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JOURNAL OF SCHOLARSHIP AND PRACTICE

Research and evidence-based practice advancing
the profession of education administration.

Spring 2024, Volume 21 No. 1

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AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice
2023-2024

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ISSN 1931-6569

Sponsorship and Appreciation

The *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* would like to thank AASA, The School Superintendents Association, and in particular AASA's Leadership Development, for its ongoing sponsorship of the *Journal*.

We also offer special thanks to Kenneth Mitchell, Manhattanville University, for his efforts in selecting the articles that comprise this professional education journal and lending sound editorial comments to each volume.

The unique relationship between research and practice is appreciated, recognizing the mutual benefit to those educators who conduct the research and seek out evidence-based practice and those educators whose responsibility it is to carry out the mission of school districts in the education of children.

Without the support of AASA and Kenneth Mitchell, the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* would not be possible.



Published by
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

America's Public Schools—Public Goods or Monopolies

Ken Mitchell, EdD
Editor
AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice
Spring 2024

“Americans share a common destiny. What that becomes will be the result of how we understand the world together, which begins with our schools. Learning in silos will breed more distrust, which is fueled by the mischaracterization of public schools as monopolies. If we truly want to be ‘indivisible with liberty and justice for all,’ America’s public schools may be the last place to achieve such unity.”

Ken Mitchell
April 2024

Dr. Jeremi Suri, of the University of Texas at Austin, recently lectured on the topic, “Why Americans Love and Hate Government.” During the Q & A, he was asked why he did not include the public school “monopoly” as a problem.

Dismissing the speaker’s use of monopoly in this context, Suri argued for the benefits that a public school system provides for the country through a unifying effect. At a time when the country is politically divided, such unity is sorely needed.

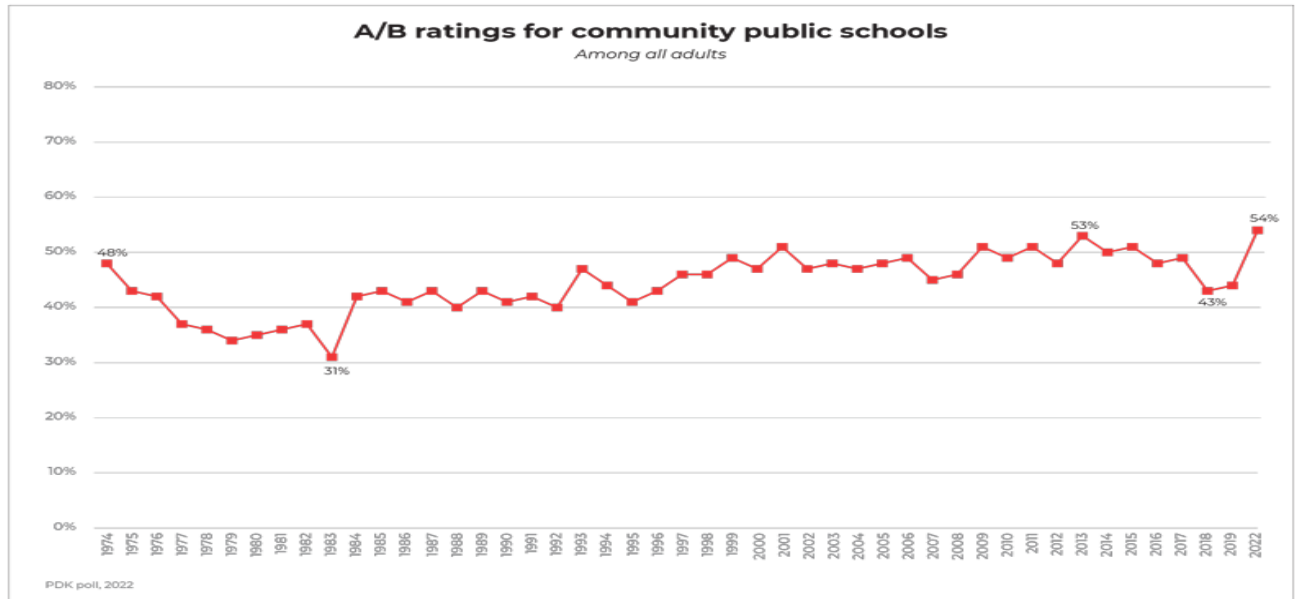
Despite what is being said to denigrate public schooling by those seeking to replace it

with a market-driven model, this is a time when Americans’ support of public schools is strong.

According to the latest *Phi Delta Kappan* (PDK) "Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools,” Americans are more favorable about public school education (see Figure 1) than they have been in fifty years: “54% of all adults (it is higher for parents of attending students) give an A or B grade to the public schools in their community, the highest percentage numerically in PDK polls since 1974, up 10 points since the question was asked in 2019. The previous high was 53% in 2013; the long-term average, 44% (PDK, 2022).

Figure 1

PDK Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools



Americans also trust their public school teachers. In the same poll (see Figure 2) 72% of parents have an overall sense of trust for those educating their children.

Figure 2

Trust and confidence in community's public school teachers)

Trust and confidence in community's public school teachers		
	Among all adults	Among public school parents
Overall	63%	72%
To appropriately handle...		
U.S. history	56%	67%
Civics	50%	57%
Social/emotional growth	48%	59%
Racial/ethnic diversity	46%	56%
Media literacy	46%	54%
How the history of racism affects America today	44%	55%
Gender/sexuality issues	38%	46%

Through my work with superintendents, past and present, and my role as the editor of this journal, I am aware of the unique and unprecedented challenges facing today's public school leaders and educators. Recent *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* issues have presented themes on how adaptive or autonomous leadership skills are essential for succeeding in such complex times.

The accepted articles for the Spring 2024 issue examine similar complexities: the changing roles of and demands on the modern principal; unprecedented challenges of school safety and mental health; addressing legal yet paradoxical mandates.

The designation of public schools as a monopoly inspired me to revisit this categorization, its roots, and the arguments for and against its use. Since monopolies are defined as market powers seeking to control prices to maximize profit, how does this definition comport with the mission and vision of the public school system?

Friedman's Monopoly

The use of *monopoly* to describe public education first appeared in 1955 when University of Chicago economist, Milton Friedman, wrote his essay, "The Role of Government in Education," which called for a federal disengagement in the funding of public

schools. One of Friedman's premises was that public schools, as a natural monopoly, were inefficient by failing to benefit from market-driven competition. He also claimed that via a "neighborhood effect," the greater needs of one imposes significant costs on others. He saw this as counter to other goals related to the individual freedoms of families.

Friedman acknowledged but challenged the premise that "a stable and democratic society is impossible without widespread acceptance of some common set of values and without a minimum degree of literacy on the part of most citizens," arguing that the bulk of the responsibility should not be placed on the government. Opposed to "subsidizing" vocational training or any educational programing beyond the most basic elementary education, Freidman saw such programs benefits to "free riding" individuals who should not be funded by the government. He justified his dismissal of public schools as an institution beneficial to society by describing public school's "ultimate objective" as being ambiguous.

In a 2004 address to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), Friedman called for the abolition of the public school system and the elimination of all the taxes that pay for it: "In my ideal world, government would not be responsible for providing education any more than it is for providing food and clothing" (MacLean, 2021).

Friedman's vision for a market-driven approach has been the cornerstone of the ongoing agenda to privatize public education in the United States via vouchers, tuition-tax credits, and for-profit charters. Despite the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of these often-unregulated alternatives to public schools (Brewer, T.J., & Lubienski, 2017; C. Carnoy, 2017; Mast, 2023; Maul, 2015; NEPC, 2017), there has been a sustained commitment by

legislators to shift public school dollars to private schools that enroll only a tenth of the school population, as 90% of today's 51 million students attend public schools. Within this group, 96 % of English Language Learners and 95% of Students with Disabilities (15% of the student population) are educated in public schools (NIES, 2022). The evidence on the effectiveness of vouchers and for-profit educational alternatives is lacking, but the funding for schools that serve 10% of the population is being increased.

In the spring of 2023, the Florida legislature signed a voucher bill that shifted millions of dollars from the state's public schools that educate 88% of the students to provide \$8,500 for each student of *any income level* that families could bring to alternatives such as for-profit private schools and the costs of home-schooling. Florida's "Step-up-for-Students" voucher was promoted with the slogan, "competition breeds excellence." What has been promised as a program to improve quality through competition and choice has become a mechanism to siphon away taxpayer dollars for a small percentage of students in privatized education.

State funding for private school education has shifted from 3% to 10%. With the promised vouchers-for-all program, it is projected that 30% of funding could be shifted for just 12% of the student population. In the first year, "Of the roughly 2,300 private schools accepting vouchers, 69 percent are unaccredited, 58 percent are religious, and nearly one-third are for-profit" (Pappano, 2023). For the 2023-24 school year, 123,000 students applied for the vouchers; 70 percent were already enrolled in private schools.

Monopoly as Rationalization

Friedman's proposal to replace taxpayer funded public schools with a voucher-supported system of private options coincided with the

Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision. It provided segregationists - north south, east, and west - with cover to seek educational alternatives from the soon-to-be integrated public schools. At the time, there was an exodus from public to private schools in the South. Many public schools were shuttered to circumvent the SCOTUS ruling to integrate.

Throughout the country, there were similar retreats to parochial schools or through the manipulation of neighborhood demographics through state-sanctioned redlining and housing policies: “Today’s residential segregation in the North, South, Midwest, and West is not the unintended consequence of individual choices and of otherwise well-meaning law or regulation but of unhidden public policy that explicitly segregated every metropolitan area in the United States” (pp. vii-viii, Rothstein, 2017).

The 1950’s reflected post-war optimism with a baby boom, a flourishing economy, an expansive connection of the country through a federal highway system, and the elevated status of the United States as the world’s leader in the new global order. Paradoxically, fear of communism exacerbated by the McCarthy hearings, rising cold war tensions, concerns of nuclear war, and the emergence of the civil rights movement contributed to national unease that was manifested in the nation’s schools.

School systems, microcosms of the local community’s values, have frequently served as public spaces for debates about ideas and culture – history, tradition, religion, patriotism, science, and art – that reflect our society. Communities via their school boards and leaders, often informed by state policies and laws, debate to reach consensus on what gets taught. Yet inevitably there will be dissatisfied constituents wanting a different vision and more recently, publicly funded alternatives.

The argument that schools are monopolies provides a cover (with hopes of a funding source) to those seeking educational alternatives that better align with one’s beliefs about politics, religion, race, and class. For those who oppose the proposition that the government is responsible for funding the education of the nation’s children, the school monopoly provides an economic argument that also addresses the goals to reduce government’s role in education and the burden on the taxpayer.

There are other agendas. Approximately \$800 billion dollars are expended annually to educate our 51 million students. Some see this as an opportunity to profit. Donald Cohen, the executive director of *In the Public Interest*, suggests that the education market is “the last honeypot for Wall Street” (Fang, 2014, p. 3 in Attick & Boyles, 2016).

Then there is religion. In *The Good News Club: The Christian Right’s Stealth Assault on America’s Children*, Katherine Stewart writes, “Listening to the debates about public schools on the Christian Right, one hears plenty of opposing opinions and a great deal of confusion. Some want to change the schools; others want to leave them. But smart money seems to know what it is doing. It provides support for programs like the Good News Club, which slowly erode the support for public education in the country at large and in their own constituency in particular. And then it lays the groundwork for dismantling public education in favor of a private system of religious education funded by the state” (p.256).

Friedman’s monopoly has become a stealth rationale for segregationists, profiteers, libertarians, and the religious right. These disparate agendas converge at a time when the complexities of the day related to societal and

civic needs or scientific and technical advancements call for a well-educated populace that benefits all.

Public Schools as a Public Good

Economist Paul Samuelson, a contemporary of Friedman, and known for bringing a scientific analysis to the field of economics, held a contrasting perspective on the role of government and the regulation of markets. Samuelson's classic definition of goods – private and public – recognized that there were certain essential public goods that could not be excluded by those who have not paid for them. He described a dichotomy of the institutional world into public and private exchanges.

In 1954 Samuelson published, “The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure,” in which he postulated that the individual's consumption of public goods, such as national security, highways, streetlights, and railroads, for example, does not prevent others from consuming; in fact, there is a cost to preventing some groups from participating. Samuelson saw benefits for all through the consumption of such public goods and did not see these as subject to market competition.

Thomas Jefferson, our nation's third president, believed that education is the foundation of democracy. In a 1786 letter to George Wythe, a law professor, judge, and fellow signer of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson wrote that education was critical for the preservation of freedom and happiness. He was realistic, too, adding, “Although I do not, with some enthusiasts, believe that the human condition will ever advance to such a state of perfection as that there shall no longer be pain or vice in the world, I believe it susceptible of much improvement ... and that the diffusion of knowledge among the people is to be the instrument by which it is to be effected” (Petillo, 2021).

Horace Mann, known as the “father of American education, proclaimed that ‘Public Education is the cornerstone of our community and our democracy.’ In 1838, he founded and edited *The Common School Journal*. In this journal, Mann targeted the public school and its problems. His six main principles were:

1. the public should no longer remain ignorant;
2. that such education should be paid for, controlled, and sustained by an interested public;
3. that this education will be best provided in schools that embrace children from a variety of backgrounds;
4. that this education must be non-sectarian;
5. that this education must be taught using the tenets of a free society; and
6. that education should be provided by well-trained, professional teachers. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Mann)

Jefferson and Mann envisioned a public school system as a basis for a free and democratic society—a public good. Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom advanced a theory of collective action that described how communities can work together to improve their societies. Embedded in this work was a belief about the importance of civic education. She delineated public from private goods, noting that the former are essential for achieving peace and security via a strong national defense, a weather service, fire protection, etc. (Ostrom, 2009, 412-13).

Public Education: Monopoly or Public Good with Not-for-Profit Goals

Americans have been taught to distrust monopolies, and rightly so. Monopolies are created to maximize profit by reducing or eliminating competition. Without competition, firms can set prices for products and services

above that which might be charged in a competitive market. But America's public school systems are not in the business of maximizing profit. Their leaders annually struggle to create "fiscally responsible" budgets in highly regulated systems. Making their arguments to school boards, town and city councils, state legislators, and governors, school leaders pitch their needs and wants.

Teachers, a budget's costliest but most essential item, are professionals whose salaries, even with collective bargaining, fall below that of other professions: "On average, teachers earned 73.6 cents for every dollar that other professionals made in 2022. This is much less than the 93.9 cents on the dollar they made in 1996" (EPI – 2023). Contrary to exaggerations of self-serving teacher unions, they are in an ongoing struggle to negotiate living wage salaries.

Schools are about serving the public good, providing our nation with informed and responsible citizens who will possess the skills, knowledge, and adaptive critical thinking to deal with the challenges of a complex future. They are about ensuring we have the engineers to provide us with a strong infrastructure, medical professionals to keep us healthy, technicians, artists, mechanics, and so many other talents to address our needs in a vibrant society and economy.

According to Knight, Abowitz, and Stitzlein (2018), those promoting school competition as a hedge against monopolization, "operate under a set of assumptions built on the economic definition of a public good that views education as only an individual experience sought to fulfill one's unique desires.

These assumptions ignore that public schools are, in large part, aimed at supporting and improving social life in communities and

the nation. This civic framing of school as a public good is a historic ideal, but it is in danger of fading as a commonly held value in the face of powerful, well-financed individualist views of education" (pp. 33-37).

Also underestimated is the complexity of the demands on today's public schools. When Friedman called for the dismantling of public schools, the programming was basic. We were just emerging from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and a doctrine of "separate but equal."

There were no laws requiring services to special education students until 1975 (Public Law 94-142). America's economy remained largely agricultural and manufacturing. There was no Internet and no thought of what today's "fourth industrial revolution" would bring and what skills would be needed to thrive as a nation and as individuals.

In the post-war years international trade competition was dominated by the United States, which had profited from supplying Europe with equipment for the war and then the rebuilding of that continent. In fact, the nation's economy prospered and has continued to lead the world in multiple economic indicators. Today, competitive trade, which relies on innovation, is global. Innovation relies on educational systems that foster creativity and maximize the potential of all.

In the Spring 2024 issue of the *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice*, Davis and Nixon, researchers at the University of West Georgia, in their analysis, "The Changing Role of Principals: Are District Leaders and University Preparation Programs Providing the Needed Supports?" outline the role of the modern-day principal as being unrecognizable as compared to leaders prior to this century.

The work is complex and imbued with conflict. Leaders need to morph into various roles: educational visionaries, change agents, instructional leaders, budget analysts, curriculum and assessment experts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders. Context has changed.

Aside from the pandemic and what it wrought, the rise of artificial intelligence, the battlegrounds of social media, political and cultural conflict and polarization, attacks on science and empirical knowledge, low teacher morale, and increasing shortages of educators are just a set of the contextual challenges facing leaders.

Knight, Abowitz, and Stitzlein (2018) argue, “In the case of education, the civic public good includes benefits for both the individual and the wider community.

Individuals benefit from receiving an education that enables them to function in society, and the wider community benefits from being part of a populace possessing shared general knowledge, critical-thinking ability for making decisions about social problems, and norms of civility and community engagement.

These benefits are made widely available and accessible to all social classes, races, and ethnic groups through a universal, tuition-free system of public schooling” (pp. 33-37).

Public schools, while benefiting individuals, have a common mission to improve civic life and the success of the nation. They should not be about making profits. They should be about the democratic principle that requires a striving for consensus about what gets taught.” (Knight, Abowitz, and Stitzlein, 2018, pp. 33-37).

A public good is generated when citizens learn to appreciate shared liberties while being elbow-to-elbow and nose-to-nose with diverse others.

The intentional and unintentional separation or exclusion of students based on social class, intellectual ability, religious affiliation, sexuality, race, or other attributes diminishes the power of a school to construct a public good of safeguarding shared liberties for all.

Because private schools, by design and by practice, select students based on an array of criteria, their value in this regard is more limited than in public schools that must accept all comers” (Knight, Abowitz, and Stitzlein, 2018, pp. 33-37).

Public schools are the public good that serve the nation. They provide a common ground for discussion of ideas that starts at the community level via school board meetings and parental engagement.

They bring together diverse voices from a pluralistic society that, now more than ever, needs ways to find unity, not further fragmentation.

Americans share a common destiny. What that becomes will be the result of how we understand the world together, which begins with our schools. Learning in silos will breed more distrust, which is fueled by the mischaracterization of public schools as monopolies. If we truly want to be “indivisible with liberty and justice for all,” America’s public schools may be the last place to achieve such unity.

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The Changing Role of Principals: Are District Leaders and University Preparation Programs Providing the Needed Supports?

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic and the rapidly changing societal issues that it occasioned have accelerated the dynamic nature of the principalship. Changing demographics, technological advances, teachers' working conditions, social unrest, and in particular the global pandemic are among the factors driving this continuous role transformation. This study explored the ever-changing principalship and evolving professional support needed by school principals in a post-pandemic environment. This qualitative study included in-depth interviews with six sitting principals. We identified five themes—deep knowledge of technology, social-emotional support, school operations, collaboration and teamwork, and flexibility—which required further support. Our findings make plain the need for extensive cooperation, collaboration, and partnership between P-12 school districts and university leadership preparation providers.

Key Words

university partnership, principal support, principal, principalship, principal preparation

The literature shows an evolving principalship with expansive responsibilities (Horner & Jordan, 2020; Pollock, 2020; Richardson et al., 2016). Changing demographics, transience, emerging technologies, contemporary divisive social issues, policy changes, and in particular a worldwide pandemic are some of the variables underlying this dynamic makeover. School principals are facing precipitous challenges from the community, social controversies, and public disagreements.

The emotional stress and trauma caused by the pandemic and the societal unrest, disruption, and financial struggles it occasioned have affected adults and students alike. These factors influence students' capacity to learn and their feelings of safety. Principals increasingly find themselves confronting new situations and are required to address the well-being of all concerned personnel (adults and students) in their schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Pollock, 2020).

The recent pandemic has rapidly accelerated an already emerging movement for a different and alternative delivery of student instruction, leading to heightened expectations for principals to become digital instructional leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Pollock, 2020).

Strong empirical evidence suggests that school principals are a primary variable in determining student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Suchter et al., 2017). Since the mid-1980s, robust efforts have been made to better define the knowledge base, curricula, standards, and quality practices of principal preparation programs (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). These efforts continued through the early 2000s, creating a growing body of research that provided a blueprint for principal preparation programs to build stronger curricula (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Orr,

2010; Young, 2015). While efforts to improve principal preparation programs are ongoing, principals' needs are continuously changing. Seminal issues such as the global pandemic, substantial societal disagreements and confusion, policy changes, and social disruptions have created evolving job expectations for principals.

As previously stated, the COVID-19 pandemic led to greatly heightened expectations that principals should become digital instructional leaders. Because of the emotional stress and trauma caused by the pandemic, principals were required to manage the wellness of all personnel in their schools.

Determining effective curricula, meaningful clinical practices, and useful internship requirements are among the most important areas for collaboration.

Through frequent and ongoing collaboration, universities can offer a curriculum and set of clinical practices that address the current challenges principals face as a result of changes in their roles caused by the pandemic and other recent changes. Similarly, university research findings can be applied to school districts to improve their support for district professional development.

This study aimed to better understand the changes in principalship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges. In cooperation with the relevant university faculties, school districts can use this knowledge to provide more robust support and development to principals. This study answers the following three research questions:

(1) What are the long-term changes in the way principals lead schools because of recent challenges (especially the COVID-19 pandemic)?

(2) What do principals perceive as the current support required to effectively lead schools in a post-pandemic environment?

(3) What are principals' perceptions of changes in universities' curricula for preparing principals?

Theoretical Framework

As universities and school districts strive to meaningfully develop and support principals, the dynamics of the principalship and the support required elevate the obligation to employ fundamental theories, such as adult learning. The stakes are simply too high and the needs too great to fall short of meeting the needs of principals.

Adult learning theory provides the theoretical underpinnings of this study's recommendations. Simply put, principals' continuous development must be supported effectively and efficiently. Knowles et al. (2005) developed six widely known assumptions or principles of andragogy: (1) adults need to know why they must learn something, (2) adults need to feel responsible for their own learning, (3) adults have vast life experiences to shape their learning, (4) adults learn best when moving from one developmental stage to the next, (5) adults learn best with problem-based learning geared toward development and practical skills, and (6) adults are internally motivated.

We applied these theoretical concepts to our recommendations and implications for practice and collaboration between P-12 school district personnel and universities.

This study adopted Norton's conceptual framework of the principal as an advocate for continuous visionary change (Norton, 2015). Norton offered principals a way to think, act differently, and succeed as visionary collaborators in this dynamic milieu rather than viewing inevitable changes as mere bystanders.

Principals do not need to be overwhelmed when dealing with rapidly evolving changes.

Literature Review

Determining the requirements for current and aspiring principals to succeed in a post-pandemic environment requires a review of literature on changes that have taken place in principals' education and adult learning. Recent developments regarding changes in principalship, the effectiveness of principals, leadership development, and adult learning theory support this study.

Development in the principalship

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the definition and job description of school principals. Nearly 40 years ago, Wynn and Guditus (1984) noted that organizations are continually evolving, and that schools and other educational institutions are no exception. More than 25 years ago, principals reported a dynamic set of job responsibilities that included collaborative decision-making, responding to changing and conflicting community demands, and taking on new and unfamiliar roles (Portin et al., 1998).

In a manuscript on changes in urban principalship, Portin (2000) identified "new patterns of management, curricular innovations, increased student testing, accountability measures, and market forces" that contributed to a "role that is complex, imbued with conflict, and far reaching" (pp. 493–494).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) wrote that principals faced multiple challenges, being required to serve as "educational visionaries, change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders" (p. 6). In 2014, Alvoid and Black observed "that the modern-day principal has transformed into something that would be almost unrecognizable

of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s” (as cited in Norton 2015, p. 1).

The challenges that principals face in the post-pandemic workplace continue to evolve, reflecting the need for them to advocate for continuous visionary change.

Recent studies (Pollock, 2020; Westberry et al., 2021) have chronicled the effects of current developments in the principalship that have resulted from the pandemic. The four key themes identified in this study, namely deep knowledge of technology, social-emotional support, understanding of school operations, and flexibility, align with the findings of Pollock (2020) and Westberry et al. (2021).

Pollock (2020) stated that the pandemic has impacted principals’ work in two ways: it has altered the design of safe schooling, setting the context for future schooling, and it has expanded the role of the principal as an instructional leader in the virtual environment. As with the participants in this study, the participating principals in Pollock’s (2020) study expressed a need for deep knowledge of technology and a more in-depth understanding of school operations to be effective in leading both traditional and virtual schools.

Principals’ effectiveness

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, principals were expected to be knowledgeable leaders who provide support for their staff and their communities. These expectations have greatly expanded because of the pandemic. Principals are now assumed to be experts in many areas for which they have not received adequate preparation.

To be successful in the current educational environment, principals must continuously develop their leadership skills to

make decisions that promote organizational goals, support teacher development, and respond effectively to complex challenges. Hence, the application of adult learning to this context offers the opportunity to support principals’ development most efficiently.

Research on principals’ effectiveness emphasizes the multiple roles school leaders must assume. According to Matthews and Crow (2010), principals play the following significant roles: learners, culture builders, advocates, leaders, mentors, supervisors, managers, and politicians.

Griöm et al. (2021) identified four responsibilities principals must address to yield positive student and teacher outcomes: engage in instructionally focused interactions with teachers, build a positive school climate, facilitate collaboration and professional learning communities, and effectively managing personnel. Other studies on leadership behaviors have identified the importance of setting direction, developing people, distributing leadership and decision-making, and managing change using data to monitor school and student progress and support ongoing improvement efforts (Leithwood & Louis, 2012).

Norton’s (2015) concept of the visionary principal as a change agent provides a framework for understanding the challenges of today’s workplace and identifying the knowledge and skills required for the future. As this concept emphasizes, effective principals must be comfortable with ambiguity and role conflicts. Principals must offer stability while selectively shaping and embracing visionary changes. They must have the flexibility to recalibrate their work while acknowledging the need for steadiness and employ changing skillsets that collaboratively lead to the necessary growth.

Leadership development

According to Scott and Webber (2008), the role of principals encompasses “diverse duties and expectations, ranging from those of instructional leaders to financial managers to policy developers, decision makers, staff mediators and negotiators, and marketers” (p. 765). Principals are responsible for the overall operational and instructional leadership of schools and require a specialized set of skills to lead effectively. However, principals continue to lack the necessary support and professional development they need, especially compared with teachers (Rodriguez et al., 2021).

Recognizing the importance of principal leadership development, several researchers have conducted studies exploring this complex phenomenon to provide practical recommendations (Daniëls et al., 2019; Maxfield & Flumerfelt, 2009; Scott & Webber, 2008; Tingle et al., 2017). To support and retain principals, district leaders and principal preparation programs should be based on a sound understanding of leadership theories, an understanding of management and change, and a repertoire of skills acquired from school-based experiences. Effective leadership development is characterized by the ability to create and implement a vision while using practical knowledge and skills.

Adult learning theory

As leadership development is a form of adult learning that supports administrators, teachers, and students, the theoretical foundation of this study was drawn from adult learning theories, in which several models of instructional supervision have been proposed (Zepeda et al., 2014). These models acknowledge that adult learners differ significantly from child learners in their needs, motivations, learning processes, and learning contexts in relation to their unique learning styles.

One theory that has become dominant over the last three decades is that principal leadership development can be viewed through the lens of transformative learning. Unlike informational learning, which emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge and skills, transformative learning involves developing the cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities required to cope with the complexities of changing workplaces (Joo & Kim, 2016).

Thus, the outcomes of transformative learning are directly connected to actual changes in action at both individual and organizational levels. Transformative learning facilitates leaders by enhancing their capacity to make authentic changes in their organizational lives.

Methods

This exploratory qualitative study aimed to understand the changing principalship and to identify the current support needed by P-12 principals in light of changing demographics, transience, emerging technologies, major societal changes, and a worldwide pandemic. The study was guided by three research questions designed to encourage dialogue about the current needs of sitting principals regarding their changing needs.

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants because it was critical that participants met specific criteria, that is, they had to be sitting principals with at least three consecutive years of service experience. We focused on schools that did not receive support from a large, well-funded district administration; therefore, we decided to focus on low-wealth districts/school campuses as determined by state equalization funding programs (districts receiving additional state

support owing to low property tax values per student). Purposeful sampling ensured that the selected participants held the knowledge required for this study and could share firsthand experiences of the support needed by principals to be effective in leading schools in the current environment.

Invitations to participate were emailed to principals of qualified schools in Tennessee and Georgia. Two principals were selected to participate at each school level: elementary, middle, and high. Virtual interviews were conducted between one team member and one participant. The interviews were video-recorded.

Instrumentation

We developed interview questions to address the three research questions that guided the study. A panel of sitting principals reviewed the interview questions for clarity and connection to the research questions and revised the final interview protocol (Appendix) accordingly.

Data analysis

To analyze the data, we transcribed the interviews using Temi.com. We reviewed the transcripts and made corrections. We then used

NVivo 12 (2018) qualitative data analysis software to code the data for each transcript. In addition, each researcher individually reviewed and coded all the interviews. We then cross-checked the codes by comparing the NVivo 12 (2018) codes with our individual code structures to support validity. We employed thematic analysis to identify patterns in the data and develop themes. The findings were organized into themes to address the research questions.

Findings and Emergent Themes

We interviewed six principals from Georgia and Tennessee; they had between 4 and 14 years of experience as school principals. Three of the principals were men and three were women; four were classified as White and two as Black. All six were leaders in schools that were identified as having low wealth according to the funding formula for their respective states (received additional state funding because of the low tax digest value per student). We examined the interview data to identify sitting principals' current needs in relation to leading schools in an effective manner. Five major themes emerged, as shown in Table 1. Aspects of these themes overlapped, providing data relevant to more than one research question.

Table 1

Top Five Themes

Theme	Number of Times Mentioned
Deep knowledge of technology	33
Social-emotional support (well-being)	29
School operations	21
Collaboration and teamwork	19
Flexibility	13

Deep knowledge of technology

Recent societal disruptions and disagreements, especially following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, had an extensive and permanent impact on school operations. School closures because of the pandemic required principals to adjust to leading the delivery of face-to-face, virtual, and hybrid instruction simultaneously, shifting from being instructional leaders in a face-to-face environment to the leadership of schools in a virtual environment.

Westberry et al. (2021) defined virtual leadership as the principle of guiding faculty and students that takes place entirely online,

where there is no face-to-face interaction. Unsurprisingly, all participants agreed that the technological competence and skills required to operate a virtual school were significantly greater than those required to run a traditional school. One participant acknowledged this added responsibility: “I really did lead two schools. I led a virtual and a face-to-face school.” Another participant responded that they needed to learn “how to juggle virtual and face-to-face and just navigating real-time virtual platforms.”

Another participant shared similar thoughts about virtual leadership:

I think I have had to learn to become a virtual principal. An example would be because a large portion of my students, and sometimes the entire school, was doing what we referred to as distance learning, and there was no face-to-face [instruction].

This major change in thinking required principals to utilize technological knowledge. Five of the six participants shared their thoughts about the need for principals, as virtual leaders, to have a deep and varied knowledge of technology to lead their schools effectively. Consider, for example, this comment:

Technology: It challenged all of us. I remember this time last year; we were conducting summer training with our staff. You know, we were training on how to set up your Canvas page or Canvas learning management system page, and how to set up your Microsoft Teams page to be student- and parent-friendly. So, it challenged me. I had to force myself. If I am going to require my staff to learn these things, I will also have to do so. So, it's hard. It challenged me to really step up my game in terms of how to use [the] Canvas learning management system.

The principals realized that to be effective in leading staff, students, and community members in both virtual and face-to-face instruction environments, they needed an in-depth knowledge and understanding of technology and various applications.

Social-emotional support

The participants identified that current societal challenges drastically changed the way students, staff, and communities interact with one another. Social-emotional support was the second theme that emerged from the interview data. All six participants noted the need to

support principals' efforts to provide much-needed social and emotional well-being for teachers and students, as exemplified by the following comments:

I know that mental health capacity is what I needed. I had to brush up on [social-emotional support and development] to provide support for my community. I know that's what our teachers needed from each other, and that's what the students needed from the teachers. Therefore, these needs had to be tailored to the community.

Principals struggle to support teachers and students in addressing the mental health issues they face. The participants were aware of their lack of training and resources in this area and the need for further development and resources to address the social, emotional, and well-being issues that teachers and students experience in schools.

School operations

The participants viewed managing school operations, defined as the planning and organization of school resources, as one of their major responsibilities that had recently expanded. All six participants noted the need for principals to be skilled in conducting school operations, citing that they were responsible for two schools: a face-to-face and a virtual school. They needed to devote more time and attention to operational issues such as safety, scheduling, sanitation, and lunch supervision. This is evident from the following observation.

I had to change everything about how I scheduled a building to think about safety and interactions, and even if the pandemic is going away, COVID will be there. However, we still need to be mindful of its safety. I do not think that we need to ever really shy away from thinking of safety and sanitation and all that because that will help keep our community healthy.

Another participant echoed the increase in operational responsibilities that principals had to assume:

You know, on some days, we had to contact a trace, which was sometimes difficult. One day, I had to track down 40-something kids and that's difficult, especially in a school that has a seven-period day, and kids are moving about. And you know, there were days that stopped us from serving as administrators [because] we had to do that. The main thing, I guess, is that our supervision time greatly increased because [of] the reduced number of students in the cafeteria. We added two lunch periods. Therefore, we had lunch every day from 11:15 am to 1:45 pm. We did not allow students to congregate at any location.

The majority of participants believed that their operational responsibilities have increased dramatically in recent times. The responsibility of providing for the safety and well-being of staff and students, with the added challenges of operating both virtual and traditional schools, changed the way principals did their jobs. Their focus shifted from instructional to operational leadership at a level that they were reportedly ill-prepared to manage.

Collaboration and teamwork

Collaboration and teamwork have emerged as areas where principals require distinct types of support. The participants unanimously expressed that collaboration with colleagues had recently increased and was a valuable and necessary measure for making effective decisions for leading their schools. Collaboration and teamwork encompass the need for principals to work closely and cooperatively with colleagues to address job-related issues.

This collaboration involves both formal and informal meetings with other principals, during which they can listen to and learn from each other. For example, one participant stated, "I think the most beneficial part of that is just collaborating with other principals, just getting in the same room with other people that are doing what you are doing and learning from their experiences." Five of the six participants expressed this sentiment.

One participant stated:

I really saw the value of collaboration and not just collaboration with leaders in my own district, but collaboration with leaders in other districts; we all learn from each other. The collaboration multiplied when the pandemic shut us down because we went from monthly collaboration as system-level leadership to weekly collaboration, ensuring that we made the right decisions that were best informed for our own region.

Furthermore, the participants reported that they found collaboration with colleagues highly beneficial for problem solving and managing their work. For example, one participant commented that collaboration with colleagues represented the best professional support available to principals:

You can attend class and go through programs, and you will always take back useful information. However, nothing will ever replace being around a table or virtually with people who are doing what you are doing in real time and finding solutions to the problems that you are struggling with.

Although the principals had previously recognized the value of collaboration with their colleagues, they felt the need to engage in it

more frequently because of the growing complexity of their responsibilities.

Flexibility

The final theme that emerged from the data is flexibility. This theme captures participants' beliefs about public education's one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning, and the rigid way in which public schools typically operate. Participants expressed concern about the lack of flexibility in the existing structures in public education. Four of the six participants mentioned this theme, with a total of 13 occurrences across the individual interviews.

One participant felt that there were multiple reasons why alternatives to public schools had begun flourishing and stated:

I think the reason we have so many options in education now is because there are too many people willing or not willing to evolve and change the way we do education. They want to retain what they have experienced in school. Hold on to the way their school, their principal, and their mentor [did it]. It was difficult to put the kids back in straight, traditional rows ... in school because that was the only way we could spread them out.

Another participant shared concerns about the need for flexibility in public schools:

I could be wrong with this statement. However, on March 13, when schools closed for the day, I said that public education had just changed, as we knew it. That day felt heavy. It's like Pandora's box. So, I believe it has been opened, and I do not think we will ever put the lid on it. I think public education has changed in some ways forever post pandemic. Therefore, we believe that there is a need to change. Preparation involves thinking through

flexibility, how public education must adjust and adapt, and providing flexibility for families. You know, I really feel as if we do not do that important work in public education, that we are going to get farmed out slowly. I think it will be farmed out to all these charter schools to provide flexibility.

Overall, the principals recognized that to remain competitive and viable, public schools must become more flexible in their structures and offer more options for the students and parents they serve. Contemporary issues require public schools to abandon their rigid approach and tailor their offerings and communication strategies to students, teachers, and parents, thus opening a door that cannot or should not be closed.

Implications for Practice

This study revealed that principals' job duties and requisite skills continue to change significantly. The complexity and depth of these emerging needs require that P-12 school district personnel and principal preparation program providers review and amend their strategies, curricula, and structures to remain relevant and thereby meet principals' current requirements in an effective manner.

University preparation program faculties should robustly review the principal certification curriculum and should consider creating a curricular advisory team comprising professors and active principals who meet at least twice a year to discuss the strengths of the preparation program as well as select areas for improvement in terms of the curriculum and other program aspects. Using an active curricular advisory council will bridge the gap between the university and P-12 practitioners and will ensure that curricula are not developed in isolation solely by university faculties. Moreover, an active curricular advisory council

will help to ensure that university curricula and clinical experiences reflect the current realities of the principalship (Horner & Jordan, 2020).

Another theme that emerged from the data was the need to support principals by providing vital social and emotional well-being support for teachers and students. The principal preparation program faculty should develop course assignments that include interviews and collaboration with community partners such as mental health professionals, counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

District personnel should recognize the importance of counselors and social workers and develop resources and information that can be made available to school principals on an as-needed basis. Instructional units developed cooperatively with university school counseling faculty and K-12 district counselors should be added to the principal certification courses.

Regarding other ways for university faculties to adjust their curricula to remain relevant to the current needs of principals, sitting principals should frequently be included as guest speakers and discussion collaborators. Furthermore, a three-credit course dedicated to “emerging issues and current trends” could be created, which would focus on up-to-date information and needed support for current principals. Active principals should play a significant role in developing course content.

Principals reported the need to increase their skills in managing school operations, citing the fact that they are now responsible for face-to-face and virtual schools. An effective strategy for enhancing principals’ abilities to prepare for and manage issues related to school operations is to frequently employ simulations and case studies that emphasize multiple pathways for managing different problems and situations. Additionally, in university preparation programs, operational issues, such

as schedules and supervision, should be considered from a systems perspective.

Furthermore, courses that teach instructional leadership should include an equal focus on virtual and non-virtual instructional leadership. Specifically, principal preparation programs should consider developing explicit technological competencies for principal candidates to ensure virtual instructional leadership skills and operational efficiency. This recommendation can be implemented as part of university curricula, in partnership with the school district personnel.

Finally, the theme of collaboration and teamwork emerged as an area in which the principals required support. The participants unanimously expressed the value of collaborating with their colleagues. Principal preparation program personnel should strive for rich clinical experiences that require support, collaboration, and interaction between principal candidates and sitting school principals.

Conclusion

The chaos and crisis occasioned by the recent global pandemic and other current societal unrest have accelerated changes and permanently influenced the responsibilities of the principalship. The significant reframing of the principalship necessitates that leadership preparation providers and P-12 districts refocus their efforts.

The depth of the changes to the principalship lead us to believe that collaboration and partnership between university providers and P-12 school systems, which have always been desirable, has now become essential. For universities to continue as relevant primary sources of leadership certification, the development of relevant curricula through structured and frequent collaboration with working principals is required. University program faculty must

exhibit elevated levels of flexibility, including dedicating program credit hours to emerging issues in the principalship.

The emerging requirements for principals include factors related to virtual instructional leadership, specific technological competencies, process, and management competencies, leveraging and accessing community resources, helping others cope with emotions, problem solving, conflict resolution, exhibiting flexibility in increasingly ambiguous

contexts, and building student self-efficacy. P-12 district personnel and university faculty should consider this listing of emerging needs and tailor support to school leaders. At this time of desperate need for support, principals deserve the best support that universities and P-12 school districts can provide. By viewing today's social disorder as an opportunity, universities and P-12 school districts can collaboratively build a more meaningful system of support for principals to enhance the success of all students.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

The following questions guided the interview process:

1. What do you know now (post pandemic) about leading a school that you wished you knew before COVID-19?
2. Did the pandemic require you to learn or utilize new skills to perform your duties? If so, which skills? Provide examples.
3. In reflecting on your leadership practices, did the global pandemic impact any of your practices to the extent that you relied more on certain practices than others? (In decision-making, problem-solving, or other areas.) If so, please explain.
4. How did the pandemic change your daily work requirements?
5. How has your job changed in the past year or two?
6. What current supports do principals need to effectively lead schools?
7. What changes do university preparation programs need to make in response to this pandemic?
8. What skills/knowledge do you currently need to lead effectively that you did not get in your leadership preparation program?
9. Describe the professional support structures you use to stay abreast of changes in principalship?
10. What do you believe may help inform the future professional development of school leaders to lead schools effectively post pandemic?
11. How can university preparation programs assist in developing both current and pre-service principals post pandemic?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add before we end?

Staying Power: English Language Arts Achievement after Installation of an Educator Effectiveness System

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Abstract

As long-term effects of educational programs cannot be sufficiently addressed by evaluators during short duration implementation grants, researchers become responsible for investigating sustainability of effects and addressing concerns of policy makers and grant funding agencies. This study examines the impact of the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement on the percentage of students passing Indiana's English/language arts achievement test after grant-funded implementation. The study uses a school-level, quasi-experimental design. Propensity score matching generates a comparison group and regression models are then run, controlling for school fixed effects. The results show that schools who sustained the TAP System significantly outperform matched comparison schools in the first post-grant year and the improved performance persists through the third year.

Key Words

evaluation; sustainable implementation; sustaining improved outcomes; English / language arts achievement; TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement; long-term effects; school reform

School reforms are intended to generate long-term benefits for schools (students, parents, teachers, and administrators). Too often evaluations of reforms lack the resources to measure whether improved outcomes sustain long-term, for 5, 10, or more years (Bigelow et al., 2021). When grants provide funding for initial implementation, program evaluation activities are often limited to the period of grant funding. However, the true test of the success of that initial implementation is whether the reform and improved outcomes are sustained after grant funding ends.

Sustaining the improved outcomes and sustaining the reform usually go together; maintaining the activities that purportedly caused the improved outcomes would be required to sustain those outcomes. This study examines the sustainability of improved English / language arts (ELA) outcomes of an educator effectiveness reform, the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP System), in schools that sustain the TAP System after grant-funded adoption and initial implementation.

The TAP System and Sustainability

Studies and literature reviews examining school improvement and reform initiatives (e.g., Borman et al., 2003; Cohen & Mehta, 2017; Datnow, 2005; Desimone, 2002; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006) have identified characteristics of reforms that influence their sustainability.

Reforms are more likely to be sustained when they have the following five characteristics (Coburn et al., 2012; Cohen & Mehta, 2017; Desimone, 2002; Li, 2017; Savaya & Spiro, 2012; Wiltsey Stirman et al., 2012). First, the reforms solve a problem for the people implementing the reform. Second, people understand how the reforms solve the problem. Third, school, district, community,

and government groups support the reforms. Fourth, existing internal resources or an external organization supports implementing the reforms. Finally, the reforms are consistent with the values of people affected by the reforms.

The TAP System is an educator effectiveness reform designed to attract, develop, motivate, and retain effective educators. Since 1999, hundreds of schools have implemented the TAP System through federal, state, and local funding initiatives.

The TAP System theoretical framework consists of four aligned core elements designed to improve educator effectiveness; thereby, improving students' academic success and opportunities (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, n.d.).

These elements are described below:

Multiple career paths

In TAP System schools, teachers can serve as teacher leaders, receiving additional compensation for providing high levels of support to their peers. Along with administrators, teacher leaders form a leadership team to deliver school-based professional support and appraise teachers' performance.

Ongoing applied professional growth.

In TAP System schools, teachers participate in weekly professional learning community (PLC) meetings, led by teacher leaders, in which they examine student data, engage in collaborative planning, and learn instructional strategies that have been field-tested in their respective schools. Professional learning continues into each classroom as teacher leaders model lessons, observe classroom instruction, and support classroom teachers in the improvement of their teaching methods.

Instructionally focused accountability.

In TAP System schools, teachers are observed in classroom instruction several times a year by multiple, trained observers. Student growth analysis complements these classroom observations, rounding out a multi-measure system of teacher appraisals. Observation results guide both formative feedback for one-on-one mentoring sessions and plans for PLC meetings, ensuring relevant professional development for teachers and a consistent vision for instruction.

Performance-based compensation.

Teachers in TAP System schools can earn annual bonuses based on their observed skills, knowledge and responsibilities, the average academic growth of students in their classroom, and the entire school's average growth in achievement. Teacher leaders receive additional compensation in recognition of their additional support roles and responsibilities.

Through these core elements, schools develop a school environment conducive to sustaining the TAP System and the improved outcomes attained from adopting it. The TAP System has most of the characteristics of reforms that support sustainability. First, schools adopt the TAP System to address an identified schoolwide problem.

The TAP System helps school leaders recognize, diagnose, and solve instructional issues across the school or within individual teachers' classrooms (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2021).

This feature of the TAP System increases the likelihood of sustaining improved outcomes beyond initial implementation. Second, the TAP System has a well-defined theory of action: applied professional development delivered via teacher leaders using a rigorous rubric of evaluation complemented by performance-based

compensation will lead to improved teacher effectiveness, which will lead to improved student achievement (Barnett & Hudgens, 2014; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2021). Third, schools implementing the TAP System receive guidance and external support from the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET).

NIET has available a wealth of documentation about the TAP System and best practices for implementing the core elements of the TAP System (e.g., (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2017, 2020). During initial implementation, schools receive support, sometimes with the assistance of grant funding, from NIET personnel who are trained to help schools effectively implement the TAP System. Post-grant, NIET assistance continues with additional training and support.

Student Performance and the TAP System

Prior research has demonstrated the impact of implementing the TAP System on student outcomes. Barnett and Wills (2016) found that passing percentages on the state achievement test for students in TAP System schools improved over time and narrowed achievement gaps in ELA and mathematics vis-à-vis a matched comparison group.

A study of a grant-funded implementation found that TAP System schools outperformed a matched comparison group over a four-year period and the difference was statistically significant after the second year of implementation (Mann et al., 2013). Schacter and Thum (2005) found that achievement growth of TAP System schools was significantly better than control schools. Springer et al., (2014) found positive effects on fall-to-spring student test score gains that were statistically significant in elementary grades and non-significant in most secondary grades.

These studies all evaluate the TAP System from adoption through a few years of initial implementation. A study, paralleling the current study, investigated the impact of the TAP System on mathematics achievement in Arizona after grant-funded implementation (Leutscher & Barnett, 2020). Schools that sustained the TAP System significantly outperformed comparison schools, selected at the end of the grant, two and three years after grant funding ended.

Current Study

The study investigates the impact of the TAP System after initial, grant-funded

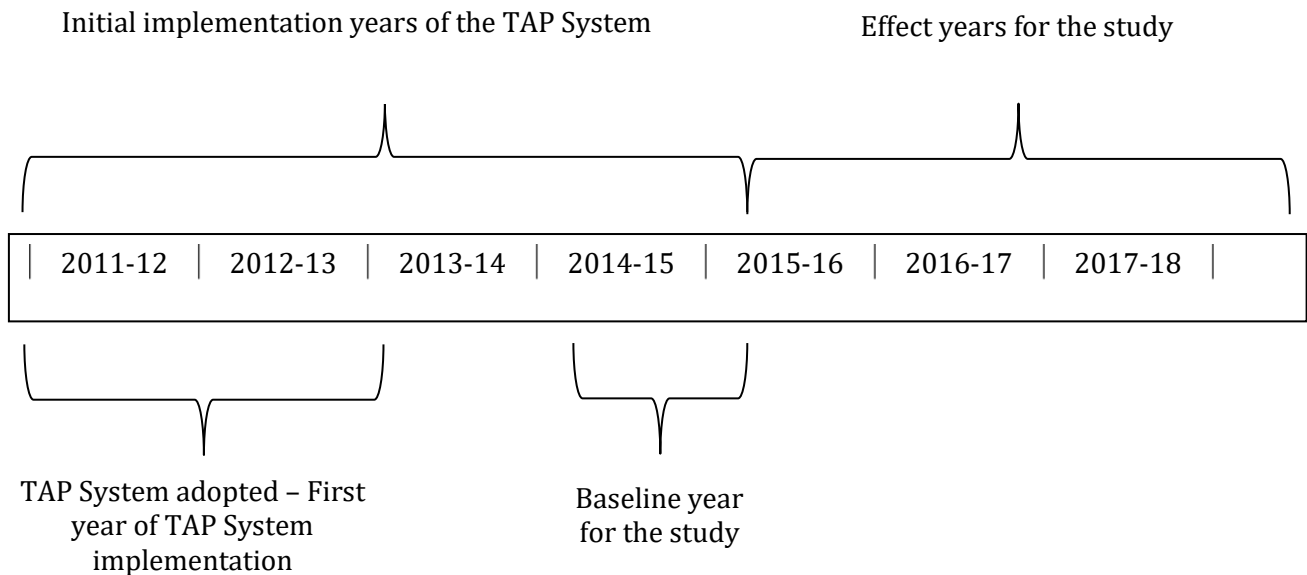
implementation (post-grant implementation) on ELA achievement.

Data on schools with a post-grant implementation of the TAP System is seen below in Figure 1:

1. adopt the TAP System at least two years before the baseline year for the study,
2. implement the TAP System for three consecutive years though the baseline year (i.e., the baseline year may count as one of the initial implementation years), and
3. maintain the TAP System for at least three years after the baseline year.

Figure 1

Timeline for Grant and Post-grant Implementation of the TAP System



Background

A Teacher Incentive Fund Cohort 3 (TIF3) grant assisted with funding the adoption and initial years of TAP System implementation for 44 schools. The TIF3 grant required (a) implementing a performance-based compensation system (PBCS), (b) guarantees of fiscal sustainability of the PBCS and (c) alignment of the PBCS with strategies for strengthening the workforce.

All schools adopted and began implementation during the 2010-11 school year. The final evaluation report (Mann & Leutscher, 2016) finds no statistically significant difference on state achievement tests between the TAP System schools and matched comparison schools at any point during initial implementation. On average across all schools in the grant, the percentage passing the state ELA assessment from 2009-10 to 2013-14 (the state test changed in 2014-15) increased 6.5 points. Comparing schools that sustained the TAP System after the grant to those that did not, the sustaining group increased the percentage passing 7.5 points in ELA, while the non-sustaining group increased 5.6. In 2013-14, the mean difference between the sustaining group and the non-sustaining group was not significant.

The TIF3 grant ended in school year 2014-15, but with an optional one-year, no-cost extension through 2015-16. After 2014-15, some schools sustained the TAP System over consecutive years through the 2017-18 school year; many other grant schools maintained a relationship with NIET but did not maintain the full TAP System. During the 2014-15 to 2017-18 post-grant implementation, the TAP System schools continued with some NIET services and could request additional support or training. The continued use of its services allowed NIET to monitor whether schools sustained the TAP System with fidelity.

Methods

Data

The study uses school-level, public-use data files available on the Indiana Department of Education website (<https://www.in.gov/doe/it/data-center-and-reports/data-reports-archive/>).

Research (Jacob et al., 2014) has shown that under certain conditions (i.e., sample size greater than thirty and low variation in school size) aggregate school-level data are sufficient for assessing impacts of school-based programs. For privacy reasons (e.g., small group size), some data may be masked in public-use data sets.

However, in Indiana, data masking is minimal. The Indiana Department of Education reports school-level aggregate achievement results as the percentage of students passing the test. To protect students' anonymity, the state masks data when the number of test takers is less than ten students. For enrollment data, Indiana does not mask any data, which allows for accurate calculations for percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals and for the percentage of students in racial/ethnic groups.

Outcome measure

The outcome measure is the percentage of students passing the Indiana state assessment (Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus, ISTEP+) for ELA. The ISTEP+ assessment measures student achievement according to the Indiana Academic Standards (<https://www.in.gov/doe/students/indiana-academic-standards/>). For the 2014-15 school year, Indiana implemented new academic standards and new ISTEP+ tests to assess achievement of the standards. As expected, the pass rates for students decreased about 20% statewide from 2013-14 to 2014-15. While pass

rates often recover in subsequent years from introduction of a new standardized test, such a recovery did not happen in Indiana. Pass rates continued to decline statewide through 2017-18 (the last year of ISTEP+ testing in K-8 grades). During the study period (2014-15 to 2017-18), statewide, TAP System group, and matched comparison group averages trend downward. On average, Indiana schools drop 4.5 percentage points in ELA from 2014-15 to 2017-18. The average TAP System school drops 3.1 points.

Study Sample

All study schools are in Indiana. In total, Indiana has 1,883 schools with ELA test data for at least one year during the study period. All study schools (TAP System and the pool of comparison schools) must have all relevant data (percentage passing and demographics) publicly available across the four study years, 2014-15 (baseline) through 2017-18. For the pool of comparison schools, 1,406 schools satisfied this criterion. The first step in the matching process required matching TAP System schools to schools with the same tested grades. Filtering the pool of comparison

schools provides 646 potential comparison schools.

Table 1 provides baseline demographic information about the TAP System and potential comparison groups prior to matching. The Free and Reduced Meals (FRM) percentage for the comparison group is 22 points less than for the TAP System group. The comparison group, on average, is 26 points below the TAP System group in percentage of English language learners. Average enrollment is 93 students higher in the TAP System group.

The TAP System group has a higher percentage of Hispanic students than the comparison group, while the comparison group has a higher percentage of White students. The percentage minority (non-white) differs by 35 points with the higher percentage in the TAP System schools. The percentage of students passing the state assessment shows a ten-point gap in favor of the comparison group. Due to the observed gaps in percentage passing ELA and percentage minority, the study employs a one-to-two matching procedure to select 26 comparison schools.

Table 1

Schools Characteristics of TAP and All Potential Comparison Schools at baseline (2014-15)

School Characteristic	TAP System Schools			Potential Comparison Schools		
	Mean	St. Dev.	Range	Mean	St. Dev.	Range
Free and Reduced Meals	73%	8%	59% - 86%	51%	22%	1% - 100%
English Language Learners	31%	13%	5% - 47%	5%	8%	0% - 50%
Students with Disabilities	14%	4%	9% - 25%	16%	5%	2% - 36%
School Enrollment	605	305	366 - 1,485	512	220	78 - 1,579
Asian	6%	13%	0% - 43%	2%	4%	0% - 31%
Native American	0%	0%	0% - 1%	0%	0%	0% - 2%
Black/African American	13%	26%	1% - 95%	10%	15%	0% - 95%
Hispanic/Latino	42%	19%	8% - 64%	10%	12%	0% - 79%
White	39%	16%	1% - 73%	74%	24%	0% - 99%
Percent Minority (Non-White)	61%	16%	27% - 99%	26%	24%	1% - 100%
Percent Passing ELA	59%	7%	46% - 71%	69%	12%	24% - 96%

Propensity Score Matching

The study selects comparison schools using a two-phase matching process. The first phase separates the schools into groups by grade configurations that contain the same tested grades at baseline (e.g., group schools with only tested grades 6 through 8). This filtering process ensures that differences in test difficulty by grade do not introduce bias. The second phase performs one-to-two, nearest-neighbor propensity score matching (PSM) on each group. As covariates, the PSM uses baseline (2014-15) (a) school-wide percentage passing the state ELA assessment, (b) percentage of minority (non-white) students and (c) state computed letter grade for the school. Table 2 presents results from the propensity score matching. As shown, the

balance between TAP System and the comparison groups before and after matching improves for all the covariates used in the matching process. Table 2 also shows other variables used during the matching process but not included in the final matching model. Among these variables, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals has a substantial improvement in balance; enrollment and the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students reduce the difference by about half; and the percentage of Black/African American students does not change. The models using these additional variables were usually rejected due to lack of baseline equivalence for the percent passing variable.

Table 2

Propensity Score Matching. Before and After Results for Covariates

PSM Covariate		TAP	Comparison		Balance Improvement	T-Test p-value	Effect Size
		System (n = 13)	Before (n = 646)	After (n = 26)			
Letter Grade	A	31%	61%	31%	100%		
	B	31%	18%	31%	100%		
	C	38%	15%	38%	100%		
	D	0%	5%	0%	100%		
	F	0%	2%	0%	100%		
Percent Minority		61.0%	25.6%	59.8%	96%	0.856	0.05
Percent Passing		59.3%	69.0%	58.6%	93%	0.799	0.07
Other Variables							
Free/Reduced Meals		73.3%	50.8%	74.4%	95%	0.794	0.07
School Enrollment		605	512	567	59%	0.675	0.18
Percent Black		12.8%	23.4%	23.4%	-1%	0.197	0.52
Percent Hispanic		38.4%	10.1%	25.1%	53%	0.074	0.65

Four public school districts and one charter school association operate the TAP System schools in this study. Eight of the TAP System schools belong to one school district. The comparison schools come from fifteen school districts. One TAP System school is a charter school. The matching process did not filter charter schools, but no charter schools were selected as comparison schools. The schools in both groups reside in a mix of urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Analytic Approach

Linear regression models estimate the impact of the TAP System on the three outcome variables (e.g., 1st Year, 2015-16, percentage passing ELA). The regression controls for baseline (2014-15) percentage passing ELA, percentage of minority (non-white) students, and school letter grade as dummy coded variables (Grade A coded zero and variables for Grades B and C). The study computes Hedge's *g* effect sizes and t-test statistical significances

for the unstandardized regression coefficient on the TAP System/comparison indicator variable.

Results

As is shown in Figure 2, the TAP System group has a small advantage at baseline (0.7 points). Controlling for this advantage, removes a small portion of the unadjusted mean difference (grey bars) compared to the regression estimates, adjusted mean difference (blue bars). As presented in Table 3, the first year after baseline the TAP System group performs 4.3 points better than the comparison group after controlling for baseline differences, a statistically significant result ($p = .017$) with a small effect size of 0.39. Two years from baseline the TAP System group obtains a medium effect size ($g = 0.60$) performing at a statistically significant ($p = .002$) 6.1 points better than the comparison group. Three years from baseline the impact continues to be statistically significant ($p = .002$) with a medium effect ($g = 0.64$) and the TAP System group outperforming the comparison group by 7.8 points.

Table 3

Percentage Passing English / Language Arts State Assessments

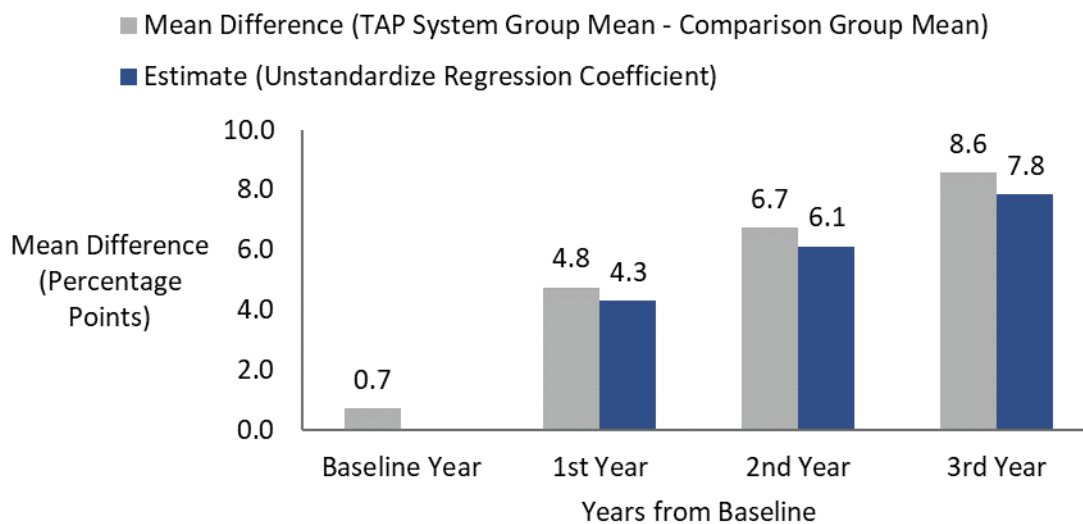
Outcome measures (% Passing ELA)	TAP System group			Comparison group			Estimated effect ¹		
	Sample size	Mean	SD	Sample size	Mean	SD	Estimate	p-value	Effect size ²
3 rd Year	13	56.2	9.0	26	47.6	13.4	7.8	0.002	0.64
2 nd Year	13	58.1	7.8	26	51.4	11.1	6.1	0.002	0.60
1 st Year	13	58.3	7.8	26	53.6	12.2	4.3	0.017	0.39
Baseline measures							Baseline effect		
% Passing	13	59.3	7.1	26	58.6	9.0	0.7	0.399	0.08
% Minority	13	61.0	16.3	26	59.8	26.2	1.2	0.856	0.05

¹Estimates for the outcome measures are the unstandardized regression coefficients on a dummy coded variable for the TAP System/comparison school condition. The baseline measures and dummy-coded variable for the school letter grades are covariates in the regression equation.

²Effect sizes (Hedge's *g*) for the outcome measures are computed using the `esc_B` function of the `esc` package in R (Lüdtke, 2019).

Figure 2

Percentage Passing Indiana's State ELA Assessments, TAP System Schools Compared to Comparison Schools



Discussion

Study Characteristics

This study uses publicly available data obtained from the Indiana Department of Education website. The outcome measure is the

percentage passing the Indiana statewide ELA assessment. A difficulty using percentage passing is that students' scale scores may grow

but not sufficiently to reach the passing threshold. That is, despite growth in scale scores, schools may show only small increases in percentage passing. Since most intervention programs tend to focus on low achieving students—those far below the passing threshold—percentage passing data are not ideal for assessing the performance of such programs.

The TAP System, however, is a school-wide comprehensive (all grades and all subjects) program that aims to help all students grow their performance. As a result, if the TAP System has the intended impact, a larger number of students should grow their achievement above the passing threshold in a single year and over multiple years than programs focused solely on low achieving students. One of the implications of this study is that percentage-passing data can reveal the impact of school-wide reform programs.

The study evaluates the sustained impact of the TAP System on ELA achievement. By the time of the study, all TAP System schools had been implementing for at least three years. When these schools adopted the TAP System, they were among the highest-needs schools in Indiana serving primarily high-needs students, and they were among the lowest performing schools in Indiana. The schools chose to maintain the TAP System after grant funding, which indicates they derived some success during the initial implementation. Given improvement during the initial years of implementation, this study “resets the bar” for the TAP System to show an impact. That is, the study matches TAP System schools to comparison schools using data from at least three years after the adoption and at the end of initial grant funding. The TAP System schools have not only had to continue to perform better than other schools but also had to perform at a higher level than during the initial implementation.

Findings

The study shows that the TAP System not only sustains but improves outcomes during post-grant implementation. That is, the effects of the TAP System do not fade over time. During post-grant implementation of the TAP System, after one year, results are statistically significant with a small effect size. During this first year, all TAP System schools participated in a no cost extension year for the grant, which may have influenced the results. However, two and three years after baseline results continue to be statistically significant with medium effect sizes. At least six years after adoption and grant-funded implementation, the TAP System continues to improve student performance for schools that sustain the system.

Limitations and next steps

As noted, the study uses percentage passing as the outcome variable, which means only students near the passing threshold influence the percentage passing (students far below or above the threshold have little or no effect). Obtaining the average scale score for each school makes every test-taking student in a school count equally toward that outcome measure. Further, obtaining student level outcome and demographic data from Indiana would allow for the development and testing of multilevel models of TAP System performance.

The current study examines sustainability of improved outcomes for three years after grant-funded adoption and implementation of the TAP System. Of the schools that began implementation of the TAP System as part of the TIF3 grant, less than half sustained the system through the end of the study period.

An area for further research is the characteristics of schools and districts that sustain the TAP System beyond initial implementation versus schools that do not. In

fact, investigating why any federal or state funded program fails to be sustained by schools and districts is important and fiscally responsible. While there is no reason to continue a reform that is not working effectively, federal and state grants use tax dollars to support implementation. When schools and districts do not maintain or sustain these reforms, it is important to understand the reasons for future planning of grant funding opportunities.

Conclusions

Policy makers and funding agencies seek reforms that can be sustained and remain effective beyond initial funding. Ultimately, school and district leaders make decisions about the reforms that will benefit their students and teachers. Currently, many schools across the U.S. invest in educator effectiveness programs with elements like the TAP System (teacher leaders, job-embedded professional

development, teacher observation, and financial incentives).

This study is one of the first to examine the TAP System analytically beyond the adoption and initial implementation period. With a post-grant implementation of the TAP System, this study in Indiana examining ELA achievement finds a statistically significant difference between the TAP System schools and matched comparison schools in the first post-grant year and the improved performance persists through the third post-grant year.

This study informs policymakers on the return on investing in such educator effectiveness models and sustaining them for increasing benefits. Finally, the study provides evidence to local school leaders that committing to implementation of the TAP System results in improved student academic performance long-term.

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A Systems Approach to Limiting or Eliminating the Use of Restraint and Seclusion in Schools

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Abstract

Despite the long-term negative outcomes associated with restraining and secluding students, these practices are frequently used in schools, with disproportionate use on students with disabilities. Based on recent guidance from the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, misusing these practices violates student rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act. This policy document aligns with research findings that seclusion and physical restraint should only be used in emergencies and only as a last resort. This article intends to provide three systems-level changes to reduce or eliminate the use of restraint and seclusion in schools: implement schoolwide positive behavior intervention and supports, support students in crisis, and include families in an ongoing collaboration process.

Key Words

restraint, seclusion, positive behavior intervention and supports, collaboration, supporting students in crisis, systems approach

On September 12, 2022, federal officials said that the Cedar Rapids Community School District, the second-largest school district in Iowa, inappropriately used seclusion and physical restraint on children with disabilities from 2019—2021 (Pitt, 2022). The U.S. Department of Justice announced that the school district must stop using seclusion rooms and provide professional development using alternative strategies to support students with disabilities who display problem behaviors at school. These changes would be made in 30 days following the Justice Department’s ruling (Pitt, 2022). Considering the State Board of Education’s enactment of new guidelines in November 2020 that restricted the use of seclusion and physical restraint only as a last resort when a threat of bodily injury was imminent, data indicated that the school district used seclusion rooms for inappropriate reasons (Pitt, 2022).

Students with disabilities are more likely to experience exclusionary discipline, including seclusion, restraint, corporal punishment, suspension, and expulsion (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights [OCR], 2012). During the 2017-18 school year, more than 100,000 students with disabilities were secluded and restrained in U.S. public schools. During this pre-COVID era, there were almost 51 million public school students in the United States, and students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act represented 13% of the school population (nearly seven million students). Yet, these students represented 80% of all students subjected to physical restraint and 77% of students subjected to seclusion (OCR, 2020). Physical restraints have been applied to manage the aggressive and challenging behaviors of students with behavioral difficulties (Lan et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2009) though mental health and disability advocacy organizations also have formed

significant opposition to the use of these practices in schools (Ryan et al., 2009).

According to the OCR (2012), *physical restraint* is defined as “a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of an individual to move his or her arms, legs, or head freely” (p. 10). The use of physical restraint in response to aggressive and challenging behaviors has been highly controversial (Shenton & Smith, 2021), as physical restraints failed to decrease the behaviors they were intended to address (OCR, 2012). *Seclusion* is “the involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving” (OCR, 2012, p.10). As of 2019, 41 states adopted this definition (Butler, 2019).

On July 19, 2022, the OCR and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) issued updated guidance about seclusion and restraint. In addition to emphasizing seclusion and restraint as ineffective strategies, this report also pointed out that these practices can violate a student with a disability’s civil rights. Instead of these punitive, reactive measures, schools can implement proactive alternative strategies to ensure that all students receive educational opportunities, support, and services to meet their needs.

Leaders are well-suited to be change agents at the systems level. Previous research indicates that successful organizational change in schools is largely related to school leaders (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021). This paper aims to describe three systems changes that school leaders can implement to reduce or eliminate the use of restraint and seclusion in schools: implement schoolwide positive behavior intervention and supports, support students in crisis, and include families in an ongoing process of collaboration.

Three Systems Changes to Limit or Eliminate Restraint and Seclusion

As a school leader considers ways to limit or eliminate the restraint and seclusion of students with disabilities in their schools, three changes are recommended: (a) implement school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports, (b) support students in crisis, and (c) include families in the ongoing process to enhance school-family collaboration. In this section, we will define each recommendation and describe the role of school leaders in enacting these changes.

1. Implement School-wide positive behavior intervention and supports

Students with persistent behavior difficulties are best supported in positive, predictable, and preventative school environments (Scheuermann et al., 2022). Schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SW-PBIS) is an evidence-based process to prevent or reduce challenging behaviors and help to promote a positive school climate (PBIS, 2022). SW-PBIS is a multi-tiered system of support that implements positive and preventive interventions for all students, with increasing support based on student needs (Scheuermann et al., 2022; Sugai & Horner, 2009). With decades of preventative philosophy and research, PBIS has been arranged into a three-tiered framework, including universal (Tier 1), targeted small group (Tier 2), and intensive individualized (Tier 3) interventions (Simonsen & Sugai, 2013).

Tier 1 interventions create a school environment that conforms to best practices in instruction and classroom management (Pinkelman & Horner, 2019). To achieve the best effect in a schoolwide approach, stakeholders and teachers collaboratively choose student behavior expectations (Pinkelman & Horner, 2019). School personnel use direct instruction to teach, model, and

practice expectations in various school settings (i.e., classroom, lunchroom, hallway, and outside the building). Teachers also provide error correction contingent on problem behaviors and reinforce appropriate behaviors while teachers collect data on treatment integrity and student behavior (Pinkelman & Horner, 2019). Based on these data, stakeholders make pertinent decisions and solve problems effectively. If a student's behaviors do not improve with Tier 1 interventions, they can move to Tier 2 interventions.

Tier 2 small-group interventions emphasize moderate-intensity supports that deal with the most prevalent needs of students with persistent problem behaviors (Horner & Sugai, 2015). In the regular classroom environment, 15% to 30% of students will not respond to Tier 1 interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Students with ongoing problem behaviors need extra structure, frequent antecedent prompts, more positive recognition, and elevated training in both behavioral expectations and self-regulation skills (Horner & Sugai, 2015). To support these students, Tier 2 involves a team of staff members who have a background in behavior intervention and can support these students, such as school psychologists, physical/occupational therapists, school counselors, and special educators.

If a student does not respond to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions, they will move into a more specialized and individualized intervention in Tier 3 (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Tier 3 supports are intended for 5% or fewer students and include intensive, individualized, and long-term intervention (Horner & Sugai, 2015; Scheuermann et al., 2022). Specifically, Tier 3 provides a comprehensive functional-based intervention (Pinkelman & Horner, 2019). Tier 3 intervention includes implementing functional behavior assessment, integrating academic and mental health

assessments, and scaffolding a function-based support plan (Pinkelman & Horner, 2019). Therefore, Tier 3 is a high-intensity intervention to support fewer students through a variety of aspects such as behavioral, academic, mental health, physical, social, and contextual variables (Horner & Sugai, 2015)

According to the Center on Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (2022), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the first step in establishing SW-PBIS is to form a leadership team. This team will include a school administrator, family representative, classroom teachers, school personnel with behavior and coaching expertise, and an individual with knowledge of student academic and behavior patterns. The school leader's next task is to assess what is already in place because positive behavior practices will likely be implemented in parts of the school (Center on PBIS, 2022). The final step in this beginning process is to solidify SW-PBIS basics. School leaders play a critical role in promoting the high-quality implementation of interventions (Debnam et al., 2013) through a carefully coordinated organizational system, including teaming, data for decision-making, and ongoing professional development to promote evidence-based intervention practices (Kittelman et al., 2022). For example, school leaders provide sustainable professional development opportunities and more motivation, direction, and strategies to support their staff in implementing intervention practices (Debnam et al., 2013; Oakes et al., 2014).

In Tier 1, school personnel use direct instruction to teach appropriate behaviors for all students across school settings, including students with disabilities who display problem behaviors. Before delivering behavioral instruction, school personnel determine who may need additional support using valid and reliable schoolwide behavior screening tools (Schonour et al., 2021). Next, school personnel

explicitly teach schoolwide expectations. One tool developed for this purpose is the Rules by Routines Matrix (Robbie et al., 2022). For example, if one schoolwide expectation is "be respectful," school personnel work together to operationalize the behaviors in schools: walking quietly in the hallway, eating their food in the cafeteria, using library books with care, and taking turns with classroom equipment (Robbie et al., 2022). Operationalizing expected behaviors might also bring order to congested hallways, disorganized cafeterias, and unstructured playground times (Scheuermann et al., 2022). Visual reminders such as posters can support students in meeting schoolwide expectations (Scheuermann et al., 2022).

The focus of SW-PBIS is rewarding appropriate behaviors rather than punishing problem behaviors. Positive reinforcement is provided verbally, combined with a token reward frequently. High Five Tickets is one strategy that can encourage appropriate student behaviors (Scheuermann et al., 2022). When a teacher observes a student engaging in a school's High Five schoolwide expectations, the teacher presents the student with a ticket and behavior-specific praise (Scheuermann et al., 2022). Students may put their names on the tickets for various reinforcers, such as a preferred snack, lunch with their best friend in another class, or a class-wide celebration. According to one study, SW-PBIS achieved an 82% decrease in physical restraints and a 99% decrease in seclusions (Wilson et al., 2022).

Students with challenging behaviors may require more time, support, and individualized instruction in Tiers 2 and 3. Implementing Tiers 2 and 3 interventions is more costly, resource-intensive, and complex (Kittelman et al., 2022). For example, school personnel may need to provide additional coaching support for initial training and coordination during the first few weeks

(approximately 2-3 weeks) of implementing intervention practices (Kittelman et al., 2022). School leaders are tasked to provide extensive resources and maximize school funding, and ensure teachers have sufficient time and energy to utilize the resources to serve students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 (Debnam et al., 2013; Oakes et al., 2014). The availability of PBIS implementation resources can be reflected in the data system, material, space, people, and time (Kittelman et al., 2022).

A data system with physical and digital versions is needed to track student identification and assessment and monitor implementation fidelity across evidence-based practices and student outcomes (Kittelman et al., 2022). School leaders may need to provide teachers with available materials with physical and digital versions of manuals, handouts, forms, incentives, equipment for training and coaching, and SW-PBIS leadership team coordination (Kittelman et al., 2022). School leaders provide time in their faculty and staff schedules for implementation activities, training and coaching activities, and team coordination meetings (Kittelman et al., 2022). With sufficient ongoing coaching support, school personnel may also consider adequate time for teachers to design and deliver evidence-based classroom intervention practices and data collection (Kittelman et al., 2022).

Due to the requirements of team-based leadership, data-based decision-making, continuous monitoring of student behavior, regular universal screening, and effective ongoing professional development, SW-PBIS is a process that takes up to one year for full implementation (Ohio PBIS Network, n.d.). The school leader's sustained support for implementation fidelity is essential for success. As part of this systemic change, a school leader may consider guidance from Spiro (2022): coach teachers during classroom visits, mentor

new teachers and leaders, provide internships for aspiring leaders, and develop relationships with community partners. For instance, an aspiring school leader may chair the SW-PBIS leadership team. Community partners may donate money or resources for tangible rewards in the school-wide system of supports. An experienced teacher may mentor a new teacher unfamiliar with SW-PBIS to provide positive reinforcement to their students. The Center for PBIS website (2022) includes free tools for school and district leaders wanting to implement SW-PBIS, including contact information for state-level PBIS representatives. While SW-PBIS applies to all students in a school and will effectively reduce or eliminate the use of restraints and seclusion, there may be emergency situations in which students are in crisis at school. In addition to implementing the SW-PBIS process, leaders may implement a formal program to address extremely challenging behaviors that will further reduce the likelihood of using restraints or seclusions.

2. Support students in crisis

After school personnel have provided Tier 1 universal interventions, Tier 2 targeted small group interventions, and Tier 3 intensive individualized interventions, students with the highest behavioral needs may still require crisis or treatment plans (Nunno et al., 2022). While the IEP team will make these decisions, school personnel may advance their professional development to understand students' challenging behaviors through seminars, podcasts, and activities such as Youth Aggression, Medication and Psychiatric Practice Guidelines, and Anger Management for Youth. (Slaatto et al., 2021). Chaparro et al. (2022) suggested that another strategy school personnel can implement to reduce challenging behaviors is team-initiated problem-solving (TIPS). In one study, schools that implemented problem-solving skills through TIPS training statistically decreased the rate of out-of-school

suspensions and office disciplinary referrals through early screening, solutions provided in a precise manner, and student-focused problem-solving meetings (Chaparro et al., 2022).

School personnel benefit from developing their knowledge and skills in professional development to build successful academic and behavioral classroom environments and effectively provide individualized instruction for students with challenging behaviors (Tölli et al., 2021). For example, Tölli et al. (2021) revealed that a school leader might provide Management of Actual or Potential Aggression (MAPA) training on a district-allocated professional development day. MAPA provides professional guidance in verbal de-escalation, prevention, early intervention, imminent risk, and challenging behaviors (Tölli et al., 2021). Through MAPA training, school personnel will learn strategies in risk assessments, trauma-informed care, alternative communication, and emphatic listening to address challenging behaviors. Other potential types of professional development include conducting functional behavior assessment (FBA), developing behavior intervention plans (BIPs) in collaboration with the IEP team, reporting problematic behaviors to families promptly, conducting direct observations, and training students in self-reporting procedures (Trader et al., 2017; Musa & Dergaa, 2022). From a legal perspective, school leaders should also provide professional development about district and state guidelines for restraint and seclusion early in the school year.

Despite best efforts to reduce or eliminate restraint and seclusion in schools, some students may experience unpredictable crises requiring a higher level of intervention. Leaders may consider implementing a specific crisis response program to train school personnel to respond appropriately to a student in crisis. Possible programs include (a)

Collaborative Problem-Solving, (b) Non-violent Resistance, (c) Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, (d) Behavior Analysis Services Program Training; and (e) Trauma Affect Regulation and Do the Good (Couvillon et al., 2010; Gink et al., 2020). Schools can select the most appropriate program based on their specific needs. Regardless of the chosen program, the ultimate success largely depends on an administrator's commitment to supporting the training process. Ideally, school leaders will have experience in different levels of behavioral programs with students who demonstrate problem behaviors, sufficient knowledge of functional assessment and reinforcement procedures, referral networks to support school personnel's needs in handling difficult cases, and a strong ability to develop relationships with families and other stakeholders (Eikeseth et al., 2009).

3. Include families in the ongoing process to enhance school-family collaboration

The final suggestion for reducing or eliminating the use of restraints and seclusions in schools is to engage families in the ongoing process. While leaders may be hesitant to share their data about using restraints and seclusion, doing so may provide greater accountability in the organizational change process. Evidence shows that collaboration between schools and families has been closely related to how well school personnel are satisfied with their jobs and improved student academic and social outcomes (Witte et al., 2021). Similarly, greater communication between schools and families promotes more positive attitudes from families (Witte et al., 2021). Such two-way communication and shared responsibility through collaboration can connect school personnel and families to focus on students' physical and mental well-being (Witte et al., 2021). School leaders can engage families in ongoing collaboration in four ways: invite families to discuss the process, train school

personnel to engage families effectively, and examine power dynamics in relationships.

One way to improve school-family collaborations is to invite families to discuss prevention strategies, share schedules of reinforcement, and provide individualized instruction plans (Center on PBIS, 2022). If families cannot attend in-person meetings, school personnel can provide virtual meetings using online platforms like Google Meet, Zoom, or Skype. Also, school personnel can coach families to implement intervention plans at home to achieve the best behavioral effects across environments (Center on PBIS, 2022). Other methods to develop school-family collaborations include two-way home-school communication (i.e., home-school notebook) and shared decision-making conferences (Witte et al., 2021). For example, school personnel may regularly email copies of Schoolwide Information Data attached with a summary and provide document guidance about intervention plans for their child(ren) (Wilson et al., 2022; Schonour et al., 2021). Teachers influence and empower students and parents (Olivos et al., 2010). The teacher is often the person whom families trust most in schools. Therefore, it might be in the student's best interest if school personnel consider allowing teachers to provide the information or any related support and service during school-family collaborations.

Another way school leaders can engage families is to train school personnel to involve families by establishing clear goals and communicating adequately verbally and nonverbally (Witte et al., 2021). For instance, speaking calmly while offering a warm smile may be important when communicating with families with limited English language proficiency (Witte et al., 2021). Leaders further support school-family collaboration by guiding school personnel in identifying and reducing their personal biases that negatively impact student learning (Witte et al., 2021). Many

schools and districts administer annual school climate surveys to elicit family feedback. Surveys can be administered through online links, paper surveys, and school computers to improve response rates. Care should be taken to offer these surveys in participating families' first language.

A final way school leaders can engage families is to examine collaborative efforts and ensure that all stakeholders share power during school-family collaborations (Olivos et al., 2010). Families should be given time to ask questions, express their opinions, and discuss their concerns (Olivos et al., 2010). Generally, families desire school personnel to respect their children through empathy, sensitivity, compassion, and kindness, treating them as equals during decision-making (Haine et al., 2015). In meetings, school personnel also protect parents from solely accepting the perspectives of other stakeholders by asking for feedback about evaluation and treatment services. Interaction and services in school-family collaborations can be improved with shared power. To achieve shared power, school personnel can perform a self-analysis that indicates prompt and appropriate changes (Olivos et al., 2010). For instance, a school leader may develop the master schedule to include school and family conferences during the day and evening to allow access for parents and caregivers who work multiple jobs.

Restraint and seclusion should only be used as a last resort in emergency situations when there is an immediate threat of serious bodily harm to the student in crisis or other students. A parent or legal guardian has the right to be informed when their child is subjected to restraint or seclusion. If all other preventative techniques have been exhausted, and a child is restrained or secluded, they should be immediately informed about the frequency, intensity, and duration of the seclusion or restraints (Gagnon et al., 2017). In

response, the parent/guardian has the right to ask for evidence, data, and patterns that may help them understand their children's behavior and performance at school (Kern, 2021).

Discussion

The COVID-19 global pandemic has been connected to the increased prevalence of mental health issues (OCR, 2021). Children and adolescents' behavioral and mental well-being was significantly influenced, increasing the number of challenging behaviors negatively impacting families and schools (Musa & Dergaa, 2022). Many elementary and secondary school children with disabilities experienced interruptions in school-based services and supports that impacted their academic growth, resulting in persistent learning gaps for students with disabilities (Musa & Dergaa, 2022). According to the Office for Civil Rights (2021), students with disabilities and mental health needs have also been impacted behaviorally. For instance, students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) experienced greater demands on their concentration; students with depressive disorders experienced isolation and loneliness; and students with generalized anxiety disorder faced uncertainty about the future.

Before COVID-19, students with disabilities were more likely to be restrained and secluded than their typically developing peers (U.S. Department of Education & Office for Civil Rights, 2020). Restraints can be traumatic for students and staff for various reasons; physically, developmentally, or psychologically, students who may already be vulnerable are at greater risk (Nunno, 2022), putting student-teacher relationships at risk and leading to detachment in the classroom. Restraints can cause injuries and death to children, leading to reforms such as banning

supine, prone, or all floor restraints on young children (Nunno, 2022). Without federal regulations related to seclusion and restraint, school leaders are responsible for understanding and implementing state, district, and school policies to maintain students' civil rights. Amidst increasing teacher and staff turnover in schools, leaders strengthen professional development, especially among new employees, to help them integrate effective strategies into their daily practices.

When faced with aggressive behaviors, school personnel's ability to de-escalate the student's behavior could positively impact the outcome. Evidence shows that schools and stakeholders can decrease the likelihood of seclusion and physical restraint through proactive and preventative strategies (Wilson et al., 2022). This paper offered three systems-level organizational changes to reduce or eliminate restraints and seclusion in schools. School leaders can use their influence to implement SW-PBIS, an evidence-based program to train relevant school personnel for the few students who may experience a crisis in schools (Couvillon et al., 2010; Gink et al., 2020), and to increase family involvement in these processes.

Conclusion

Although many state policies only allow for seclusion and physical restraint in emergency situations, there has been consistent overuse of students with disabilities in non-emergency situations in public school settings. To reduce this likelihood, school leaders need to implement systems-level changes. These practices, programs, and strategies will help build a safe and positive school environment for all students, including those with behavioral challenges.

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Developing Comprehensive School Safety and Mental Health Programs

written by Jeffrey C. Roth, PhD and Terri A. Erbacher, PhD

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Irwin et al. (2022) developed a report, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021*, as a joint effort by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), which indicated the percentage of public schools implementing safety and security measures increased between the years 2000—2010 and 2019—2020, with some security measures increasing by as much as 20-30%.

As schools increasingly develop comprehensive safety programs, Jeffrey C. Roth and Terri A. Erbacher's book, *Developing Comprehensive School Safety and Mental Health Programs*, comes at a crucial time and is a must-read for any member of the K-12 education community looking to develop school safety and mental health programs within their school.

Roth and Erbacher (2022) define the term school safety at the introduction of the book by stating it as:

"school attributes that constitute the condition and perception of physical and psychological safety such that

students, educators, families, and members of the school community function in a secure learning environment that is reasonably free from fear of harm or disruption" (p. 7).

Roth and Erbacher acknowledge that the term can be ambiguous for some and delivers an operational definition to form a common language between the authors and readers. They (2022) also recognize the vital relationship between school safety and mental health by stating that when the learning environment is safe and supportive, those within the environment experience mental wellness and readiness to learn.

This connection between school safety and mental health is essential to note because it provides an understanding that school administration must address both issues as they develop a comprehensive program for it to be effective.

With this linkage, Roth and Erbacher identify schools' need to develop a multi-tiered, comprehensive, and efficient school safety plan while addressing the many challenges in

developing, facilitating, and supporting these programs (Roth & Erbacher, 2022). Roth and Erbacher's integrated approach is multi-tiered and broken down efficiently and effectively, utilizing themes across 19 chapters, each discussed in full detail. Specifically, the book recognizes safety processes, crisis preparation, suicide and violence prevention, mental health services for students, and several others (Roth & Erbacher, 2022).

In addition, Roth and Erbacher acknowledge throughout the book how vital school climate is in developing a comprehensive program addressing school safety and mental health. The Office of Elementary & Secondary Education (OESE) (2020) defines school climate as a broad, multifaceted concept that involves several aspects of the student's education experience and stresses that a positive one is essential

because it provides a safe and supportive learning environment. Roth and Erbacher (2022) make note of school climate by stating, "climate can nurture and support a program or starve and negate it" (p. 61). This concept goes to the adage that "when environments are good, good things happen, but if the environment is bad, bad things can happen."

With NCES reporting 93 school shootings occurring in 2020-2021 alone (Irwin et al., 2022), there is a real need within a K-12 school setting for comprehensive programs encompassing security and mental health. This critical need places schools in a distinctive role. Roth and Erbacher's one stop integrated approach provides in-depth information to help schools to understand, develop, and implement a comprehensive plan to help address security and mental health needs, all while benefiting the "whole child." It is truly one-of-a-kind.

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Jeffrey C. Roth and Terri A. Erbacher, *Developing Comprehensive School Safety and Mental Health Programs*, (New York, NY; Routledge), 2022; 452 pgs., softcover, \$54.95

Mission and Scope, Copyright, Privacy, Ethics, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines, Submissions, Publication Rates & Publication Timeline

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The **mission** of the Journal is to provide peer-reviewed, user-friendly, and methodologically sound research that practicing school and district administrations can use to take action and that higher education faculty can use to prepare future school and district administrators. The Journal publishes accepted manuscripts in the following categories: (1) Evidence-based Practice, (2) Original Research, (3) Research-informed Commentary, and (4) Book Reviews.

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Length of manuscripts should be as follows: Research and evidence-based practice articles between **2,800** and **4,800** words; commentaries between **1,600** and **3,800** words; book and media reviews between **400** and **800** words. Articles, commentaries, book and media reviews, citations and references are to follow the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, **latest edition**.

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10. 120-word abstract that conforms to APA style
11. six to eight key words that reflect the essence of the submission
12. 40-word biographical sketch

Please do not submit page numbers in headers or footers. Rather than use footnotes, it is preferred authors embed footnote content in the body of the article. Also note, **APA guidelines are changed so that one space is required after the period at the end of a sentence.** Articles are to be submitted to the editor by e-mail as an electronic attachment in Microsoft Word, Times New Roman, 12 Font.

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- Publisher, city, state, year, # of pages, price
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- Date of submission

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Spring	October 1	January 1	February 15	April 1
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Additional Information

Contributors will be notified of editorial board decisions within eight weeks of receipt of papers at the editorial office. Articles to be returned must be accompanied by a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

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➔ AASA Resources and Events

- **AASA Leadership Network**, the School Superintendents Association’s professional learning arm, drives educational leaders’ success, innovation and growth, focused on student-centered, equity-focused, future-driven education. Passionate and committed to continuous improvement, over 100 Leadership Network faculty connect educational leaders to the leadership development, relationships and partnerships needed to ensure individual growth and build collective impact. A snapshot of over 30 academies, cohorts and consortia is represented in the graphic below. To assist in navigating through the pandemic, AASA has produced and archived over 100 webinars since March 2020 on *Leading for Equity* and *What Works* at aasa.org/AASA-LeadershipNetwork-webinars.aspx.
- Contact Kristine Gilmore at kgilmore@aasa.org, Valerie Truesdale at vtruesdale@aasa.org or Ann Levett at alevett@aasa.org to explore professional learning and engagement.

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INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	AASA/Harvard University Partnership Programs (various opportunities)	AASA Learning 2025 Network
	AASA National Superintendent Certification Program®	Advancing Rural Education Cohort
	AASA National Superintendent Certification Program® States	Authentic Family Engagement Certification Program & Summit
	Aspiring Superintendents Academy®	Early Learning Cohort
	Aspiring Superintendents Academy® Female Leaders	Eastern States Consortium
	Aspiring Superintendents Academy® Hybrid Learning	Innovative Districts Empowering All Learners (IDEAL) Cohort
	Aspiring Superintendents Academy® Latino and Latina Leaders	Instructional Teams Teaching & Learning Cohort in partnership with Center for Model Schools
	Aspiring Superintendents Academy® State Collaboratives	Large Countywide Suburban District Collaborative
	Leadership Academy for Black Educators	Leadership in School Communication in partnership with NSPRA
	National Aspiring Principal Academy in collaboration with NAESP & NASSP	Mental Health Cohort
	National Instructional Leader Academy in partnership with AVID	National Principal Supervisor Academy in partnership with CEL
	Portrait of a Graduate Academy in partnership with Battelle for Kids	National Women's Leadership Consortium
	Superintendent Instructional Teaching & Learning in partnership with Center for Model Schools	Next Education Workforce in partnership with ASU
	Urban Superintendents Academy	Redefining Ready! Cohort
Howard University Cohort & University of Southern California Cohort	Social Emotional Learning Cohort	
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS	Building Resilience & Positive Youth Development	STEM Leadership Consortium
	Engage Every Student	Transformational Leadership Consortium
	Family Engagement in collaboration with National PTA	
	#PowerOfPartnerships	
	School Safety in collaboration with University of Michigan	

DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

JOIN THE AASA LEADERSHIP NETWORK!

 We bring together thought leader practitioners, content experts, and educational leaders to learn, grow, and take action together.

Who Should Join?
 The Leadership Network provides programming for School Superintendents, District Team Members, School Administrators, and those who aspire to central office positions, school leadership roles, and the superintendency.

 For more information about AASA's Leadership Network, contact Mort Sherman, Senior Associate Executive Director at msherman@aasa.org

To ensure each child has access to equitable, rigorous, and relevant educational opportunities, the AASA Leadership Network is committed to supporting a pipeline of diverse school superintendents and educational leaders as they refine the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for highly effective leadership.

➤ **AASA Learning 2025 Learner-Centered, Equity-Focused, Future-Driven Education Initiative Underway**

Comprised of school system leaders and business and non-profit leaders, AASA’s Learning 2025 Commission was chaired by Daniel A. Domenech, executive director of AASA and Bill Daggett, founder of the Successful Practices Network. A network of educational systems now comprises a Learning 2025 National Network of Demonstrations Systems, whose chief objective is to prepare all students for their futures.

For additional information about **Learning 2025 Network for Student-Centered, Equity-Focused Education**, visit the AASA website www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=45826 or contact Ann Levett at alevett@aasa.org.

➤ **Join AASA** and discover a number of resources reserved exclusively for members. See Member Benefits at www.aasa.org/welcome/index.aspx. For questions on membership contact Meghan Moran at mmoran@aasa.org

➤ **Welcome materials may be found at**
www.aasa.org/welcome/resources.aspx

➤ **Upcoming Program and Events**
www.aasa.org/professional-learning/calendar-of-events

➤ ***School Administrator***

School Administrator's Updated Editorial Calendar Available

AASA's monthly magazine has extended its editorial themes through the end of 2024. Also available is guidance for submitting story ideas to the magazine's editor for consideration. Find both here.

AASA Member Bloglist

The staff of *School Administrator* magazine maintains a roster of AASA members (mostly superintendents) who manage a blog with periodic postings. Any additions or deletions should be reported to the editor at magazine@aasa.org. Find the bloglist at www.aasa.org/publications/all-publications/member-blogs

➤ **Engage With @AASAdvocacy**

Superintendent effectiveness in federal advocacy is only as good as your ability to be succinct in communication of information, intentional in what you're asking and strategic in how you make available the supporting evidence. Here are several ways you can engage with those at AASA who oversee the association's legislative advocacy. You can use these steps to dip your toe or fully submerge.

The AASA Advocacy app keeps you informed about the most impactful changes coming from Congress and provides a curated selection of relevant news for school administrators. It empowers school leaders to shape educational policy. The app is available in the Apple App Store and on Google Play.

Bookmark the advocacy page. You find that aasa.org/advocacy has it all, from toolkits and talking points to information on upcoming conferences and calls to action.

Read the Leading Edge. This is AASA's policy blog.

Follow the department on Twitter. Our feed is @AASAdvocacy, and the members of the team are @Noellerson, @SPudelski, @TaraEThomas1 and @K_Sturdevant.

Join the Legislative Corps. Sign up to receive our weekly advocacy update, published every week when Congress is in session. Contact Tara Thomas at tthomas@aasa.org.

Listen to PEP Talk podcasts. On AASA's recently revamped podcast, you can listen to Public Education Policy Talk.

Attend the policy and advocacy strand at AASA's National Conference on Education. Join us in San Diego in February for six topical sessions and our federal relations luncheon for the latest developments at the federal level.

Visit your congressional representative. A great opportunity to do that takes place each July at AASA's Legislative Advocacy Conference in Washington. Visit aasa.org/legconf.aspx. Make your voice heard.

➤ **AASA 'Live Well. Lead Well.' Initiative Focuses on Mental, Physical & Emotional Health of School System Leaders**

For more information about *Live Well. Lead Well.* campaign, visit the AASA website:
www.connect.aasa.org/livewellleadwell

➤ **Official Online Industry Suppliers for Educators**

aasa.inloop.com/en/buyersguide

➤ **AASA Main and Advocacy App**

Both apps are designed for school superintendents, central office staff, principals, teachers, policymakers, business and community leaders, parents and more. The Advocacy app enables advocates of public education to connect, network, communicate with other members, access, and share important information directly from their devices.

www.aasa.org/app.aspx

➤ **Superintendent's Career Center**

aasa-jobs.careerwebsite.com/

➤ **2020 Decennial Study of the American Superintendent**

www.aasacentral.org/book/the-american-superintendent-2020-decennial-study

The study is for sale and available at www.aasacentral.org/aasa-books

➤ **Resources for Educational Leaders** may be viewed at AASA's virtual library:

www.aasathoughtleadercentral.org

➤ Learn about AASA's **Books Program** where new titles and special discounts are available to AASA members. The AASA publications catalog may be downloaded at

www.aasacentral.org/aasa-books

➤ **Podcast: Beyond Self Care: Disconnect to Reconnect**

<https://www.aasa.org/news-media/media/beyond-self-care-disconnect-to-reconnect>

➤ **Webinar Recordings: A to Z: Getting Started with Electric School Bus Purchasing**

<https://www.aasa.org/resources/resource/a-to-z-getting-started-with-electric-school-bus-purchasing>



Upcoming AASA Events

**AASA 2025 National Conference on Education, March 6-8, 2025,
New Orleans, LA**