



Special Advisory Committee – School Leadership Study

FINAL REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to the appointment made by the Minister of Education on February 24, 2020, a **special advisory committee** (“the committee”) was established to inspect and evaluate the work experience, including the terms and conditions of employment, in respect of school principals and vice-principals in all school districts, and:

- a. identify themes and anomalies across and between school districts;
- b. reconcile statutory authorities and obligations with on-the-ground practice;
- c. assess and create an inventory of current district practices with respect to employment terms and conditions;
- d. create a repository of workforce intelligence; and,
- e. collect additional information on school district-specific professional development offerings, onboarding, recognition, and performance management practices.

This committee was tasked to be **fact-finders** regarding principals and vice-principals work experience across the province, to analyze and summarize these facts and present our findings for the Minister of Education to consider.

We carried out our review between February 24, 2020, and June 1, 2020. The dates generally corresponded with the declaration of a global pandemic, and the effects of COVID-19, were reverberating throughout the province, and significantly in the education system. Notably, during our review, in-class instruction was suspended and then gradually expanded, and learning was predominantly online.

In completing our report, we considered:

- the *School Act* and *School Regulation* in terms of principals’ and vice-principals’ statutory responsibilities;
- **employment contracts** gathered from all sixty public school districts;
- documentation outlining short- and long-term **illness trends** for principals and vice-principals;
- **documents** provided by British Columbia Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association (BCPVPA), and British Columbia Public Schools Employers Association (BCPSEA);

- **interviews** (via video and teleconference) with leadership in BCPVPA, BCPSEA, British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA), British Columbia School Superintendents Association (BCSSA);
- **interviews** (via teleconference) with human resource leads in all sixty school districts;
- **interviews** (via video) with representatives of the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) and Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS); and,
- **interviews** (via teleconference) with school-level principals and vice-principals from across the province.

In addition to our interviews and document collection, we summarized, analyzed, and recorded key aspects of employment contracts in **spreadsheet** form.

We would like to acknowledge and thank those who participated in this review. All individuals interviewed gave their time and experience, freely and fully; in particular, school-based principals, who were busy preparing to reopen schools, were engaged in their conversations, and interested in our work.

Summary of Key Findings

At the outset, the committee wishes to confirm that this report presents findings, and not opinions. We believe that we have been careful to articulate information, observations and opinions shared with us. They have been organized thematically, as opposed to individual attribution, with the exception of the associations with whom we spoke. For them, we have summarized our discussions.

For purposes of greater clarity, findings are expressed in one of two ways: the first is those views that were shared consistently with us, and so there is no qualifier as to which constituency provided the observation(s); and, the second is where the views were expressed by one or more, but not all constituencies. In the latter instance, we have attributed the views to the particular constituency.

It is important to begin with our broadest observations.

People interviewed expressed unanimously that principals and vice-principals are an immensely valuable strength to the British Columbia education system and its students. Research shows that their impact on student outcomes is profound, they create a culture and environment where children can reach their potential, and teachers can create the conditions where learning can flourish.

Concurrently with this, principals are the front-line interface between the community and classrooms. As society continues to grow more complex and dense, so do schools. The modern principal holds many hats - lead educator, building manager, report writer, social worker, mental health professional, etc. It was reported consistently to the committee that principals and vice-principals are concerned that the volume and complexity of this work has increased significantly in the last few years.

Overall, **our key finding is that there is not one issue, but two issues that affect the working lives of principals and vice-principals.** The first is **employment contract concerns**, and the second is **work experience/leadership development concerns**.

More specifically, we made the following key findings in our study:

→ Employment contract findings:

- principal and vice-principal contracts are **iterative**, they have been established, then changed through small steps and modifications, since principals left the teachers union in 1988. The approach has been one of developing consensus, and preserving collegial relationships.
- although there is uniformity in contract elements and language in many of the sixty template contracts in the province, there is **wide variability** in some key provisions. Some, but not all of this, is about responsiveness to local conditions and culture;
- some non-compensation provisions that lack consistency include:
 - Types of appointment, i.e. whether continuing, trial to continuing, term specific, or both continuing and term specific
 - Indemnification
 - Termination with or without cause
 - Maternity provisions (with or without Supplemental Employment Benefit plans)
 - Sick leave bridging to Long Term Disability (with or without Short Term Disability plans);
- **capacity** to negotiate employment contracts varies extensively from district to district for both Boards and principals and vice-principals, either individually or through local chapters;
- larger districts with more members often (but not exclusively) have dedicated Human Resources staff, and more capacity to pay attention to the substantive and process provisions of employment contracts, than smaller districts;

- the Board of Education in SD.5 has developed a different contract for **new hires**, where some previous provisions have been removed or altered substantively (e.g. continuing contract status, role of the local chapter, indemnification);
- a few districts have employment contracts that have clauses that are significantly outside the norm. Examples include: only two districts do not have assignment and reassignment language; three districts provide for a provision for administrative time; and, SD.43 has comprehensive language about the representation rights of the local chapter for principals and vice-principals in the district, and is the only contract that addresses the role of the BCPVPA. These and other matters are highlighted under Themes & Anomalies discussed later in this report, as well as the spreadsheet in Appendix 2;
- a few districts are attempting to reduce the contract liability to the Board by removing clauses (sometimes unilaterally);
- there is considerable evidence that many clauses are *de facto* **negotiated provincially** through the support of BCPSEA and BCPVPA; and
- from **unsolicited statements** during interviews, most BC principals and vice-principals who were interviewed do not wish to organize as a union, but certainly, want to be treated fairly and equitably across the province.

→ Work Experience/Leadership Development findings:

- Overall, principals and vice-principals **are committed to the career** they have chosen. They enjoy working with people, especially students.
- The work of school-based administrators has **grown in volume and complexity** over the last decade.
 - Shifting priorities from government, districts, unions, and parents have made the job more complex than ever.
 - Many principals and vice-principals state that they find themselves supporting families (as opposed to only students) more than ever. These supports can be to help families navigate community resources, such as food security, mental health support, parenting support, etc.
 - Many principals and vice-principals report that increased accountability for new initiatives such as the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and WorkSafe BC requirements and reporting including Violence in the Workplace reporting, all take time away from the central purpose of leading instruction.
- The majority of principals and vice-principals interviewed, stated that at times they feel unrecognized for their significant and essential role in the effective delivery of education.

- There is great variability in the process of onboarding principals and vice-principals, and providing on-going development to principals and vice-principals. Again, larger districts have more capacity to develop and support these programs.
- Solutions to the concerns of principals and vice-principals are, by the nature of the sector, complex and multi-layered. Many partners influence, or have a stake in, the work of school-based administrators. It will not be easy to bring consistency to current legally binding individual employment contracts across sixty autonomous school districts. After hearing from all constituencies, we find that solving principals and vice-principals contract concerns, will not alleviate their work experience/leadership experience concerns.

BACKGROUND

- There are approximately 2,500 vice-principals and principals in BC's public education system.
- The BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) was established in 1988 as an autonomous, professional and voluntary association advocating on behalf of their members (currently ~95% of P/VPs).
- Principals and vice-principals have individual contracts of employment with their Boards of Education. They are a foundational element of the employment relationship. The contracts have been in place for many years, and have developed incrementally over the years in response to:
 - legislative change,
 - judicial decisions,
 - local circumstances,
 - discussions, consultations, or negotiations with the local P/VP chapters, and
 - best practice advice (as distinct from direction) from BCPSEA.

At the end of the day, Boards of Education in each school district are responsible for the provisions of these contracts. In this decentralized environment, there are both visible similarities and differences as the contracts address common terms and conditions of employment, as well as local needs and concerns. An example of this is that some districts have template contracts and insert information about the individual, others take a previous version of the contract and update it for the individual, and the last variation has a relatively short (3-4 pages) agreement, which includes an appendix which has been worked out with the local chapter over the years.

- There have been interventions over the years at the provincial level to address issues in the public sector. One example is the compensation freeze ("the freeze") that was imposed in 2012, and eased in 2017, with the introduction of regional salary grids, followed by benefit improvements in 2019. The freeze affected employees who were excluded from bargaining units. Consequently, in the K-12 sector, it was applied to a number of employees including principals and vice-principals. They reported that the freeze contributed to frustration and often resulted in perceptions of broader and deeper concerns about their experiences.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Over the last few years, BCPVPA has expressed significant concern with a perceived lack of consistency across the province's sixty school districts with respect to a variety of terms and conditions of employment for P/VP. As such, BCPVPA is seeking negotiation agency on specific matters at the provincial level, including: term, indemnification, assignment/reassignment, maternity leaves, short-term disability, termination, and dispute resolution.
- While there have been many discussions between BCPVPA and BCPSEA on this matter since 2018, the parties have not reached an agreement, and both parties have been frustrated by the lengthy process.
- Current data and intelligence regarding the employment conditions have been provided by BCPVPA, without the benefit of the school districts' input. BCPVPA has identified inconsistency issues with the following aspects of employment terms and conditions:
 - Initial hiring
 - Assignment and reassignment
 - Vacations
 - Recognition of the local Chapters
 - Sick leave and related benefits
 - Maternity and other benefits
 - Indemnification,
 - Dispute resolution
 - Right to representation
 - Local agency
- BCPSEA has passed 2 motions ¹(one at their 2019 Annual General Meeting, and another more recently in January 2020) to address BCPVPA's concerns. In addition, BCPSEA has recently conducted a review of the template employment contract for principals and vice-principals in each of the sixty school districts and found that: the vast majority of contracts align with the template developed by the district through consultations with local P/VP chapters, variances

¹ 2019 AGM- BE IT RESOLVED that BCPSEA staff engage in non-binding discussions with representatives of the BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association to establish a structure and process to identify the key terms and conditions of employment and report back to BCPSEA board and membership on their findings.

AND FURTHER THAT:

After reporting back and consulting with Boards of Education, and receiving direction from the membership, BCPSEA may create templates of contract language that Boards of Education may choose to implement for their Principal and Vice Principal staff contracts on a voluntary basis.

2020 AGM- BE IT RESOLVED that issues related to the employment relationship between principals and vice principals and their employer boards of education, including development and revision of terms and conditions of employment in alignment with the BCPSEA statutory mandate, continue to be best addressed at the local school district level in order to facilitate, enhance, and reflect each district's organizational structure and culture and that BCPSEA develop, in consultation with BCPVPA, preferred template language that districts may use at the local level.

in terms and conditions of employment are relatively minor in scope, and do not appear to represent an unfair or egregious approach in any district, and common contract language alone would not address most of the issues cited by the BCPVPA.

- Given the duration of what has now escalated into a dispute amongst partners, and lack of a shared path forward, Government has established a special advisory committee [Ministerial Order No. M057 under section 171.1 (1)(a) of the School Act] (“the committee”) to provide an objective review of the circumstances pertaining to school leadership. The Order is set out in appendix 1.

PROJECT GOALS

GOALS

1. Assess and create an inventory of current practices with respect to P/VPs’ employment terms and conditions across all sixty school districts, as well as work experience of P/VPs in BC (this should include consultation activities with the education sector – i.e. interviews, focus groups, surveying, etc.);
2. Identifying themes, if any, across the Province as well as anomalies in various school districts pertaining to P/VPs employment terms and conditions;
3. Reconciling P/VPs’ statutory authorities and obligations with on-the-ground practice;
4. Collecting information on professional development offerings, on boarding, recognition and performance management practices as it relates to P/VPs among school districts;
5. Creating a repository of P/VP workforce intelligence, including salary placement on grid, mobility, turnover rates, sick time and absenteeism, health leaves, and length of time as an educational professional.

Additionally, if time permits, conduct a jurisdictional scan of contract negotiation mechanisms and processes for P/VPs across Canada.

METHODOLOGY

The committee determined that the most efficient method of gathering facts and collecting documents would be through a series of meetings and interviews with the leadership of all involved partners in the sector. Due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began shortly after the start of the committee's appointment, video-conferencing was deemed to be the most appropriate method of communicating with groups, and telephone calls for conducting individual interviews.

It is important to note that the committee was reliant upon copies of employment contracts and other documents that were shared with us. We wish to be clear that, in our view, people we communicated with did their very best, at a very complicated time, to provide us with all of the documentation we requested, and to be as forthcoming as they could in sharing other information. The committee believes that there may be a handful of missing grandparented contracts and some incomplete information, but that on an overall basis, our findings fairly represent practices in the sector.

Public School Districts

- The committee contacted all sixty public school districts, and they provided copies of their employment contract for principals and vice-principals.
- The committee created a spreadsheet of key features of these contracts (see appendix 2). These data were cross referenced with data provided by BCPVPA and BCPSEA, along with examination of actual contracts provided by districts.
- The committee conducted interviews with 59 districts by phone (1 other was completed by email). Districts identified the most appropriate person (HR lead, Secretary-Treasurer, Superintendent) for committee members to speak with. Questions (see appendix 3) on the following topics were discussed:
 - Key contract provisions such as term, assignment, reassignment, processes,
 - Total compensation review including salary movement to 2018 grids, benefits, vacation and leaves,
 - Recruitment challenges,
 - Roles of other parties including local chapter, BCPVPA and BCPSEA, and
 - Anything else they wished to share, including perks provided in addition to the contract, retention issues, understanding of job satisfaction, and concerns of principals and vice-principals.

British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA)

→ The committee met with BCPVPA representatives:

- April 8, 2020, David DeRosa and Kevin Reimer, President, and Executive Director respectively
- April 16, 2020, the members of the BCPVPA Contract Advisory Committee and Directors of Member Support Services, Don Boyd, Magdalena Kassis, and Ellen Roberts
- April 24, 2020, David DeRosa and Kevin Reimer, President and Executive Director, and Membership Support Services Directors, Don Boyd, Magdalena Kassis, and Ellen Roberts
- April 28, 2020, May 12, 2020, Town Hall Meeting with Chapter Presidents
- May 7, 2020, President David DeRosa recommended that the committee speak to a principal returning to the classroom. The committee spoke with the principal by conference call
- Executive Director Kevin Reimer provided the committee with 25 documents for their consideration and information.

Morneau Shepell/HUB International

- April 15, 2020, the committee met with Ingrid Gallier, Vice President, and Krishnaa Ramesh, Associate Consultant, to discuss trends Long Term Disability (LTD) use, provisions in school districts for Short Term Disability, and disaggregation of reasons for applications for LTD from principals and vice-principals.
- Ingrid Gallier provided the committee with 8 documents for our analysis.

British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA)

- April 15, 2020, the committee met with BCSTA President Stephanie Higginson and Executive Director Mike Roberts.

British Columbia Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA)

- The committee met twice with Alan Chell, Board Chair, Renzo del Negro, Chief Executive Officer, and Deborah Stewart, Executive Director, Corporate Services, and Communications. The first meeting occurred on April 21, 2020 and a second meeting was scheduled on April 29, 2020.

British Columbia School Superintendents Association (BCSSA)

- April 24, 2020, the committee met with Chris van der Mark President, Claire Guy, Executive Director, and 6 members of the Board of Directors representing various regions within the province.

Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) & Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS)

- May 7, 2020, the committee met with Allyson Otten, Executive Director for the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), and Tim Simony, Executive Director for the Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS).

Interviews with school-based principals and vice-principals

- May 2020, the committee contacted 38 currently serving principals and vice-principals from all 6 regions of the province. Due to the pandemic, these interviews were done in lieu of focus groups to provide a sense of issues that impacted front-line principals and vice-principals. The committee asked 8 open-ended questions (appendix 4) which allowed the respondents to comment on their satisfaction for both the employment contracts they currently have, and the engagement they have for the work they do.

In March 2020, the local principals and vice-principals' association from the Southeast Kootenay school district (SD.5) had applied to the BC Labour Relations Board for union certification, with support of the BCPVPA. When made aware of this, the committee decided to cease conducting its fact-finding work in this district. This decision was made to ensure that the process unfolded as required by the *Labour Relations Code* and case law, and that there could be no perception of interference or an unfair labour practice during the consideration of a certification application.

INTRODUCTION TO FINDINGS ON EACH PROJECT GOAL

Before discussing each project goal, the committee wishes to provide introductory comments that, in our view, are important and overarching observations that inform each project goal.

Complexity

From the beginning to the end of our work, we were struck by the enormous complexity of the governance of the K-12 system. Beginning with the Ministry, through Boards of Education, alongside the leadership and management of Superintendents and their staff, and exemplified by Principals and Vice-Principals at the school building level, there are many opportunities to influence direction. Factor in that this happens in sixty different districts throughout the province with local needs and circumstances, and this results in a complex ecosystem. There are also the added layers of the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and the other unions representing support staff.

Where there is this level of complexity, process becomes important to ensure understanding of participation rights and responsibilities, confidence in directions and decisions, and that no one is "left behind".

Engagement

Principals and vice-principals are engaged in their profession, and this is a **tremendous asset** for the province, school districts, students and their families, communities and teachers.

Equally, the leaders of the associations discussed under Methodology above, are **engaged and passionate** about the pursuit of their organization's objectives.

It was clear to us that this level of engagement is a core element to the collaboration the K-12 system needs to function effectively.

Trust

It was equally clear to the committee that trust was an issue amongst partners, and particularly between the BCPVPA and BCPSEA. It is another core element, and meaningful collaboration will be elusive without it.

Culture

A defining aspect of education in BC (and other provinces and territories) is that in order to become an educational leader like a principal, vice-principal, or superintendent, one has to have commenced their career as a teacher in the BCTF (or comparable union from another province) bargaining unit. The Union is active, and has a well-developed infrastructure to support bargaining, collective agreement administration and professional learning. As expressed to the committee, the Union takes care of its members.

It is not surprising that many principals and vice-principals **enjoy being part of a collective** (as distinct from a union), and feel like “ducks out of water” when it comes to understanding, discussing and advocating for changes to their employment contracts. It was not something that many are comfortable with, as their skills and capacity lay in student learning, and motivating others for success. Several Principals and Vice-Principals said to us that **they were not trained for this**.

Consistency

When professionals such as principals and vice-principals have to consider their employment contracts, whether as an individual or as a member of their local chapter, it is often helpful for them to **perceive there is more consistency amongst key provisions**. Transparency is key to developing this perception, which can build confidence and contribute to strong beliefs that there is **fair and equitable treatment**. Feelings of being taken advantage of can have ripple effects on related matters, affect engagement and encourage people to look for solutions to achieve greater alignment.

Clarity of Principal and Vice-Principal responsibilities

The *School Act* and the *School Regulation* set out the legislative framework for the responsibilities of principals and vice-principals. A core provision of the Act is that Boards must ensure that a principal, vice-principal, or director of instruction is responsible for each school in the district. That responsibility is outlined in greater detail in the Regulation. Principals and vice-principals have an important role to play as **key advisors to the Superintendent**, and **providers of professional expertise to Boards**.

Conflation – contract issues with leadership development issues

One of our early and sustained observations from our interviews was that it was important to separate leadership development from contract issues. Both are important.

Contract issues pertain to those provisions in employment agreements that the BCPVPA has determined to be unfair or unreasonable compared to other employee groups in the sector, or between school districts. These were outlined above in the Problem Statement.

Leadership development issues pertain to matters outside employment contracts – part of their broader workplace experience – that impact principals and vice-principals significantly. These include: work intensification, administrative task downloading, perceived lack of recognition, and the expansion of “other duties as required or assigned”. These issues were conveyed to the committee by principals and vice-principals and the BCPVPA.

THEMES AND ANOMALIES ACROSS THE PROVINCE

In preparing this report, the committee decided to start with Project Goal 2 as it provides broader observations, and then move to the greater detail that is outlined in Project Goal 1.

Themes

It is clear that in every district, employment contracts have **developed incrementally** over years. Generally, these revisions have occurred following discussions (on the continuum from consultation to negotiation). The approach has been one of developing consensus, and preserving collegial relationships. Additionally, the committee heard that individual principals and vice-principals had negotiated preferential understandings over the years.

In the minority of districts, revisions to the contract have been made without consultation with principals and vice-principals, either directly or through their local chapter. This was explained to the committee in one of two ways: it is the Board’s contract, and the Board does not need to consult to make changes; or, that was the way things had always been done, and principals and vice-principals did not raise concerns about the process or result. An example of where the first way became a significant issue was a couple of years ago in SD.27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin). In that district, an attempt had been made to change the contract unilaterally by eliminating the long service payout to pay for the salary increases stemming from the new regional framework in 2018. That attempt led to votes of non-confidence, the installation of a Special Advisor, and ultimately a new Superintendent.

It was also clear to the committee that BCPSEA and BCPVPA are usually in the **background guiding** the senior management (Superintendent, Secretary-Treasurer) and local chapter’s contract committee, respectively.

Variability, more often than not, results from:

- being responsive to **local conditions** and **culture** (e.g. interactions are relationship-based, and matters are handled less formally, often through practices and handshakes),
- **capacity** of the district office to be on top of contracts (i.e. ranging from rural and remote districts where the Superintendent and Secretary-Treasurer are all things to all people, to large districts with developed Human Resources functions), and
- the template contract **not being a priority** for one or both parties.

Contracts consistently provide for:

- Length of appointment – whether continuing, successful trial period then continuing, or term specific
- Duties and responsibilities
- Salary and benefits (whether in the main body of the contract or an appendix)
- Appointment, assignment and reassignment
- Evaluation/performance review/professional growth
- Termination for cause and not for cause

Wide variability:

- How different appointment lengths are used across districts
- Leaves including personal days when school is in session
- Maternity leaves
- Bridging to Long Term Disability
- Vacation
- Professional development allowances
- Indemnification
- Right to representation in processes such as termination and negotiation

Because practices (how things have traditionally been taken care of) are deeply rooted in school districts, there is often an understanding of how a process will unfold, or a decision will be made.

Consequently, employment agreements do not address these matters, or the agreement says it will be in accordance with district practice. The issue then, is to find the **balance** between respecting those norms and understandings, and managing the risk that they will be lost through **turnover** of both principals and vice-principals, and those in district offices who hold that knowledge.

Indemnification is an example of a provision in an employment contract that would normally be seen as boilerplate language (and often not completely understood by either the principals and vice-principals or district staff). There is an **inherent complexity** to the concept. Nevertheless, it was surprising to the committee to see a range from one sentence to at least a full page in contracts. The median approach was a previous version of the BCPSEA recommended language.

Maternity leave is an example of language that lacks consistency, which is surprising especially in the 21st century. Given the vast majority of principals and vice-principals come from the **female-dominated** BCTF bargaining unit, **one might expect maternity/parental leave provisions** to be outlined consistently in contracts. We need to set aside for the moment the provision for **Supplementary Employment Benefit (SEB) plans** in less than half of the contracts (there may be additional districts with SEB plans provided as a matter of practice, or where the contract states they will be treated the same as teachers). There are costs to SEB plans, and districts may have allocated total compensation envelopes to other matters. The cogent observation is that in these contracts, particularly in the education sector, **women need to see themselves and their choices in these roles**. It was surprising to the committee to see contracts with minimal and non-specific language (SD.92 Nisga'a and SD.6 Rocky Mountain), or a simple reference in many to the *Employment Standards Act*.

Anomalies

Beyond the wide variability, there are a small number of contractual matters that stood out for the committee:

- SD.36 Surrey and SD.57 Prince George **do not have assignment/reassignment language**; rather, principals and vice-principals are appointed to the district. All other districts have assignment/reassignment language in employment contracts.
- Vacation – from not having a specific provision (and having vacation addressed by implication through clauses like Work Year and Duties when not in session), to specific **provisions ranging from 6 to 10 weeks**.

- Administrative time – Only SD.36 Surrey, SD.60 Peace River North, and SD.69 Qualicum have a **specific allocation provision**.
- Role of local chapter – In seventeen districts (28%), employment contracts have reasonably clear language about the rights and responsibilities of local chapters to represent principals and vice-principals in employment contract negotiations (whether the template and/or employment plan). The notable example is SD.43 (Coquitlam) with comprehensive language providing for **representation rights by the local chapter**, and of the BCPVPA (the only employment contract to reference the BCPVPA in this capacity).
- Review processes – 52% of contracts have a provision within the agreement for a review of the agreement at **dedicated intervals**. Examples include SD.22 (Vernon), SD.44 (North Vancouver), SD.48 (Sea to Sky), SD.61 (Greater Victoria), and SD.83 (North Okanagan – Shuswap).
- Dispute resolution processes – Three districts (SD.6 Rocky Mountain, SD.36 Surrey and SD.39 Vancouver) have processes that culminate in binding arbitration under the *Commercial Arbitration Act*.

K-12 CONSULTATIONS

British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA)

- Representatives shared consistently and generously with the committee. Key themes of the meetings and materials were:
 - BCPVPA representatives believe that they have been **patient** for at least 6 years, in trying to get traction about the need they have identified for a defined relationship for principals and vice-principals, with the BCPVPA as their formal representative. They also believe that, in spite of their best efforts, they have not been able to convince various associations, as well as Government ministers and staff, to agree with their solution(s). They express concern and frustration with their engagement with BCPSEA.
 - Their preferred solution is to have Government put in place the mechanisms to recognize the BCPVPA as the **official negotiating representative** of P/VP (not as a union) across the province, with assigned matters negotiated at provincial and local tables, and any outstanding matters at the provincial table to be resolved by binding arbitration. The stated similar (but not identical) approach for this is the Ontario model (discussed in section 11, where the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) is a voluntary association recognized by the Ontario Government as the official bargaining agent for P/VP. Key differences include that there is only a provincial table in Ontario, and there is

no binding arbitration to resolve disputes. The latter is something the OPC seeks to change.

- They believe it is important to formalize practices and understandings into contracts for 2 reasons: to protect P/VP from neglectful or poor management practices, and having to rely on the goodwill of the superintendent and Boards of the day; and to ensure these practices and understandings remain in place, and are not lost over time through turnover of key personnel.
 - They articulated that they wish to strengthen working relationships by addressing perceived issues of unfairness, lack of consistency, and inequity. Their important matters include, but are not limited to: fair, transparent processes; health and wellbeing of P/VP; impact of Government directives and decisions across the province, e.g. the memorandum of Agreement on the implementation of the restored language in the BC Teachers Federation (BCTF) agreement; and, mechanisms for contract review and dispute resolution (the latter of which is discussed further below).
 - The BCPVPA seeks to have a dispute resolution mechanism that would start with the superintendent, move next to a 4-person joint committee, then to a mediator, and finally to binding arbitration.
- BCSTA, BCPSEA, and BCSSA would be opposed to the above-mentioned process. They view this as an unnecessary barrier to good supervision of school leadership. Further, the time constraints required to move a dispute from complaint to resolution could significantly hinder the operation of the district.

British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA)

- BCSTA provided a historical background to efforts to work with the BCPVPA to address their (BCPVPA's) concerns regarding perceived inequities within employment contracts across the province.
- **BCSTA convened a number of meetings** to hear the concerns and search for solutions. Included in these meetings were members of BCPVPA, BCSSA, BCSTA, BCPSEA, and senior Ministry staff. These meetings have not yet been successful in finding a solution(s) to the BCPVPA concerns. The parties were committed to continuing the meetings further to find solutions.
- They shared the view that a collaborative series of conversations needs to take place about leadership in the sector – strong, engaged leaders at the school level – and, that it was a **much bigger problem to solve than employment contracts**. Key to finding solutions is agreement on principles, structure, roles and responsibilities, process, and engagement.
- In terms of roles and responsibilities, it would be critical to creating a shared understanding of the roles of principals and vice-principals, recognizing local autonomy. For example, what

does leadership at the school level mean? What does being part of a district leadership team mean or look like?

- On the issue of process, there would need to be clear principles. They would be interested in a **balanced process** that respected the leadership roles of principals and vice-principals and the accountabilities of Boards of Education. This process should include consultations with principals and vice-principals, and providing them input into the terms of their contracts. It would be one avenue – an important one – to recognize their contributions, and provide them with a voice.

British Columbia Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA)

- BCPSEA shared a history of past attempts at resolving differences between BCPSEA and BCPVPA regarding the employment contracts for British Columbia principals and vice-principals. Central to the discussion were these points:
 - Presently there are **no legislative provisions** for BCPVPA to become the negotiating agent for principals and vice-principals in the province.
 - BCPSEA is a **member-driven organization**; member boards have not given specific direction for BCPSEA staff to pursue provincial negotiations with BCPVPA.
 - BCPSEA currently provides **model language templates** for boards to consider in their employment contracts with principals and vice-principals.
 - Individual issues of contract fairness are best addressed at the **local district level**. Included in this concept of fairness is recognition of the historical trade-offs that have been made within total compensation envelopes.
 - BCPSEA believes that BCPVPA has failed to provide specific examples of where there are inequities across the province that require provincial level negotiations.
- A second meeting was scheduled to discuss in-depth, BCPSEA template language for a variety of contract clauses, including indemnification, termination, leaves (including maternity), short and long-term disability use, and availability.

British Columbia School Superintendents Association (BCSSA)

- **BCSSA highly value the work of principals and vice-principals** in the schools they serve. They consider them to be integral members of the district's leadership team, and the future leaders of British Columbia school districts. Further, they believe that they should be appropriately compensated, and treated fairly in their employment terms and conditions.

- The group clearly identified their views on BCPVPA's bid for negotiation agency for all chapters in the province and their current bid for certification as a union for the principals and vice-principals in SD.5 Southeast Kootenay.
- In terms of organizing principals and vice principals as a union, BCSSA believe that **constraints of the union and the duties of principals are incompatible**. Further that it would seriously erode their relationships with their school leaders.
- The Board of Directors believes that there may be a place for **standardized language for some clauses** of the employment contracts (i.e. indemnification language, maternity leave provisions, dismissal provisions).
- They also believe that there should be **no attempt to fetter a superintendent's responsibility** to manage school-based leaders. An example would be in clauses that allowed for the appeal of transfer and reassignment.

Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) & Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS)

- The committee learned of the formation of the OPC by the **removal of principals and vice-principals from the teachers' union by the Ontario provincial government**. The OPC represents approximately 95% of eligible principals and vice-principals, and negotiates on their behalf for some provisions of their employment contracts.
- The OPC has a mentorship program called the Emerging Leader Development Program (ELDP). This program is designed to prepare teachers for a successful transition to a principal and vice-principal role. The ELDP focuses on topics described in recent research, or identified as helpful by new and experienced principals and vice-principals in building their capacity to deal with the complexity and demands of the role. (See the ELDP overview in Appendix 5.)
- Similarly, the recently formed PSAANS was necessitated by the **removal of principals and vice-principals from the teachers' union by the Nova Scotia provincial government**.

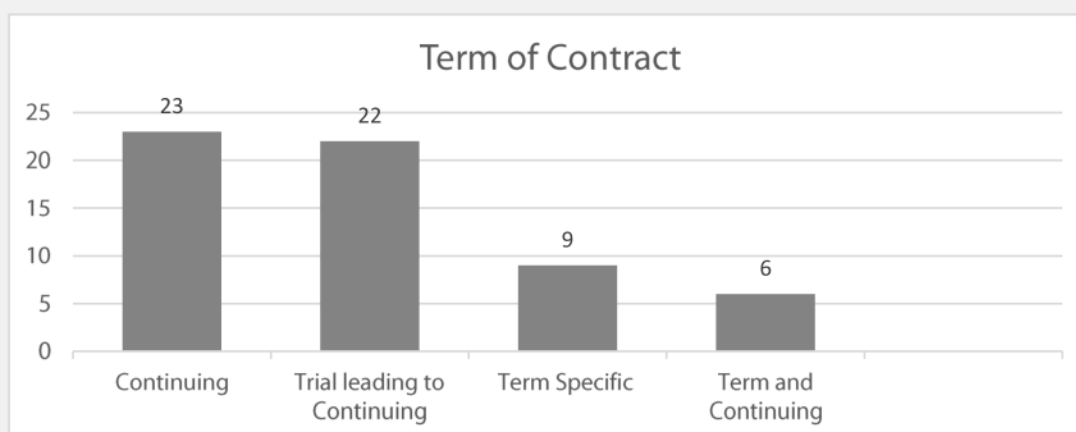
INVENTORY OF CURRENT PRACTICES

As stated previously in the Methodology section, the committee relied upon collected employment contracts from all sixty public school districts in British Columbia. Human resource leads, Secretary-Treasurers and/or Superintendents were contacted and **interviewed** regarding the various aspects of principal and vice-principal employment contracts and working conditions (listed below). These contracts had key aspects that were recorded, and later reconciled with documentation from BCPVPA, and when inconsistencies were found, were verified by the committee through detailed contract inspection (see Appendix 2).

These key aspects contain clauses or conditions that BCPVPA had identified in their documentation – *Contract Analysis: BCPVPA Principals and Vice-Principals* dated November 2019 – as showing the greatest variability across the province.

→ Term of contract

- The committee examined the types and variety of principal and vice-principal employment contracts available within the province of British Columbia. Terms of contracts varied from, **continuing, trial leading to continuing, and term specific**. The slight majority (23 districts) had continuing contracts. Twenty-two districts had terms that contained a 2 to 3-year term (trial period) before obtaining a continuing contract. Within many of these contracts, a specific condition was required before obtaining continuing status. Often this condition was the **successful completion of a performance review**. Nine districts had term-specific contracts (these varied from 2 to 5-years) and six districts had **both** term and continuing contracts.



→ Number of Distinct Contracts

- The overwhelming majority of districts have a **single template contract** that is negotiated by a committee of the local PVP chapter, district staff, and occasionally trustees.
- Some districts have a few individual contracts that are similar to the typical district contract, but contain **grandparented** clauses for a benefit that the district no longer offers principals and vice-principals (i.e. early retirement benefits, long service benefits and management recognition benefits).
- One district (SD.5 Southeast Kootenay) recently began to offer new principals and vice-principals a different contract with materially different provisions for vacation.

→ Assignment/transfer/reassignment

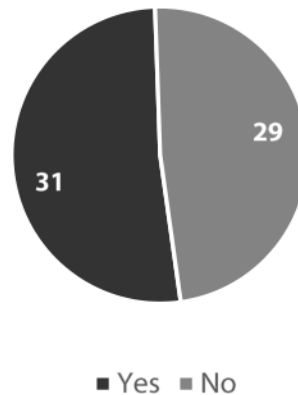
- Fifty-eight contracts (96%) contain language regarding **assignment moves** for principals and vice-principals.
- Two districts (SD.36 Surrey and SD.57 Prince George) contain clear language that the appointment is to the district, and there is **no particular school assignment**.
- Many of these contracts often refer to **notice in writing** (7-30 days), and salary protection if the salary is lower at the new assignment.
- A few remote and rural districts provide **moving expenses** if the employee is required to move.
- Fourteen districts provide for an **appeal mechanism** to the superintendent, and occasionally to the Board.

→ Local chapter agency

- Thirty (50%) of district employment contracts contain **no reference to the local chapter** of BCPVPA in terms of discussions/consultations/negotiations.
 - The above group contains SD.5 Southeast Kootenay term contracts
- Thirty-one (52%) of district employment contracts contain the right for the local chapter of BCPVPA to review the contract at **specified intervals** (between 1-5 years).
 - The above group contains SD.5 Southeast Kootenay continuing contracts

→ Seventeen (28%) of the districts above, contain reasonably clear language that the local chapter has the right to agree to changes to the contract on behalf of its members. SD.43 Coquitlam also contains language that identifies BCPVPA as its provincial representative in negotiations.

Right of Local Chapter to Meet on Contract Review

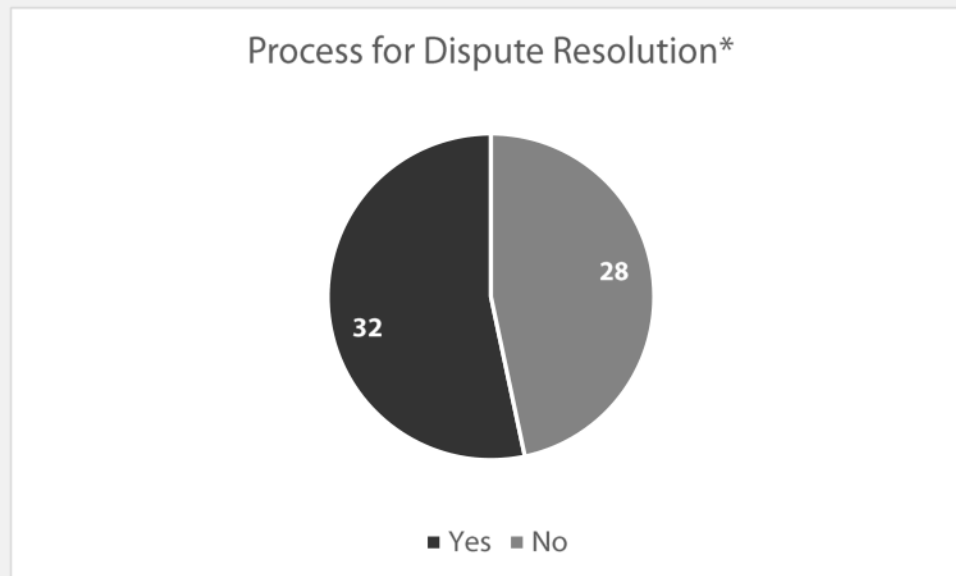


- Two school districts (SD.19 Revelstoke, SD.20 Kootenay-Columbia) contain language regarding a **joint committee**.
- One school district (SD. 59 Peace River South) contains language that implies a right to meet with the chapter regarding negotiations.
- BCPSEA views these as personal service contracts between the principal and vice-principal and the Board of Education, **not a collective agreement** bargained by an association.
- Many districts commented that it is **their practice** to refer principals and vice-principal to the BCPVPA when a dispute, investigation, or dismissal is being contemplated. These districts deem it to be good human resources practice to ensure an employee has outside representation.

→ Dispute Resolution

- Twenty-eight districts (48%) have **no dispute resolution processes** in contract.
 - SD.5 (Southeast Kootenay) term contracts are contained within the group above.
- Eighteen districts (30%) provide for an **opportunity to address the Board of Education**, either in writing or in person.
 - SD.5 (Southeast Kootenay) continuing contracts are contained within the group above.

- Two districts (SD. 36 Surrey, SD. 39 Vancouver) can proceed further to binding arbitration under the *Commercial Arbitration Act*

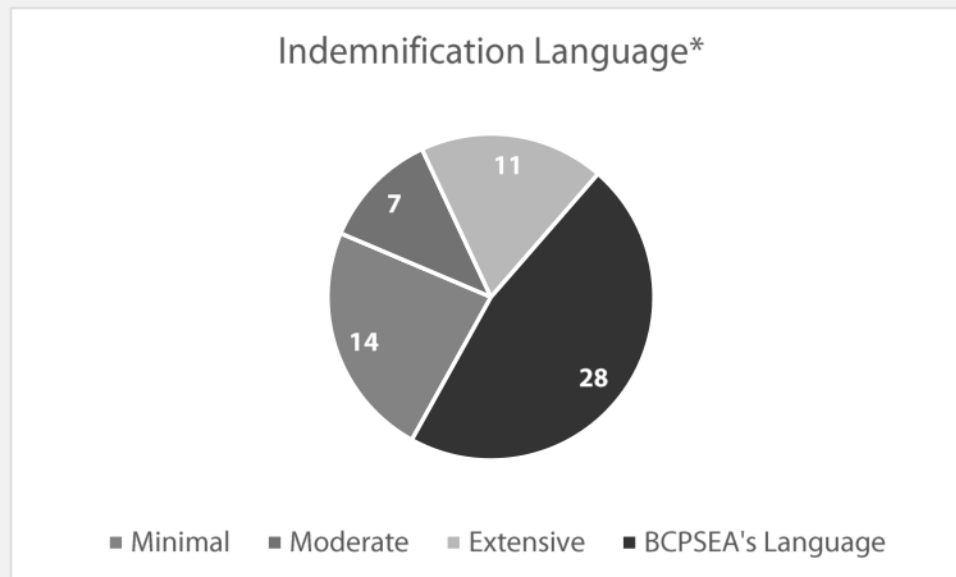


**For the purpose of this graph, SD. 5 is counted in the “no” category. However, this district recently has two different contract templates, one for contracts with a continuing term (with dispute resolution language), and another one for term-specific contracts (without dispute resolution language).*

- Ten districts (17%) have **joint committees** to try to resolve the issue
 - Two then proceed to the Board then mediation
 - One then proceeds to mediation
 - One then proceeds to the Board
- Note: In the majority of cases where there is a dispute resolution process in contract, the individual principal or vice-principal owns the dispute. The BCPVPA and local chapter have no rights to intervene unless requested to do so by the individual principal or vice-principal. This process is different from a unionized grievance procedure, where the grievance is owned by the union, not the employee.

→ Indemnification (discussed above in section 5 – Themes and Anomalies)

- All districts offer indemnification clauses. There is wide variability in the language ranging from one sentence to at least a full page. The most common language used by districts is a previous version of the model language provided by BCPSEA.



**For the purpose of this graph, SD. 5 is counted in the “moderate” category. However, this district recently has two different contract templates, one for contracts with a continuing term (with moderate language on indemnification), and another one for term-specific contracts (with indemnification language based on the language recommended by BCPSEA).*

→ Recruitment

- Except for one position in SD.74 Gold Trail, all other districts reported no unfilled vacancies in principal and vice-principal positions.
- Districts that reported recruiting challenges, also indicated that they **experienced similar challenges for all positions in the district**, including teachers, support staff, and business staff. Often the challenges resulted from looking for candidates with greater experience than was apparent from the applications to the postings.
- Representative of comments made in a large number of districts, one Human Resources professional stated, “Just because there are no unfilled positions does not mean there are no recruitment challenges, we have fewer qualified applicants each year to choose from”.
- It was common for school districts to want to find a **balance** between hiring from outside of the district, and promoting from within for principal and vice-principal positions. While some districts were already focused on growing their own talent (e.g. SD.36 Surrey, SD.39 Vancouver, and SD.73 Kamloops-Thompson), others had identified it as a priority for work in the coming year or two.

→ Principals and Vice-Principals returning to teaching

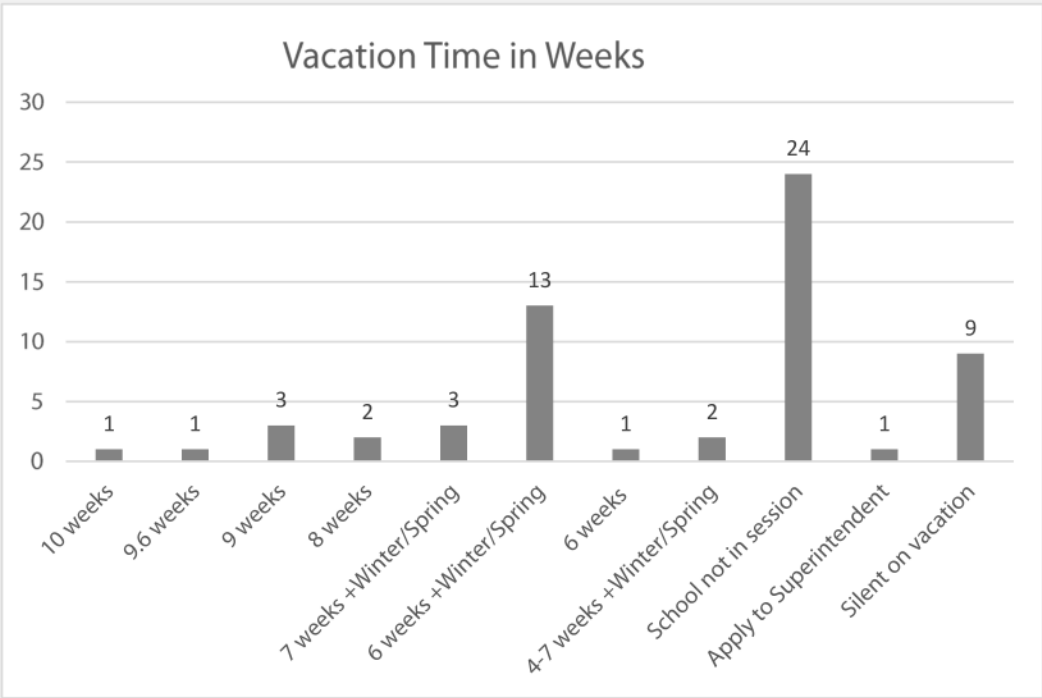
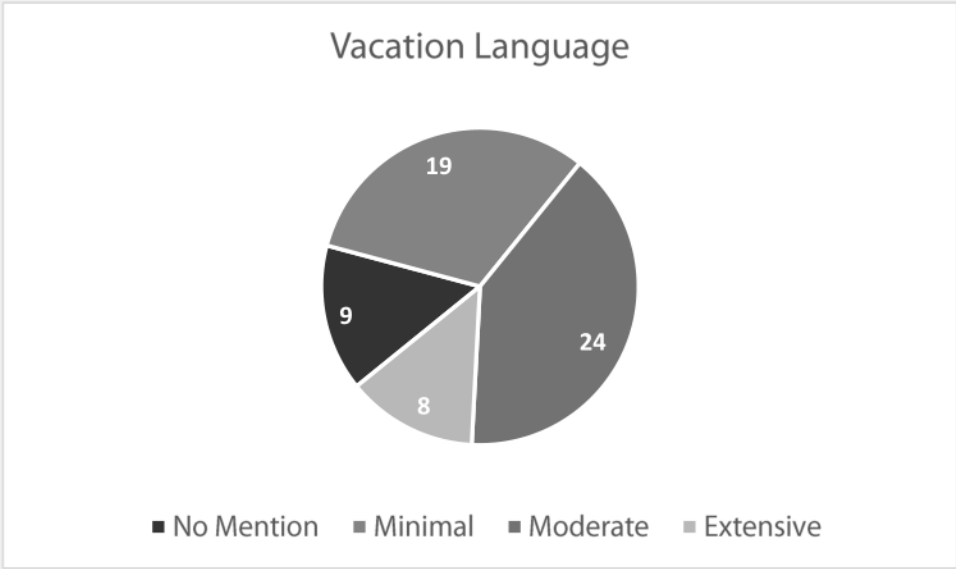
- Districts and BCPVPA reported data on principals and vice-principals returning to the classroom. Districts reported on the last 5 years, while BCPVPA provided data from January 1, 2019, to April 30, 2020. Districts reported between 86-91 principals and vice-principals returned to the classroom over the last 5 years. BCPVA reported that 36 Principals and Vice-Principals had returned to the classroom over the period they provided data for.
- The **reasons for returning varied**, were initiated by either the P/VP or the District, and included: lack of suitability, performance issues, family commitments, stress, work intensification, and broadening of responsibilities.
- The committee interviewed a current principal who will be returning to the classroom this coming year after a successful career as a principal. The principal identified work intensification, duties moving away from instructional leadership, the need to support more families' emotional and social health, and a desire to spend more time with their young family as reasons to leave the principalship and return to teaching.
- Although difficult to quantify, it appears more principals and vice-principals are returning to full-time teaching because of **leadership development-related issues**, and **not because of dissatisfaction with employment contracts**.

→ Salary on Regional Frameworks

- All districts, except SD.5 Southeast Kootenay, are on the **provincial regional framework**.
- There is **great variability** on how districts determine **which level** to place Principals and Vice-Principals, and **how they move** from one level to the next.
- The small number of districts that **delayed the implementation** of the regional salary frameworks appear to have a higher percentage of **residual morale issues** with principals and vice-principals. These morale issues seem to have brought greater scrutiny to other aspects of their contracts.

→ Vacation (discussed above in section 5 – Themes and Anomalies)

- There is **great variability in contract language** regarding vacation allowances. The most common language (24 districts) provides principals and vice-principals vacation time when school is not in session, including winter and spring breaks, and summer break excluding the first week of July and the last week of August. Other variations include 6-10 weeks, with a variety of conditions. **Nine districts have no mention of vacation in their contract.**

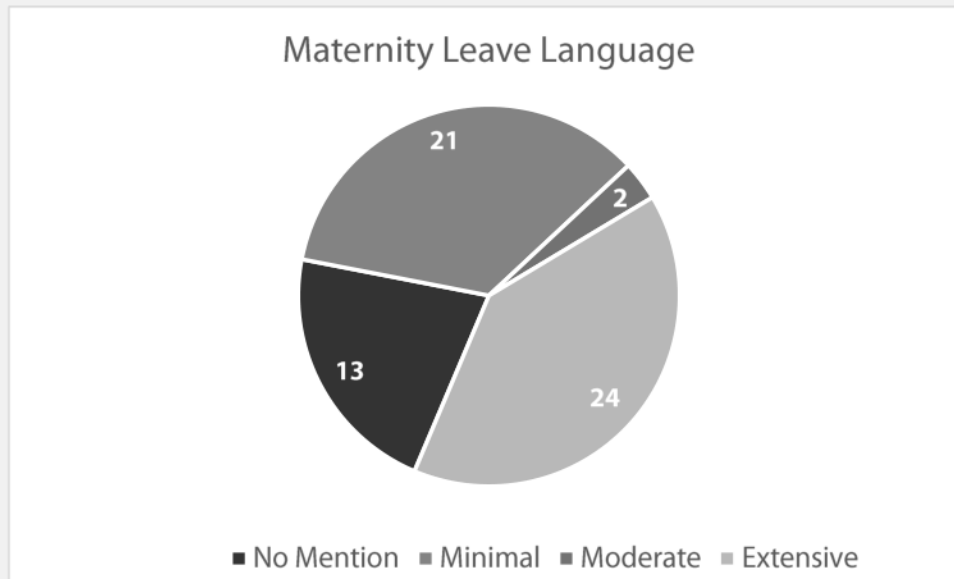


→ Benefits

- There is considerable variability in benefits, but much **less so than even 2 years ago**. Most districts have endeavoured to ensure that contracts with principals and vice-principals contain benefits that are on par with teachers. There are some small nuanced trade-offs for different dental and extended health benefits. Generally, **benefits were not raised as an issue** in our deliberations.
- It is virtually impossible to evaluate the comparability of benefit plans on a benefit-by-benefit basis. For example, how does one compare the relative values of an extra \$ 100 in vision care every 2 years, with higher reimbursements for orthodontic or physiotherapy coverage?
- **Recent progress has improved these provisions** substantially in many principal and vice-principal contracts. BCPSEA led the initiative to support districts in working towards comparability with teachers, once the compensation freeze was eased in 2018.

→ Leaves - including maternity (discussed above in section 5 – Themes and Anomalies)

- Leaves are an area of wide variability. As principals and vice-principals come from the teaching profession, **they expect that their leave provisions will be similar to what they experienced as teachers**. This is the case in most districts in the province, although it is not explicitly stated in many principal and vice-principal contracts. In the balance of districts, it is expressed as pursuant to district policy or practice, or within the discretion of the superintendent.
- Language and benefits regarding maternity/parental leave provisions are quite varied. **Thirteen districts make no mention in contracts**. Of the minimal and moderate categories shown in the chart below, nine contracts refer to an application to the superintendent, nineteen refer specifically to the *Employment Standards Act*, and nine refer to the same provisions as teachers or school district practice.

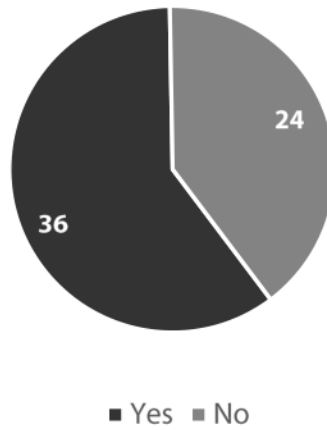


- 24 districts have a **Supplementary Employment Benefits (SEB) plan** provided for in the contract with a top-up to 70%-95% of salary.
- Although many districts stated in their interviews that **they will treat principals and vice-principals fairly**, currently, in 13 school districts, there is no formal guarantee in contract that a principal or vice-principal will receive the same maternity/parental benefits as a teacher within the same district.

→ Sick leave provisions

- All districts have some form of sick leave provisions, ranging from the accrual of 15-18 days per year, to 100% of salary from the first day of illness until LTD.
- Twenty-three districts have **short-term disability plans** that bridge to LTD.
- While it is expressly provided for in a small number of contracts, many districts reported that they **“do the right thing”** if the affected principal or vice-principal is short of sick time to bridge to LTD, when there is no short-term disability available, by continuing salary until LTD begins.
- BCPVPA is concerned that in districts where there are no contractual bridging options to LTD, that individual principals and vice-principals need to **rely on the goodwill of the superintendent**.

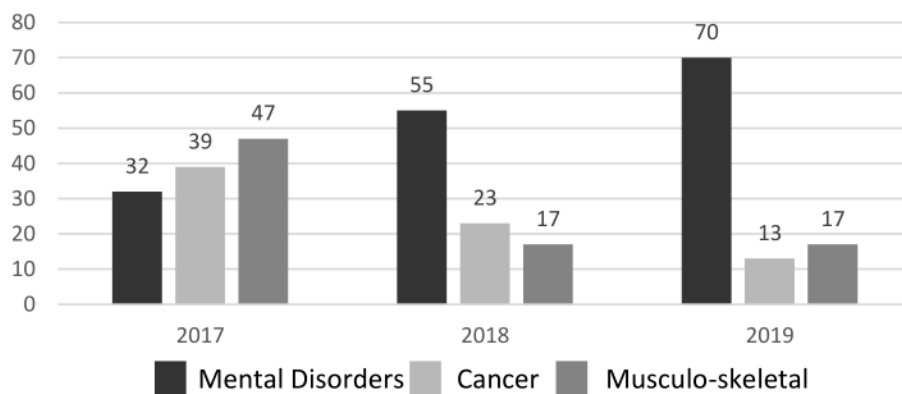
Bridging Language for Long-Term Disability



→ Long-Term Disability use (discussed above in section 5 – Themes and Anomalies)

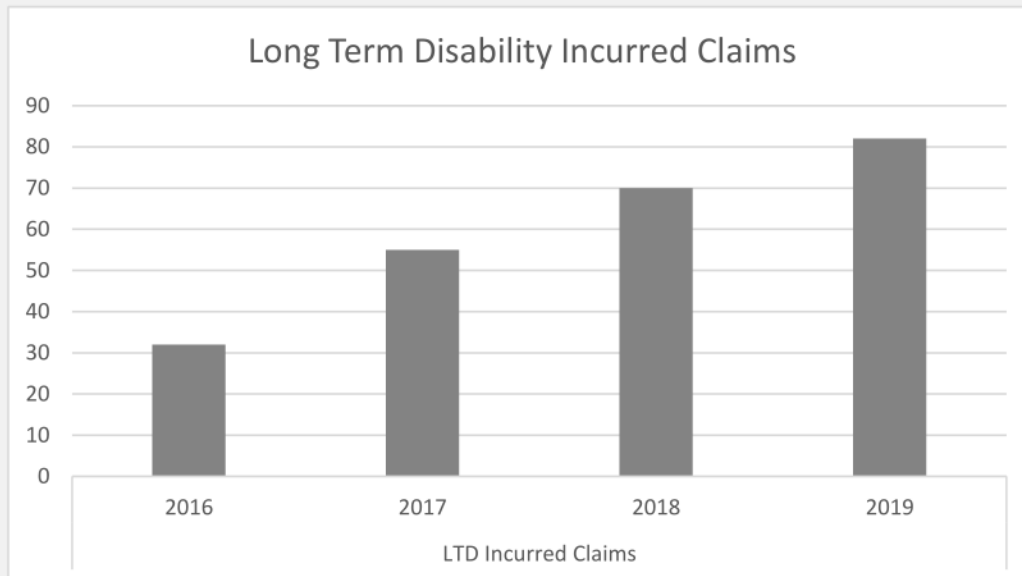
- In interviews with HR leads, Secretary-Treasurers and/or Superintendents, most districts reported no material change in LTD use by principals and vice-principals.
- A few districts (less than ten) reported increased stress and mental health-related sick leave, some leading to LTD.

Long Term Disability Top Claim Categories BCPVPA Plan



- In data provided by Morneau Shepell/HUB International and BCPVPA, there appears to be a demonstrable increase in LTD claims over the last 3 years. The data showed that **claims for mental health issues had increased**, and is almost three times higher than the rate of claims for musculo-skeletal issues.

The disconnect between the district reporting and that of BCPVPA may be **attributable to district staff being unaware of some of the LTD claims and leaves.**



The committee considered this in light of published reports on mental health. For example, the Mental Health Commission of Canada reported in 2016² that it was estimated that 1 in 5 Canadians has a mental health issue, and that 21.4% of the working age population was living with a mental health problem or illness.

In a recent report published by SunLife Assurance Company of Canada (one of the country's largest benefits providers), *Designed for Health: A focus on mental health disability claims*³, they report the following (using their own data unless stated otherwise):

- LTD claim incidence has **increased up to 13%** from 2016-2019, and mental health claims were the most common, double the rate of the next most frequent claim type.
- Statistics Canada data shows that the number of Canadians who report a diagnosed **mood disorder has increased** significantly in the last decade.

² [Making the Case for Investing in Mental Health in Canada](#)

³ [Designed for Health: A Focus on Mental Health Disability Claims](#)

- The growth in LTD claims for **mental health was 27%** for the 6-year period from 2014-19, and more than 50% of those claims were for depression. The balance were for the following disorders: adjustment/stress, anxiety/panic, bipolar, PTSD, and others.
- Finally, the incidence of mental health claims is highest in the **35-54 age bracket**, and in the **public administration sector**. In this latter regard, the incidence is **30% higher than the average**.

The report discusses a number of factors that may be contributing to the dramatic increase in mental health claims including the **changing nature of work**, social isolation and a digital world. One other possible contributing factor was the **increasing acceptance** of talking about and understanding mental health.

→ Impact of BCTF Supreme Court of Canada decision and Memorandum of Agreement

- All districts reported that **no principals and vice-principals lost their position** because of the Memorandum of Agreement to implement the court ruling.
- Most districts reported that many principals and vice-principals, especially **elementary vice-principals had the teaching portion of their assignment impacted**. Those affected previously had a teaching assignment in a non-enrolling area, such as library, special education, or counseling.
- BCPVPA and some districts reported that in a number of schools **the most experienced and well-qualified person (the vice-principal) was replaced by a new teacher with minimal qualifications and experience**.
- Some districts reported that the non-enrolling issue has been **mitigated recently due to the district meeting or exceeding ratio requirements**. However, they cautioned that these positions could disappear due to future budget pressures.
- Finally, it was stated to the committee that after the several years of the compensation freeze, the **change of assignments** to a return to the classroom **struck a nerve**. Some principals and vice-principals perceived the change was yet another example of a failure to recognize their positive and important contributions to education.

→ Perquisites ("perks") outside of contract

- Many districts have resources dedicated in their budgets to support professional learning for principals and vice-principals. These funds are **wholly controlled by senior management**.
- Some districts (i.e. SD.23 Central Okanagan, SD.36 Surrey, and others) have developed **formalized internship and mentoring programs** for those new to the role.
- Many districts fund new principals and vice-principals to the **BCPVPA Short Course**. This support can vary year to year, and can be severely curtailed when budget pressures happen in districts.

- At least 13 districts offer **discretionary days** in various amounts from 2-5 days outside of their contract. These days often require the permission of the superintendent, and can be withdrawn for any reason. The balance of districts have discretionary days within their employment contracts, which are costed against total compensation.

STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND OBLIGATIONS

As noted earlier, the fundamental legislation is the *School Act* and *School Regulation*. There is, of course, other legislation that affects principals and vice-principals including the *Teachers Act*, *Teaching Profession Act*, *Public Sector Employers Act* and *Employment Termination Standards*.

The template contracts, with which we were provided, and the data resulting from our interviews, confirmed to the committee that there were **no obvious gaps between the legislation and on-the-ground practice**. The *School Act* is consistently referenced in contractual provisions dealing with duties and responsibilities.

For example, contracts consistently address appointments, qualifications, duties and responsibilities, and termination not for cause.

The fundamental issue present is that principals and vice-principals, supported by the BCPVPA, see themselves as **educational leaders**, and are concerned that much of their time is spent on **management and administration matters**, and "...other duties required or assigned by the board...". The large majority of the duties outlined in the *School Regulation* are focussed upon management, administration and supervision responsibilities. There are employment contracts that include the responsibility as educational leader as part of their duties.

The committee's observation was that the gap that exists is primarily **one of expectation**, rather than what is required to be done by legislation, and what happens in practice. Clarity of responsibilities is critical to the success of principals and vice-principals in their roles. One of the ways this can be addressed is through broader leadership development practices, discussed next.

BROADER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

This section pertains to those aspects that are **outside of the employment contract**, and that have significant impact for principals and vice-principals.

We heard many times during interviews that at the core of the challenges of the role of a principal and vice-principal are a **series of issues** including work intensification, perceived lack of recognition, administrative task downloading from districts, the Ministry of Education and other ministries such as Health, and a narrowing of scope in the job descriptions for other employee groups including teachers and support staff (such as teaching re-assignment resulting from the Memorandum of Agreement resulting from the 2016 Supreme Court of Canada decision, playground supervision, WorkSafe BC reports, and Violence in the Workplace reports). The impact of these can be measured through various lenses, some individually, and also as a collective trend of principals and vice-principals leaving their roles, including increases in administrators return to teaching, stress leaves, LTD claims, or early retirement.

In addition, as many of BCPVPA's concerns relate to an **under-appreciation of the role** of principals and vice-principals, and lack of support for the profession, acknowledging the importance of leadership development targeted for principals and vice-principals could be a strategic choice, with potential for high impact on student success. **The research is clear and unequivocal about the criticality of principals and vice-principals** to support improved student outcomes.

→ [Surveys of Principals and Vice-Principals](#)

Surveys were conducted with randomly selected principals and vice-principals across the province, ensuring that each region was represented. The respondents were invited to comment on their satisfaction for both the employment contracts they currently have, and the engagement they have for the work they do. The survey questions are shown below, and can be found in Appendix 4. In total 38 surveys were conducted and the range of experience for those surveyed was from one to thirty-two years. The complete set of responses are found on the SharePoint site. Common themes to each of the questions (including some direct quotes) are identified below, in no specific order.

What support did you receive to learn your role, and increase your chances of success?

- Mentor (my Principal, another P/VP colleague, senior leadership)
- BCPVPA Short Course
- BC Education Leadership Council course for new leaders – Judy Halbert, Linda Kaser

- *"Trial by fire and hoped for the best."*
- *"Nothing on budgeting, scheduling, managing..."*
- *"It's ironic in a learning organization how little we value training the leaders of our multi-million dollar schools."*
- *"More training for the business aspects of the job, with some shared responsibility between the district, province, and BCPVPA. Being a fantastic teacher leader does not mean you will be a good principal."*

Has your understanding of the role you applied for changed? If so, how?

- **Complexity** of student needs, not just curriculum and learning
- Strain and **stress from home** that come into the school
- Need to **support families** resulting in being more removed from helping students
- *"I did not realize how many **outside agencies** are involved."*
- *"The organizational management part of my job happens **outside the school day**."*
- *"I spend more time helping to **support teachers** with difficult children."*
- *"More things added to the plate, nothing comes off the plate, permission needs to be granted to remove things."*
- *"As an example, during this time of COVID 19 with custodial time not starting early, I need to be opening gates in the morning and checking the school grounds."*
- *"Increase administrative time to address all of the concerns, while also creating a mentorship role that helps with building capacity."*

What support do you receive now to be successful in your role and career?

- Supported by superintendent and senior executive, colleagues and local association
- There is a disconnect that you are part of the district leadership team
- Not enough **mentorship** opportunities out there
- Local Pro D committee retreats and book groups
- Series with BCPVPA supervision for learning
- *"Our family of principals and vice principals are very supportive of each other."*
- *"I have a network."*
- *"There should be a provincial expectation for a certification program, and it is not unreasonable to expect that candidates put in time similar to the OPC model of certification."*

What aspects of your work as a PVP contribute positively to your experience (what do you enjoy about your work)?

- *"Being with kids, the direction that you can have to help develop kids."*
- *"I like working with staff and families, helping staff innovate."*
- *"Relationships..... the connections with the entirety of the community."*
- *"An opportunity to have a broader impact than as a classroom teacher."*
- *"I want people to feel supported and them to know that I would have their back."*
- *"The challenge; I like to help solve problems and work with people to solve them. I enjoy the journey with students and colleagues."*

What aspects of your work as a PVP limit your effectiveness?

- Challenges in meeting the needs of all kids
- Administrivia
- Meetings, surveys, forms, downloading from government is not effective use of time, too much paperwork
- Funding
- Continuous tensions between BCTF and P/VP and senior management
- Trustees involved in operational decisions instead of governance
- *"Legalities, I should have done a law degree instead of a masters for this job."*
- *"I need to work with kids and teachers not be writing reports about kids and teachers."*
- *"Isolation, loneliness, so many new people, hard to always lead when you are still sorting things out."*

We've heard a lot in our fact-finding process about PVP employment contracts. Are there things you would like to see changed? If so, what are your top 3 priorities for change?

- Dismissal without cause language
- Benefits for mental health are lacking in contract, dealing with stress and trauma
- Basic fundamental rights, Dismissal rights, Sick leave, Maternity leave
- Provincially, negotiation agency, local team off side of our desks
- There is a lot anxiety in BCPVPA because of the union application
- Need for clarity and equity between districts and around the province
- Indemnification, Evaluation and Dismissal, Term versus Continuing contracts
- A conflict dispute mechanism for people being terminated for cause and without cause

- *"We are not going to sign unless we send it to BCPVPA and the district won't sign unless they send it to BCPSEA. It is a fruitless experience. Why not skip the middle man?"*
- *"Not sure the contract needs to be changed as much as the working conditions. Some of this is outside the scope of contract. More about relationships with leadership and the respect. If this is not addressed, then people turn to contract challenges."*
- *"Compensation and benefits should be better as you take on more responsibilities, increases should be funded as standard condition."*
- *"I should not be climbing the ladder and getting fewer perks and benefits (husband is a teacher in the same district so I get his extended health benefits)."*

Is there anything else you would like to share?

- Staffing, **mentorship** program needs to be more formalized
- Need to look at the role of trustees and what influence they have, as they appear to be controlled by the superintendent, and now distanced from P/VP and schools
- If issues in the small districts were sorted out, these union issues would go away
- Need to find solutions, not be reactionary, **communication is key**
- Short course should be done regionally, make it more accessible
- *"Elected people [BCPVPA Executive] seem to be making this a bigger issue than members might believe it to be."*
- *"The road we are going down is dangerous, legal advice is different from what will happen if locals don't want to unionize."*
- *"I don't want to be a member of a union, but want to be treated fairly."*
- *"I will retire earlier because the job is getting more complex."*
- *"I do not want to be part of a union, most PVP do not want a union, they want to be **heard and respected**, we are not."*
- *"Could use more admin time in schools for training positions and mentoring, building capacity."*
- *"We are better as an association with some standard provincial language but room for local needs."*

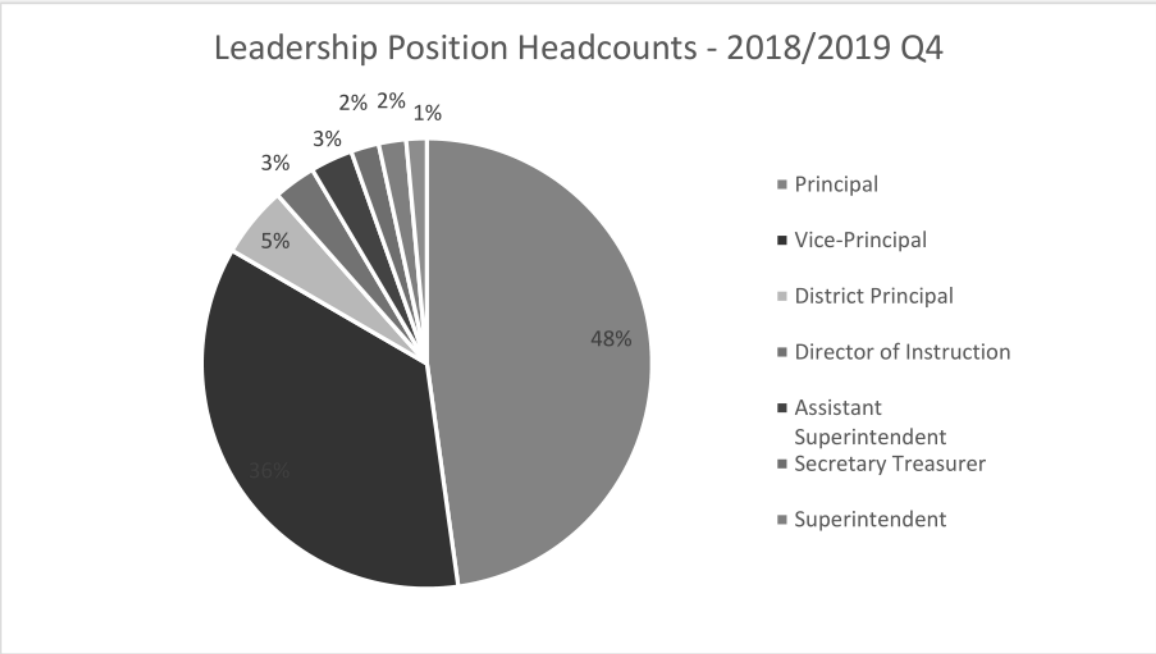
Throughout the conversations, the committee members were impressed with the willingness of principals and vice-principals to be **committed to seeking solutions**, and not just identifying problems. It is obvious that they **truly enjoy their roles**, the challenges associated with those roles, and the opportunity to lead and inspire through those roles.

A notion that seemed to encapsulate the current realities is derived from an addendum that has historically been associated with school leadership expectations. **"Any other duties as assigned"** was

once a catch-all understanding that was shared with incoming principals and vice-principals, as they embarked on their new careers. It presupposed some unique, one-off situations (sick child, bomb threat, additional supervision) that might arise. Principals and vice-principals shared with the committee that today it appears to include many more items (additional reports, being a teacher on call, level 1 grievances) that require considerable training and administrative time. While they acknowledge the argument can be made that these are reasonable additions to the plate of the principal or vice-principal, they have a strong belief that it cannot be done without either something being removed from the plate (and this is not occurring), or some additional time being provided to the role(s).

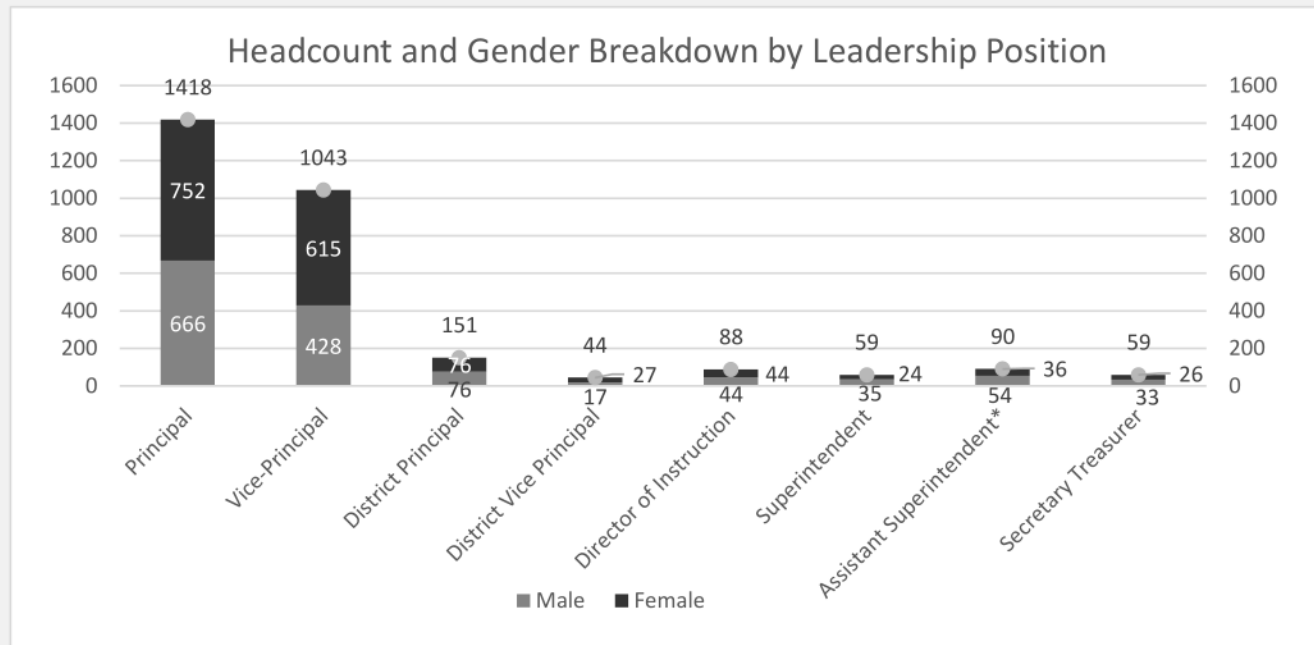
WORKFORCE INTELLIGENCE

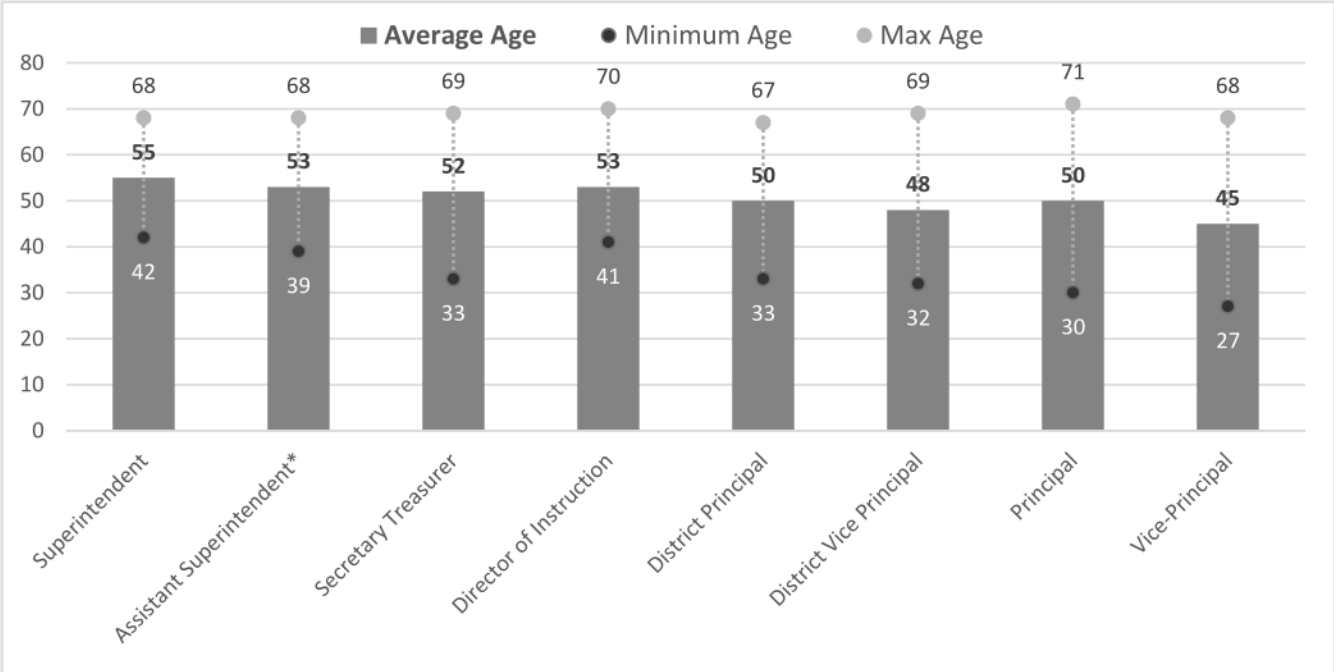
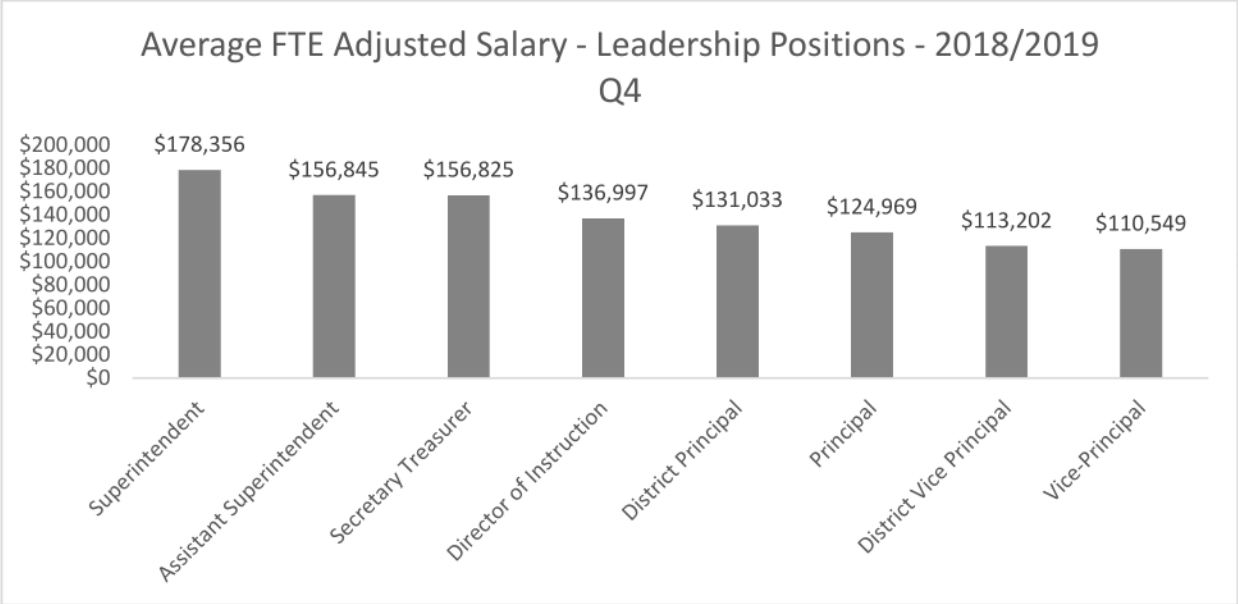
The committee relied on demographic information provided by the Ministry of Education, and has included that information in this report. The graphs below show leadership position **by role, gender distribution in those roles, age distribution, and salaries.**



Of the 2,952 leadership positions in the B.C. public education sector, **84% are principals and vice-principals:**

- Principals: 1,418 (headcount); 1,414 (FTE)
- Vice-Principals: 1,043 (headcount); 1,038 (FTE)





Superintendents in BC make on average around \$68,000 more than vice-principals, a 61% increase in salary. A vice-principal in turn makes on average 29% more than a teacher at the top scale at \$85,681 (after 15 years experience/typical training).

Information on salary grid placement, recruitment and retention, return to teaching rates, and long/short-term disability leaves are found elsewhere in this report.

JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

A detailed table outlining approaches across **various provinces** to principal and vice-principal negotiations can be found at the end of the section. The committee thought it was important to consider 3 provinces in greater detail.

The committee met via Zoom with Allyson Otten, Executive Director for the **Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)** and Tim Simony, Chair for the **Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS)**. The committee also reached out to a principal in Quebec to gather information on their organization.

Ontario principals and vice-principals were **removed via legislation** from the teachers' union in 1998, and are currently represented by 3 different administrator organizations representing Catholic, Francophone, and English-speaking public schools. The OPC is the largest of the organizations, and represents the latter group of schools, having approximately 5,500 members.

In 2012, the Ontario provincial government **recognized the OPC as the bargaining agent** alongside the other two leadership bodies. The P/VP associations (ADFO - French Catholic, and French Public, CPCO – Catholic, and OPC - English Public) negotiate at a single table, and jointly. Ms. Otten shared with the committee that this represented the first opportunity, since removing principals and vice-principals from the teachers' union bargaining unit fourteen years earlier, for P/VP to have a discrete provincial agreement. OPC saw it as a "big win", that a **voluntary association could speak collectively** for all principals and vice-principals (approximately 95% are members). Concomitantly, individual rights to negotiate on provincial matters were extinguished.

While many matters of substance are **negotiated provincially**, there remain matters that are discussed at the **local table** such as transfer within a school district, professional development funds, and indemnification.

Key points shared with the committee included that principals and vice-principals in Ontario **do not have seniority rights** should they leave their role, and desire a return to the classroom. They must requalify to be considered for a teaching assignment, and go to the bottom of the seniority list. They **do not have a right to strike**. While they have access to **non-binding mediation**, they do not have a dispute resolution agreement that identifies an independent, third-party arbitrator who would have the authority to make a binding decision on matters in dispute.

Following the Glaze report in spring 2018, the government of Nova Scotia **passed legislation removing principals and vice-principals from the teachers' union bargaining unit**, and also dissolved school boards, replacing them with regional centres that are aligned with their Ministry of Education. The Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS) was also given the ability to negotiate provincially for all 840 members (all PVP must belong, as well as the CEO of each regional centre, and the Superintendent for the French sector).

There is a clear definition of **what can/cannot be negotiated**. By legislation, the benefits package remains with the teachers' union, with the stipulation that principals and vice-principals can do "no worse" than teachers. Currently, this has been applied to benefit and pension plans, general wage increases and sick leave. Mr. Simony noted that the guarantee had not been specifically defined, and it may be applicable to other matters in the future. It is noteworthy that by vote of the PSAANS membership every 2 years, they decide to affiliate with the teachers' union (without the payment of dues). That affiliation allows them access to certain entitlements under *The Public School Administrators Employment Relations Act*. Specifically, these entitlements are the right to return to a unionized teaching position without loss of seniority, and access to professional development funds bargained in the teachers' collective agreement.

They also **do not have a dispute resolution agreement** that identifies an independent, third-party arbitrator who would have the authority to make a binding decision. They do believe they now have a voice in broader educational conversations, and are specifically invited to the table. They did not have the opportunity to do so when they were members of the teachers' union.

Quebec is the third province outside of British Columbia that has principals and vice-principals removed from the teachers' union. They have the longest history with the model having introduced legislation fifty years ago. While there remain some items that are negotiated at the local level, all items with a monetary impact are negotiated provincially. Negotiations are the same for francophone and anglophone systems, and the organizations include all members in leadership roles at the school, region, and centre levels. A comprehensive document guides the agreements province-wide, with major employment conditions being uniform throughout the province.

Approaches to Principals Working Conditions Across Canada

Province	Teachers' Union or Excluded	Negotiation Mechanism
Alberta	Teachers' Union	Contracts negotiated at the provincial and local level with the teachers' union as bargaining agent
Saskatchewan	Teachers' Union	Contracts negotiated at the provincial and local level with the teachers' union (with monetary issues determined provincially)
Manitoba	Teachers' Union	Contracts negotiated locally with the teachers' union as bargaining agent
Ontario	Excluded	Contracts negotiated at the provincial and local level with PVP association as bargaining agent (major issues addressed provincially)
Quebec	Excluded	Contracts negotiated at the provincial level (involving Treasury Board) and local level with the PVP association and a Management Negotiation Committee for School Boards
New Brunswick	Teachers' Union	Contracts negotiated provincially (involving Treasury Board) with the teachers' union as bargaining agent
Prince Edward Island	Teachers' Union	Contracts negotiated at the provincial level with the teachers' union as bargaining agent
Nova Scotia	Excluded	Contracts negotiated at the provincial level with PVP association as bargaining agent
Newfoundland and Labrador	Teachers' Union	Contracts negotiated at the provincial level with the teachers' union as bargaining agent

CONCLUSION

There are three observations that have stuck with the committee during this engagement. First, we noted the enormous complexity of the governance of the K-12 system, happening in sixty different districts throughout the province, with local needs and circumstances. Second, and equally as important, we found that everyone we engaged with was thoughtful and fully committed to the success of the system. Third, and most importantly, there was unanimous recognition that principals and vice-principals were hard-working educational leaders whose retention and recruitment were critical to that success.

Notwithstanding differences about processes and concerns, people wanted principals and vice-principals to feel valued, respected, have a sense of belonging to their district colleagues and profession, and take care of their well-being. This is a great starting place.

During the course of our work, we observed that there are issues with a lack of consistency across some elements of contracts, and that contributed to perceptions of unfairness and a lack of transparency. The corollary observation – and, in the committee’s view, the most critical one – was the need to address how principals and vice-principals experience their workplaces. This requires a focus on leadership development practices as outlined in this report, and a commitment to supporting the revised 3 “Rs” – recruitment, retention and recognition. Talking about and actioning recognition is, by necessity, an iterative process, and is grounded in the quality of relationships. There is much to learn from strong practices in various districts, and from other jurisdictions. There is no need to “re-invent the wheel”.

The committee is grateful for this opportunity to take a step back from the current state, and be able to provide an objective review of the current state of practices and work experiences of principals and vice-principals. The review also provided us with the opportunity to understand and share the views and concerns of the associations who are part of the K-12 sector, and describe issues between them.

Finally, the committee would like to acknowledge that the vast majority of our deliberations unfolded during the course of a global pandemic, and which had significant repercussions on the constantly changing delivery of student learning. We are so grateful to all of the people – principals and vice-principals, superintendents, secretary-treasurers, HR leaders, Association representatives, and Ministry staff – who gave so generously of their time and thinking in order to contribute to our work.

We would like to say a special thank you to Ms. Linda Beddouche, Director, Workforce Development, Governance and Analytics, in the Ministry of Education for her invaluable guidance, attentiveness and professionalism.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

Tom Hierck

Thomas (Tom) Hierck

Jim Cambridge

James (Jim) Cambridge

Lisa Castle

Lisa Castle

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
ORDER OF THE MINISTER OF
EDUCATION

School Act
Ministerial Order No. M057

I, Rob Fleming, Minister of Education, order that

1. The following individuals are appointed as members of a special advisory committee to all boards of education in the Province of British Columbia:
 - a. Thomas Anthony Hierck of Gibsons, BC;
 - b. James William Cambridge of Victoria, BC; and
 - c. Lisa Louise Castle of New Westminster, BC.
2. The term of the appointment commences on March 2, 2020 and ends on June 30, 2020.
3. The special advisory committee must inspect and evaluate the work experience, including the terms and conditions of employment, in respect of school principals and vice principals in all school districts, and:
 - a. identify themes and anomalies across and between school districts;
 - b. reconcile statutory authorities and obligations with on-the-ground practice;
 - c. assess and inventory current district practice with respect to employment terms and conditions;
 - d. create a repository of workforce intelligence factors, including salary placement on grid, mobility, turnover rates, sick time and absenteeism, health leaves, and length of time as an educational professional;
 - e. collect additional information on school district-specific professional development offerings, onboarding, recognition and performance management practices;
4. The special advisory committee must submit a report to the Minister in respect of progress made in carrying out the duties set out in section 3 as follows:
 - a. a draft report on or before May 15, 2020; and
 - b. a final report on or before June 1, 2020.
5. Remuneration for the members of the special advisory committee will be paid by the Minister.

February 24, 2020

Date


Minister of Education

(This part for administrative purposes only and is not part of the Order.)

Authority under which Order is made:

Act and section: School Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, c. 412, s. 171.1(a)

Other: _____

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Appendix 3 – List of Interview Questions for School Districts

- 1| Are PVP contracts continuing or term specific with provisions for renewal?
- 2| Are there any provisions in contract for PVP assignment, reassignment, or appeal of assignment?
- 3| Do PVP have a right to representation in contract if they are being investigated?
- 4| Who/How do you approach contract negotiations with PVP? Do PVP have the right (in contract) to have the local chapter negotiate their contracts? Is there any reference to the provincial body (BCPVPA)?
- 5| How many variations of PVP contracts do you have?
- 6| Does your PVP contract contain indemnification language?
- 7| Do you have trouble recruiting PVP? Any unfilled positions? Has this changed over last 5 years?
- 8| How many PVP have returned to teaching over the last 5 years? What reason was given for the return?
- 9| Has you District increased PVP salaries in line with allowable increases sanctioned by BCPSEA? If so, were they delivered as soon as possible or delayed?
- 10| Are PVP benefits in contract? Are they on par with teachers?
- 11| Are PVP leaves (including maternity) in contract? Are they on par with teachers?
- 12| What short term illness provisions are available for PVP? Are they in contract or at the discretion of the district?
- 13| How are PVP contract disputes resolved at the local level?
- 14| Is PVP vacation allotment specific within the contract? If not, how is it determined?
- 15| Were any PVP displaced (loss of job) by the implementation of the Supreme Court MOA for teachers in non-enrolling positions?
- 16| Has there been a change in LTD use by PVP? What would the five-year average be? Are new to your district PVP bridged through sick leave to LTD?
- 17| Please share any other perks PVP receive outside of the contract.
- 18| What else would like to share that would be useful to consider in our study?

Appendix 4 – List of Interviews Questions with School-Based Principals and Vice-Principals

- 1| How long have you been a PVP?
- 2| What support did you receive to learn your role, and increase your chances of success?
- 3| Has your understanding of the role you applied for changed? If so, how?
- 4| What support do you receive now to be successful in your role and career?
- 5| What aspects of your work as a PVP contribute positively to your experience (what do you enjoy about your work)?
- 6| What aspects of your work as a PVP limit your effectiveness?
- 7| We've heard a lot in our fact-finding process about PVP employment contracts. Are there things you would like to see changed? If so, what are your top 3 priorities for change?
- 8| Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix 5 – Overview of the Emerging Leader Development Program (Ontario)

The Emerging Leader Development Program (ELDP) is designed to prepare teachers for a successful transition to a school administrator role. The five-hour online modules are facilitated by practising principals and provide an opportunity for reflection and dialogue with other emerging leaders. The ELDP focuses on topics described in recent research or identified as helpful by new and experienced principals and vice-principals in building their capacity to deal with the complexity of the role.

Modules may be completed in any order. You can choose as many or as few as you would like to participate in. This is not a certificate program.

Module information

MODULE 1 – Developing an Understanding of the School Principal Role

- The legal duties of principals as outlined in the Education Act
- The Ontario Leadership Framework: developing an understanding of the 5 domains and how the OLF can be used as a guide for professional growth
- The personal leadership resources and how they impact the role of the principal
- Emotional Intelligence (EI)

MODULE 2 – Having a Professional/Challenging Conversation

- Different types of conversations
- Cognitive and emotional barriers
- Active trust as an essential part of making change and leading a school
- Recognizing the power of listening throughout the conversation

MODULE 3 – Exploring your Equity Stance

- The impact of privilege and unconscious bias impact on school, students, staff and communities
- The principal as change agent
- Recognizing biases/privilege and the extent to which these inform our decision-making attitudes and actions
- The moral imperative in creating an equity and inclusive stance

MODULE 4 – What is Instructional Leadership?

- How leadership and management are intertwined in the role of principal
- The changing nature of school leadership
- The difference between professional learning and professional development

MODULE 5 – Leading Safe Schools

- The role of the principal in creating and maintaining safe and caring schools
- Progressive discipline as a whole-school approach
- Bullying intervention and prevention as integral to a positive school climate
- Restorative circles as a means of working through conflict in schools

MODULE 6 – Data Informed Decision Making

- The role of the principal in promoting a culture of excellence and accountability
- Internal, external and holistic accountability
- Types of data: achievement, demographic, perceptual, and program
- Data and the School Effectiveness Framework and the School Improvement Process

MODULE 7 – What are the Legal Duties of a Principal?

- The similarities and differences between the legal duties of a teacher and principal
- The relationship between a principal's legal duties and their daily practice
- Health and safety of students and staff
- Principal duties related to statutes, regulations, PPM's and board policy

MODULE 8 – Growing Your Personal Leadership Resources (PLR's)

- Social resources, psychological resources, and cognitive resources
- Self-awareness through assessment surveys
- Strategies to build strong PLR's
- Personal action plan & SMART goals

MODULE 9 – Life-Balance for Aspiring Leaders

- Examine life-balance and its complexities
- Explore the wellness wheel
- Understand your well-being and link to practice
- Ways to enhance your well-being