



Vermont Legislative Research Shop

Vermont's Principal Shortage

Vermont and the Nation's Shortage

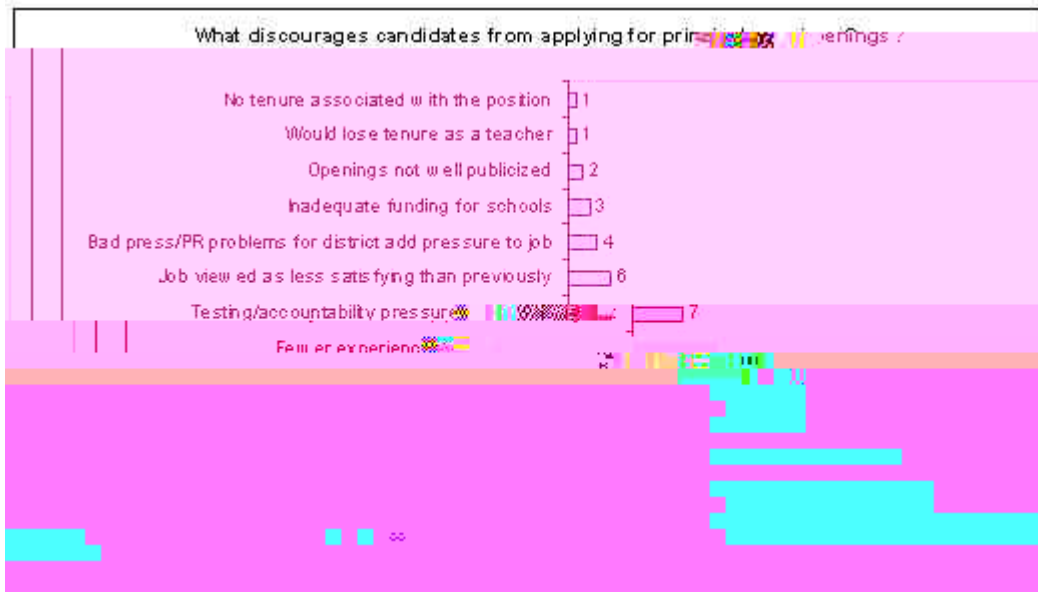
Across the nation, qualified applicants have become scarce for the position of Principal. Rural schools face even harder times attracting applicants; with smaller budgets rural districts are unable to compete with suburban schools. Curtis Rose, assistant director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, said the problem is critical, "Some districts can't even find one applicant for an opening. It's definitely a seller's market" (McKay 1999). The shortage affects city schools as well. At the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year 195 of public schools in New York City opened without a principal, "the highest vacancy rate in five years" (Natt 1999). Research compiled by the National Center for Policy Analysis reported that of the 403 school districts surveyed nationally, almost half said they were having trouble filling the position of principal in the 1998-1999 academic year (National Center for Policy Analysis).

Vermont is not immune to the shortage. Many Vermont schools began the 1999-2000 academic year "scrambling to fill principals' position" (Allen 1999). The high rate of turnover is not unique to principals either. Glover Vermont Principal Jeffrey Lindgren left after four years of leadership; the three-member school board of Glover was completely replaced by the time he left his four-year term. Lindgren said, "The boards change and their ideas change and their beliefs change, and when that happens, it's hard to suddenly change and go in their direction . . . It's very frustrating" (Allen 1999).

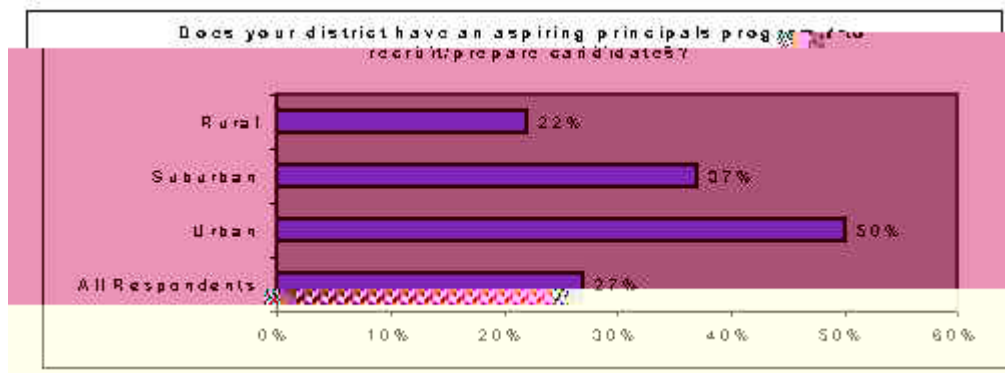
Causes of the Shortage

The position of Principal has evolved over the past decades; this has put more stress on individuals and made the job less appealing for the relatively low amount the position pays. At the same time the position is becoming more demanding. A great amount of new responsibility has been placed on principals. The average workday and work year has also been extended. The typical workday of principals begins at 7 a.m. and ends at 7 p.m. They work an average of 54 hours per week and they are contracted for an average of 240 days a year. In contrast, teachers are contracted for 180/190 days per year and their workday is dramatically shorter (Warchol and Batts 2000). Principals are expected to attend PTA meetings, sporting events, plays, community meetings, and many other activities outside of school hours.

This situation is compounded by the narrowing gap between the salaries of veteran teachers and principals. Jane Gibson Natt, in her article "Faced W



However, findings show that there are more than adequate numbers of qualified candidates, they just are not



In order to solve the Principal shortage many school districts are turning to programs designed to identify and groom potential leaders. More emphasis is being placed on mentoring and support programs for new principals. Recognition of outstanding principals, encouraging talented people to prepare for and apply for the Principalship, and attempting to decrease the disparity between the amount of authority granted and responsibility expected of Principals, are needed steps in solving the Principal shortage. Greater monetary compensation for principals should also be considered in attempts to solve the shortage. The high level of responsibility and time demands compared with the financial compensation is the most apparent cause of the shortage and should not be entirely overlooked in the efforts to create a larger pool of qualified candidates.

Sources

Allen, Anne W