

NASSP's National Study of Highly Successful Middle Level Schools and Their Leaders

Selected Comparisons of:

*Leaders in Middle Level Schools
Programs and Practices*

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Gender Differences: ***Highly Successful School and National Sample***

- **52% of the HSS principals were female, compared with 27% in national sample**
- **Males were consistently appointed to administrative positions at a younger age, in both groups. HSS principals (male and female) were appointed at a younger age than the national sample**
- **Female principals had more training in middle level education and were more likely to identify improvement of curriculum and instruction as their reason for entering administration**

Professional Background

Principal Certification	HSS	NS
K-12	48	46
Secondary	39	39
Middle	5	4
Highest Degree		
Master's degree	18	18
Master's + Educational Specialist	33	40
Master's + PhD coursework	16	17
PhD or EdD	9	10
21	11	
Assistant Prin. Experience (all levels)		
None	18	23
1-3 years	33	32
4-6 years	33	26
7 + years	16	19
Middle Level Asst. Prin. Exper.		
None	39	45
1-3 years	33	29
4-6 years	16	17
7 + years	12	10

- Highly successful principals are more likely to be enrolled/have completed doctoral work

Age Appointed to First Principalship

	HSS			NS		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
24 and younger	0	0	0	<1	0	<1
25 – 29	9	4	15	7	3	9
30 – 34	20	14	28	18	11	21
35 – 39	28	26	30	24	18	26
40 – 44	24	33	13	22	26	21
45 – 49	12	12	13	19	27	16
50 and older	7	12	2	19	15	6

- ✓ Females tend to be appointed to their first principalship at a later age than males (for both HSS and NS schools)
- ✓ Females also tend to be appointed to their first assistant principalships at a later age than males (for both HSS and NS schools)
- ✓ Female principals have more teaching experience than males

Total Years as a Middle Level Principal

	HSS			NS		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
1	6	8	4	12	13	11
2 – 3	8	14	2	26	32	25
4 – 6	19	22	17	23	27	22
7 – 9	21	18	26	15	16	15
10 – 14	30	31	28	14	9	16
15 – 19	10	6	15	6	2	7
20 or more	5	2	8	4	1	5

- ❖ Highly successful principals tended to have more middle level principalship experience.
- ❖ Highly successful principals also tended to have more **total** years of principalship experience (at all levels)
- ❖ HSS principals were more likely to have been employed more years at their current school (68% of HSS had spent 4-14 years at current school, compared with 46% of NS)

Graduate Study in Middle Level Education

Middle Level Courses Taken	HSS			NS		
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male
None	14	14	14	37	40	37
1 – 2	33	31	34	34	35	34
3 – 5	34	31	37	20	15	21
6 or more	20	24	14	9	10	8

- ✓ HSS principals were more likely to have completed graduate training in middle level education.

***Principals' Average Work Week
(Self-Reported)***

Hours	HSS	NS
40	3	1
40 – 49	0	5
50 – 59	46	46
60 – 69	33	39
70 +	18	9

- Both groups reported working long hours

Principals' Rank Order of Time Allocations for a Typical Work Week

	HSS		NS	
	Do Spend	Should Spend	Do Spend	Should Spend
School management	1	5	1	4
Personnel	2	2	2	2
School Activities	5	6	3	6
Student Behavior	7	8	4	8
Program Development	3	1	5	1
Planning	4	3	6	3
District Office	6	9	7	9
Community	9	7	8	7
Professional Development	8	4	9	5

- ❖ HSS principals reported spending more time on their priorities

Career Plans (Next 3-5 Years)

	HSS	NS
Remain in current position	39	38
Retirement (TOTAL)	25	24
Retirement	10	18
Retire – continue in educational leadership in another retirement system	7	4
Retire – seek position in higher education	8	2
Seek a high school principalship	3	5
Seek a superintendency	9	10
Seek a central office position other than superintendent	14	15

- Over 60% of principals report that they intend to leave their positions in the next 3-5 years
- An overwhelming percentage of principals reported that they definitely or probably would choose educational administration again (91% of HSS principals, 82% of NS principals)

Importance and Implementation of Selected Middle Level Programmatic Practices

(We Tend to Implement that Which Is Important to Us)

	Very Important		Full Implementation	
	Highly Successful	National Sample	Highly Successful	National Sample
Interdisciplinary teams of 2-5 teachers sharing common students, common planning time, housed in close proximity	96	77	81	55
Exploratory course offerings which provide required (not elective) curricular opportunities for all students	78	72	75	66
Advisor-advisee program regularly scheduled for 15 minutes or more during each classroom day	61	48	47	32
Co-curricular program separate from regular graded courses, but occurring during the school day, designed to provide students with the opportunity to pursue leadership roles, special interests, and socialization	56	42	43	26
Intramural activities offered for all students during or immediately after the regular classroom day	60	48	47	37

* Importance: Little/No, Somewhat, Very

*Implementation: None, Partial, Full

- All Highly Successful principals value these common middle level programmatic characteristics significantly more.
- All Highly Successful schools implement these common middle level programmatic characteristics significantly more.

School Schedule Serving Most Students

	Highly Successful	National Sample
Daily Disciplinary Schedule (6, 7, 8 periods daily)	23	46
Daily Interdisciplinary Schedule (6, 7, 8 periods implemented as blocks of time)	55	38
Alternating-day Disciplinary Schedule (3 or 4 periods daily)	14	11
Alternating-day Interdisciplinary Schedule (3 or 4 periods implemented as blocks of time)	7	4
Self-contained Classroom Schedule (one teacher for all core classes)	1	1

- Non-traditional schedules significantly more common in Highly Successful schools.

Schools with One or More Interdisciplinary Teams by Grade Level

	Highly Successful	National Sample
Anywhere in the School	95	79
At Grade 5	90	59
At Grade 6	96	79
At Grade 7	95	76
At Grade 8	94	69
At Grade 9	100	22

- Highly Successful schools are significantly more likely to have interdisciplinary teaming somewhere in the school.
- Teaming is significantly more prevalent in Highly Successful schools at each grade level.

Characteristics of Interdisciplinary Teams

	Highly Successful	National Sample
Team has at least one common planning time daily	93	89
Team works together more than four hrs per week during planning times	35	22
Classrooms of team teachers are adjacent	45	26
Team has designated team leader	86	71
Students taught core classes only by team members	79	83
Students assigned to teams heterogeneously	100	93

- Teams in Highly Successful schools slightly more likely to have common planning times.
- Teams in Highly Successful schools significantly more likely to plan more than hours per week.
- Classrooms of teams in Highly Successful schools significantly more likely to be adjacent.
- Students having all core instruction within same team slightly more common in national sample.
- Students assigned heterogeneously to teams slightly more common in Highly Successful schools.

Curriculum Design

	Highly Successful	National Sample
Discipline Centered (most instruction in departmentalized settings)	25	38
Topic Centered (content linked between disciplines but instruction mostly departmentalized e.g. “Civil War”)	33	27
Theme Centered (interdisciplinary themes; instruction is truly interdisciplinary e.g. “Changes”)	27	21
Student Centered (teachers and students identify themes/units. Instruction almost entirely in interdisciplinary teams)	15	14

- ❖ Three-fourths of Highly Successful schools design curriculum in formats that support interdisciplinary learning.

Assessment Practices

	Highly Successful	National Sample
Student Projects	19	11
Essay Tests	13	12
Demonstrations to Peers	11	8
Portfolios	10	7
Mastery Checklists	7	4
Demonstrations to Adults	6	4
Multiple-Choice Tests	16	22
Short-Answer Tests	14	13
Fill-in-the-Blank Tests	9	10
Matching Tests	7	9

- Authentic, higher-order, engaged, demonstration forms of assessment more common in Highly Successful schools.
- Traditional forms of assessment more common in National Sample schools.

Elementary to Middle Level Transition Practices

	Highly Successful	National Sample
Middle level counselors/administrators actively solicit information about incoming elementary students who may be at risk academically or socially	98	81
Incoming students come to middle school in spring of prior year for orientation activities	89	81
Activities or events specifically designed for parents of incoming students are implemented	89	74
Middle level counselors go to sending school to meet/work with incoming students	86	72
When incoming students come to middle level school for orientation, current students play significant roles in the process	77	58
Current middle level students go to the sending school to meet/orient incoming students	64	43
Incoming students come to middle level school in the fall without older students present for orientation activities	44	37
When incoming students come to middle level school for orientation, counselors conduct orientation process without significant assistance from teachers or students	19	26

- Highly Successful schools are more likely to implement transition programs into the Middle Level grades.
- Highly Successful schools also more likely to implement transition programs out of Middle Level grades.

***Comparison of Co-curricular Programs and
Intramural Sports
For Grade 7***

	Grade 7	
	Highly Successful	National Sample
Student Government	91	86
Student Clubs	84	71
Music Groups	77	58
Service Clubs	76	58
Drama	74	54
Publications	71	55
Mini Courses	33	20
Honor Society	33	33
Intramurals Sports	70	54

- Highly Successful schools significantly more likely to have Co-curricular and Intramural programs for their students.