of school–community partnerships VPs have developed.

The survey also asked vice-principals to indicate how their involvement with school–community partnerships influenced their workload. They offered mixed feedback. Only one of the 330 additional comments at the end of the survey was related to this question. This principal described how increased community partnerships has increased their workload:

> I have also noticed that the addition of community leases and the Extended Day Programs has significantly added to the workload of the VP—not only are we managing our own students, but we often need to become involved in concerns that happen before and after our "work hours."

Attempts to position the school as a community hub have increased the amount of time vice-principals have to be at the school site because they are often tasked with supervising community groups and other programs that operate at the school after normal operating hours. A further 45% of the sample population indicated that involvement with school–community partnerships does not affect their workload, while only 2.3% specified that school–community partnerships decreased their workload.

Recommendations

These recommendations are directed to those who influence and support the vice-principals in our systems: school boards, senior administration, principals, professional principal associations, Ministry of Education, teacher federations, community stakeholders, and school communities.

Survey respondents generously dedicated time in their busy day to provide information and responses that allow us to confidently make recommendations to the education community that provides support to vice-principals, both current and aspiring vice-principals. It should be noted that some of these recommendations reiterate the recommendations we provided in our

2014 report on principals' work. This is to be expected, as even though it appears there are differences between the work of principals and vice-principals, there is still much overlap.

Improve job satisfaction. While the vice-principal workforce appears to feel positively toward their work overall, there remains recurring themes from the survey data that indicate a sub-group of vice-principals are not coping well, are disengaged from, or are disgruntled with their work. *Table 14* displays that 74.6% of participating vice-principals are satisfied with their job most of the time. Though this finding is encouraging, it indicates that 25.4% of participating vice-principals are dissatisfied with their work. Further, 24.5% of respondents indicated that if they could do it again, they would have remained a teacher instead of becoming a vice-principal. Many participants indicated they became a vice-principal to have a positive influence on student learning; however, they feel they spend most of their time on student discipline and not instructional leadership. We recommend all stakeholders work collaboratively to positively influence those factors that can help to improve job satisfaction.

Reduce isolation for vice-principals through principal mentoring. Our analysis indicated that vice-principals' work is isolating. While vice-principals expressed having very limited supports outside the school, *Table 15* indicates that it was rare for vice-principals to access significant supports from any one organization. Respondents reiterated that their main support was their principal. We recommend an exploration of structures that could be put in place to reduce the amount of isolation vice-principals experience.

Provide effective professional learning that is aligned with vice-principals' work. Vice-principals and principals had similar suggestions for professional learning topics, except for one significant difference. The first two skills/areas that both vice-principals and principals felt they needed to develop over the past two years to succeed in their role were (a) emotional intelligence/relationship-building and (b) communication skills. However, while principals focused on teaching and learning, vice-principals indicated they needed to develop skills connected to concerns surrounding mental health. We recommend that the OPC and other members of the education community continue to develop and deliver professional learning opportunities in these key areas, including concerns around mental health.

Promote Healthy and Safe Work Environments. Approximately 72% of participating vice-principals reported their work often or always puts them in emotionally draining situations. These emotionally draining situations were often the product of in-depth interactions with students, parents, and teachers. We recommend that the education sector work to promote healthy and safe work environments for vice-principals.

Change the culture. The survey findings suggest that vice-principals are extremely dedicated. Most respondents indicated they were satisfied with their decision to become a vice-principal despite working long hours, feeling less respected by teacher unions, and feeling like they do not have enough time to complete their work. The qualitative findings strongly indicated that vice-principals' workload leaves little opportunity for them to engage in healthy behaviours, using sick days when necessary, regularly eating lunch, or taking time away from the school to engage in professional learning. These activities are designed to make the position more manageable. The education community and OPC could work with their Members, as well as aspiring

vice-principals, to change the culture surrounding vice-principals—starting with their own expectations of their work and role in the school. The OPC could begin by encouraging vice-principals to engage in these work entitlements and practices, and encouraging principals to continue to support their vice-principals.

Commit to a diverse workforce. Our data analysis indicates that the vice-principal population is slightly more diverse than that of the principal workforce in terms of race and ethnicity (81% Caucasian as opposed to the principals' population at 93%). This may signal the outcome of efforts to recruit and retain vice-principals from underrepresented populations. We recommend that the education community actively supports and mentors aspiring vice-principals from visibly minoritized groups to pursue official school leadership positions, particularly from the Black and First Nation, Metis, or Inuit (FNMI) communities that represented only 3.1% and 1.6%, respectively.

Build research partnerships. Continue to build partnerships and networks with research organizations such as universities to provide Members with timely information based on research evidence. These efforts will continue to bridge the knowledge–practice gap and help build capacity within the vice-principal workforce.

Further research. We recommended that the OPC explore the vice-principal role in our 2014 principals' report. We are pleased that this study was the outcome of that recommendation. The volume of responses from vice-principals indicates that the OPC Members are interested in and concerned about this line of research. We strongly recommend that the OPC and the rest of the education community continue this research agenda by supporting further research that explores how health and well-being concerns, brought on by contemporary work environments, influences vice-principals leadership practices.

Vice-principal mentoring. Debate exists as to whether the vice-principal role prepares individuals for the principal role. In some jurisdictions, principals mentor vice-principals to prepare them for a future principalship; few programs, however, mentor teachers, other administrators, and novice vice-principals to prepare them for the vice-principalship. We strongly recommend that the education community consider mentoring initiatives in which effective vice-principals mentor new vice-principals to succeed in the position.

Advocacy. The OPC increasingly advocates for vice-principals' interests with the Ontario provincial government and local district school boards. Recommendations included here support much of the ongoing advocacy work of the OPC.

Advocate for district-based professional learning. We recommend that the OPC continues to work with school districts to provide professional learning for aspiring and practising vice-principals, specifically to address many of the concerns highlighted in the survey findings.

Address the impact of Regulation 274/12. Principals noted Regulation 274/12 as a concern in 2014. It appears that this regulation continues to be an issue for the vice-principals who participated in this study. We recommend the OPC further lobby the Ontario provincial government to

address some of the increasing workplace concerns generated through policy layer enactment and initiative intensification, specifically Regulation 274/12.

Enhance existing Principals' Qualification Program (PQP). Vice-principals in this study clearly indicated that there were specific work concentrations unique to the vice-principal role, and that they wished to have access to dedicated professional learning opportunities specific to their role. We recommend the OPC builds on and enhances the existing PQP to respond to some of the specific work tasks and challenges that vice-principals face daily—perhaps even a vice-principal qualification program (VPQP).

Promote workload reduction. Preliminary analysis indicates that vice-principals' work is intensifying because of the changing nature of their work, but also because principals' work is being downloaded onto them. We recommend the OPC, where possible, promote workload reduction for vice-principals.

Advocate for appropriate resources supports. As mentioned earlier, vice-principals indicated that they often (33.7%) or always (18.7%) experience emotionally draining situations due to a lack of special education supports and resources. We recommend the OPC advocates for appropriate distribution of resources that can support vice-principals working with these specific student populations.

Develop productive working relationships with teachers and teacher unions. Vice-principals indicated that much of their interactions with teachers result in emotionally draining situations. Much of this stress comes from dealing with teacher performance, wellbeing, and in some cases, resistance. We recommend that the OPC continues to advocate for, and work towards creating, a healthy and productive relationship with teachers and their unions. This may also mean advocating at the provincial level for changes in workplace relationships.

Defend employment arrangements. Of our respondents, 32% indicated that they have regular teaching duties as part of their employment arrangement. Preliminary data analysis indicates that individuals have difficulty sustaining these work arrangements over a long period of time. We recommend that the OPC defends fully dedicated, full-time equivalent leadership work arrangements, and dissuade the use of any other combination of teaching and leading arrangements.

Current and Aspiring Vice-Principals

The survey findings provided some valuable insight for current and aspiring vice-principals in relation to their work. These recommendations are for individuals seeking to positively engage with their present or future leadership role.

Be informed. We recommend aspiring leaders seek out as much information about the vice-principal role through additional professional learning, independent reading, and informal

conversations with those currently in the position. This way, they will have a better understanding of what to expect and of the transitional process that comes with entering such a demanding position.

Be proactive. Aspiring and current vice-principals will need to be proactive about developing their individual skills and knowledge, first by identifying what their strengths are and where they need to improve, then by seeking out helpful resources.

Build a leadership skill set. The survey findings indicated that vice-principal practitioners should specifically seek out skills training around four key areas: emotional intelligence/relationship-building, communication skills, knowledge of teaching and learning, and mental health and wellness.

Develop healthy coping strategies. Our data analysis demonstrated that vice-principals' work is time consuming and demanding. We encourage vice-principals to build a repertoire of healthy coping strategies that promote positive mental health and wellness.

Develop a supportive network of friends, family, and fellow administrators when transitioning into the principalship. The survey results indicate that friends, family, and fellow administrators are the three main groups vice-principals turn to for support when coping with the demands of their workload. We recommend that aspiring vice-principals make efforts to surround themselves with a supportive and encouraging network of friends, family, and fellow administrators when transitioning into the vice-principalship.

Conclusion

This study examined the changing nature of vice-principals' work in Ontario public schools. Through focus groups and an online survey, we developed a more comprehensive understanding of vice-principals' work by determining the types of duties, activities, and practices vice-principals engaged in on a daily basis, as well as the challenges and possibilities they face in their current work. Survey data from 77 questions that covered 12 aspects of vice-principals' work were subject to descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. These analyses revealed a number of findings. Vice-principals mainly spend their time in five areas: administration and human resources, instructional leadership, relationship management, school management, and community and professional learning. Student discipline and internal school management were two significant predictors to the average amount of time vice-principals spend working each week. The vast majority of vice-principals wanted to spend more time on tasks and activities associated with instructional leadership. The increasing work responsibilities and challenges reported in this study are examples of work intensification that are similarly experienced by principals. Our data also suggests that while there are some similarities between the work of vice-principals and principals, there are also differences. As vice-principals play an important role in schools, they require a greater level of support to deal with the changing nature of their daily work—especially since over 66% of participants have fewer than five years of experience in their roles as vice-principals. The recommendations posed for education stakeholders, as well as aspiring and practising vice-principals are intended to ensure that vice-principals receive the necessary supports to succeed in the role.

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