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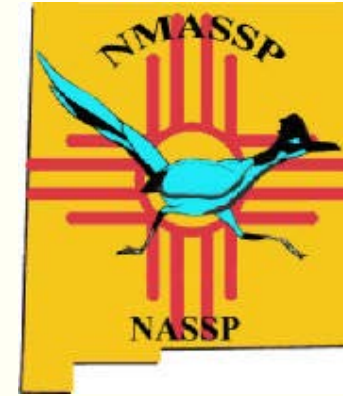
Presentation on: State of the Principals: Today and the Future

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Purpose of the Presentation

Today's discussion will focus on the ecosystem of a school, and how that ecosystem impacts teacher retention.

This panel will include research-based inquiry on how principals, along with strong professional learning, impact teacher retention. The focus points of our discussion will include:

- The characteristics of a strong school principal;
- The challenges faced by school principals related to teacher retention and support; and
- The support needed for principals to be strong leaders.





WHAT IMPACT DO PRINCIPALS HAVE ON SCHOOLS IN NM?

The research is clear on the topic, strong principals have a direct impact on the success of the schools they lead (Grissom et al, 2021).

Principal's that remain in the principal position at the same school for at least 5 years often build rapport with staff, students, families and community members that lead to greater student success (Richardson, 2017).

Consistency of school goals, expectations, and daily routines become ingrained and everyone knows their specific role.

Relationship building is the key (Shields, 2006, p.76). What happens within schools is a reflection upon leadership. Consistency is important but the job itself is becoming more difficult to want to continue doing.

How do principals' factor into teacher retention?

- **Principals are responsible for setting the tone within the school, which directly impacts the culture of the teaching and learning (Lynch, 2020).**
- How teachers are treated, evaluated and encouraged is the number one factor in teacher retention (Donley et al, 2019).
- **The more control, voice and responsibility teachers have, or are allowed to have, the more connected to the school they will feel.**
- Second, support keeps a quality teacher motivated and focused.

Support includes:

- Quality and timely interactions that focus on problem solving, overcoming barriers, setting goals, setting expectations, providing supports, listening and sharing resources.
- Holding all staff to the same expectations, having clear expectations, being firm but fair, not wasting their time or resources
- Providing incentives and activities that allow them a voice and to be involved in the culture of the school, including leadership opportunities and responsibilities.

What do principals do to chase away teachers?

- Micromanaging and a lack of autonomy
- Failure to show support with student discipline issues
- Failure to show support with difficult parents
- Concerns: inconsistent implementation of school goals
- Failure to respect the employee's time
- Failure to provide necessary professional development and instructional support
- Showing favoritism
- Rigidity or inability to change
- Lack of open communication or effort to build individual and trusting relationships
- Deficiencies in providing supportive collaboration with teachers in the decision-making process of the school

What makes a good principal? Skillset, characteristics, essential attributes

- **Must have a clearly defined philosophy-based leadership style.**
- Must strive to build relationships and partnerships with all stakeholders.
- **Must give autonomy teachers in their instructional planning and practice**
- Must be very well rounded and have an ability to see the big picture and react quickly and effectively to situations that arise.
- **Must be able to make good decisions that benefit the student in the best interest of the school and effectively implement opportunities for collaboration.**
- Must have the ability to stand firm when necessary and compromise when beneficial.
- **Must have solid financial skills and budget sense.**
- Should embrace and promote co and extra curricular activities.
- **Can't let false allegations and extreme criticism bother them.**
- Good listener with effective communication skills.
- **Quick: thinker, decision maker, wit, common sense, under pressure.**
- Relationship builder

What makes a good principal? Skillset, characteristics, essential attributes

Someone who has the best interest of the school, students and community at heart and can work with their teachers and staff to provide what is best for the students.

It is important to be able to see the big picture and be able to make hundreds of decisions daily.

There are so many things that can come up daily and a good principal can make the right decisions based on so many factors.

What do you look for when hiring a principal?

- Experience and initiative.
- Effective communication skills,
- Enthusiasm and passion for education,
- Evidenced love for students and the educational process,
- Creative problem solver.

Someone with experience working with people, someone who likes kids, someone who has a positive attitude and outlook. Someone who can handle conflict and doesn't have a soft skin so to speak.

What principals do need to know?

- That you will get no credit for anything good and blamed for everything bad.
- You will no longer be respected by a growing number of students and parents who don't believe they should be held accountable for their actions.
- You must be a jack of all trades and master of most. This means that you need to know a lot about everything. Topics range from curriculum and instruction to traffic and facilities, food preparation injuries to legal issues and pandemic control.
- Every few minutes a new situation will occur, and, in many cases, multiple things will occur that require your attention simultaneously.
- Principals do everything... traditional role plus sub classes, clean restrooms, answer phones and everything in-between.
- Your duty day never ends. You won't have duty free weekends or summers.
- You staff counts on you to be strong, supportive, and have the ability to lead in difficult times. You need to be able to plan and prepare for things that have never happened before and everything that has ever happened in the past.
- Principal can never say that is not my job to anything.

How do we recruit strong leaders into becoming principals?

What barriers exist?

- Higher salaries-Salary compression due to new teaching level mandates has made the difference between a level 3 teacher and a principal a negative gain. More work/responsibility/time for less hourly rate.
- Functional training and transition time – internship.
- Sometimes there is a lack district support in negative situations.

How can barriers be addressed?

- Multi-year contracts, mentors, balance lower hourly rate of pay?
- Looking at changing the curriculum for higher education degree.
- Make the job more appealing and manageable.
- Make performance accountability measurable with supports.

What would incentivize someone to become a principal?

- Knowing that we can be contracted for more than one year to grow the change needed in our schools. The principal position is growth process and new principals do most of their learning on the job.
- Make the principalship a more desirable job and compensate talented leaders for taking it on in their position.

How do we recruit strong leaders into becoming principals?

Continued

What programs are available to become a principal?

- The Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE) was a good concept, but it turned into a sit-and-get directive PD program. Principals need networking and informal mentorship.
- New principal programs by outside organizations such as NMCEL, CES, NAESP and NASSP.

What types of programs could be created to allow for teachers to flow into the principalship?

- Organized, scheduled and peer-led informal mentorship/PD that is supported by state funds and district contracts.
- College cohorts used to be really effective in preparing principals for the job and create networks of support they could rely on.

How do we recruit strong leaders into becoming principals?

Continued

What hiring considerations should be taken at the district level?

- Take an active approach to recruitment.
- Evaluate candidates against the competencies and skills demonstrated by successful principals.
- Design the placement process to match individual schools' needs with particular candidates' strengths.
- Continually evaluate hiring efforts.

Mullen, Bridget. (August 4, 2014). *6 Ways to Recruit Great Leaders as Principals*. Center for Excellence and Workforce.

What do you think keeps people from going into the principalship?

- Time
- Money (Salary)
- The position is an at-will yearly contract.
- Accountability – Burdens have grown heavier with the job, yet direction in accountability has not been updated in our state (HOUSSE)
- The feeling that we are liable for nearly everything on our campus, while our actual control is centered in consensus building - not authoritative management. (middle manager vs. executive)
- Responsibility and dealing with negativity
- Lack of authority and value
- Staffing issues
- Turn over of Superintendents and PED staff

How can we support principals once they are in their schools?

- Support the NMAESP and NMASSP to manage informal mentorship and regional collaboration.
- Principal preparation that includes time in a school as the leader with support and mentorship.
- Professional Development
 - What supports do principals need?
 - Principal work feels isolated. We need to build real structures for non-directive regional and local collaboration that happens on a scheduled monthly/quarterly basis.
 - Networking opportunities.
 - **A seat at the decision-making table.**
 - There are Superintendent, Charter Groups and Teacher Unions at the table, but principals are usually not invited.

What do beginning principals need to know?

- Who are their peers in their area?
- Help is closer to them than they know.
- Other principals want to help them, even on the small things.
- Who to call to get answers to questions?
- What is required and when is it due?
- Who can they go to for support and networking opportunities?
- How will principals be evaluated and what are their accountability measures?

Besides salary increases what incentives could be offered to get people to become principals?

- Membership in NAESP/NMAESP or NASSP/NMASSP that is paid through Title II, Part A funds to support principal professional development supporting effective instruction.
 - This will create a larger network of principals that can support each other and encourage each other when the going gets tough.
 - Time to collaborate.
 - Professional learning opportunities.
 - Principal mentorship program.
 - Statewide principal conference.

Questions?

References

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