

# ***Principal Career Paths in Delaware***

Dr. Elizabeth N. Farley-Ripple

Dr. Jeffrey A. Raffel

Dr. Jacquelyn O. Wilson

Hilary Mead, MPA

Jennie Welch

*University of Delaware*

# Previous Research Findings

- Retaining quality leaders in our nation's schools matters for student success, and there are **negative implications of a high level of instability** in the field of school administration.
  - School leadership has an indirect influence on student learning.
  - Real and perceived shortages of qualified candidates.
    - Ex: Delaware Teacher and Administrator Demand and Supply
  - Turnover in leadership is disruptive to teachers, students, and reform efforts.
- Furthering these findings: *What are the causes of principal turnover?*
  - *Quantitative and qualitative methods*

# Complexity: A view from the schools

## School-level approach:

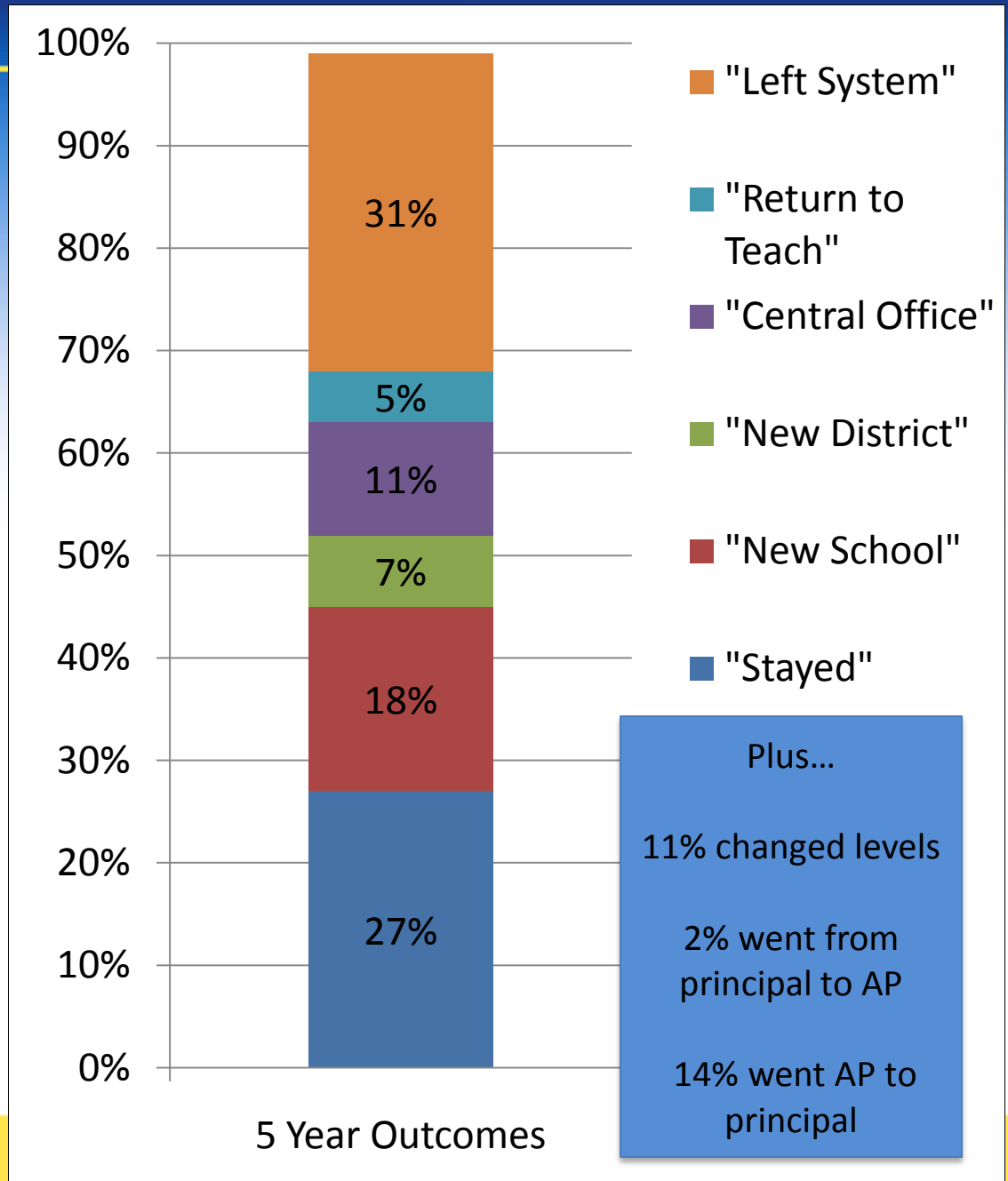
- 178 schools in 2003
- Principal changes
- Type of turnover
- AP changes
- Stability

- 140 schools experienced at least one change in principal
- More than half had only 1 but 16 had three or more
- 46 were internal promotions
- Others include inter-district transfer (low), “shuffle” or “churn”, promote from teacher
- 120 schools experienced at least one AP change, ranged from 1 to 11
- Adding AP positions (7 schools), losing an AP position (26 schools)
- Only 15 (8.4%) schools had no change in principal or AP in 5 years**

## Complexity: A more focused approach

### 2003 Administrator cohort

- 372 administrators in 2003, 5 year follow up in 2008
- Complex movement much like snapshot approach
- Ultimately only 21% stayed in same role and location



# PRINCIPAL RETENTION IN THE STATE OF DELAWARE 2001 – 2008

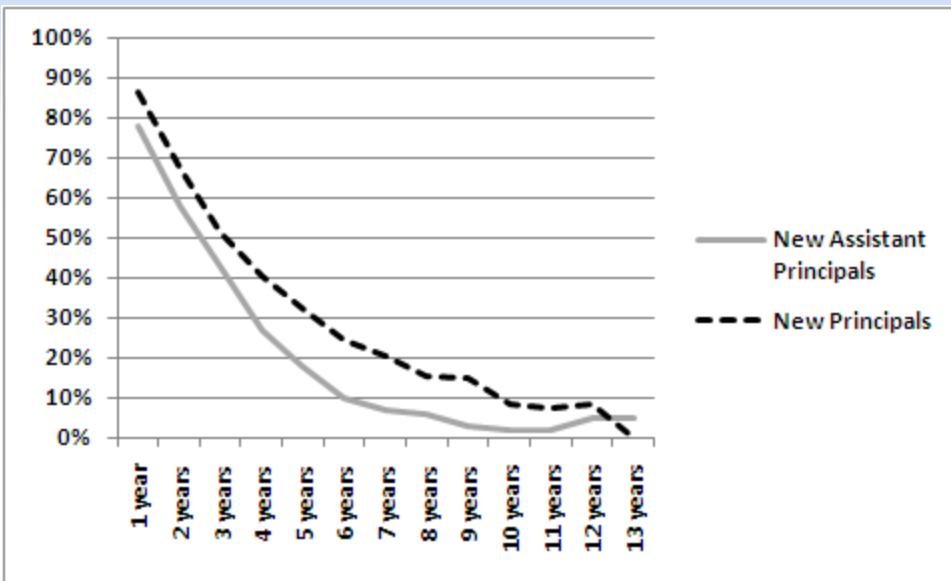
Solano, McDuffie, Farley-Ripple, Burton

- Administrative data 1995 to 2009
- Descriptive analyses all years to profile characteristics and mobility of administrators (principals and APs)
- Statistical analyses of principal mobility:
  - Use of OLS regression to predict tenure (time in each school)
  - Use of complementary log-log survival analysis for longitudinal analysis of *new* principals 2001 to 2008
    - Examines demographic, school, and district characteristics
    - Compares those staying in the same role (principal) and location (school) each year to those leaving for: another school, another district, central office, leaving the system, retiring

**TABLE 1  
NUMBER OF NEW ADMINISTRATORS  
BY YEAR AND ROLE**

Year	New Principal Hires	New AP Hires	Total Administrator Hires
1996	13	20	33
1997	14	19	33
1998	20	19	39
1999	23	42	65
2000	28	54	82
2001	38	47	85
2002	25	40	65
2003	32	29	61
2004	31	44	75
2005	31	43	74
2006	37	38	75
2007	23	39	62
2008	31	35	66

## Retention in Initial School Assignment Between 1996 and 2008



- After 1 year, the % of new Principals retained averaged 88%
  - After 3 years, 56%
  - After 5 years, 36%.
- Lower rates for APs than Principals: in 2009, 74% after 1 year
  - 29% after 3,
  - 20% after 5
- With some exceptions, the % of new Principals/APs retained in their initial position each subsequent year declines for more recent cohorts, indicating increasing mobility of new Principals and therefore shorter tenure in their initial position.

# A dynamic look at mobility: 5 year outcomes

5 YEAR MOBILITY STATUS OF NEW ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS HIRED 1996-2004		
Status	#	%
Same school	106	34%
Principal	48	15%
Assistant Principal	58	18%
Different school, same district	93	30%
Principal	61	19%
Assistant Principal	32	10%
Different school, different district	45	14%
Principal	29	9%
Assistant Principal	16	5%
Left System	70	22%
Retired	3	1%
Central Office Admin.	25	8%
Unknown	29	9%
Teaching	13	4%
Total	314	100%

5 YEAR MOBILITY STATUS OF NEW PRINCIPALS HIRED 1996-2004		
Status	#	%
Same school	76	34%
Principal	73	33%
Assistant Principal	3	1%
Different school, same district	39	17%
Principal	27	12%
Assistant Principal	12	5%
Different school, different district	13	6%
Principal	10	4%
Assistant Principal	3	1%
Left System	96	43%
Retired	20	9%
Central Office Admin.	40	18%
Unknown	32	14%
Teaching	4	2%
Total	224	100%

## Summary of Findings

- **Principal characteristics**
- **School characteristics**
- **District characteristics**



# Principal Characteristics

- Principals' professional characteristics have a more substantial effect than demographics:
  - The longer a Principal has been an administrator, the less likely they are to move
  - The more moves a Principal has had, the greater the odds of them moving again
  - Principals with higher salaries are less likely to move to another school, district, or to the central office\*\*\*\*
  - Principals with greater years' teaching experience are also far more likely to move to another school within a district as well as to the central office.

## School Characteristics

- Differences between elementary, middle, and high schools weren't evident.
- Geographic differences by county only affected retirement.
- More challenging school conditions increase the likelihood of turnover (teacher-student ratio, student enrollment, % students suspended, % minority students, % special education students)
- Retention is increased when school characteristics are more positive – as indicated by the percent of students at or above proficient in math.

## District Characteristics

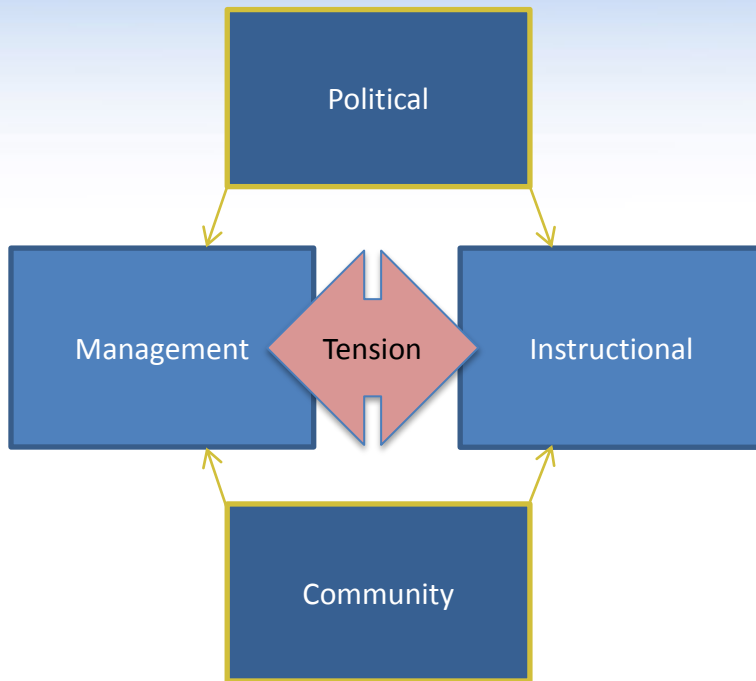
- Across models, few district characteristics appear significant.
- District expenditures per pupil - positively associated with tenure in position, tenure as Principal, and movement to the central office.

# *Tracking Transitions: Principal Career Paths in Delaware*

- Elizabeth Farley-Ripple, Hilary Mead, Jeffrey Raffel, Kelly Sherretz, and Jennie Welch
- Interviews (48)- How do school leaders make sense of their own career paths?
- Roles, responsibilities, decision-making

# Short-Order Cook, Movie Star, and More: The Work of a School Administrator

## Roles and Responsibilities



## Working Conditions and Relationships

Working Conditions	Working Relationships	Personal and Affective
<b>The school context:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse or high-needs student populations</li> <li>Condition of facilities</li> <li>School history</li> </ul>	<b>Working relationships within school:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With children</li> <li>With teachers</li> <li>With other administrators (assistant principal - principal relationships)</li> </ul>	<b>Affective dimensions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hours</li> <li>Stress</li> <li>Emotional Toll</li> </ul>
<b>The larger education system:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy climate</li> <li>Expectations for improvement</li> <li>Autonomy</li> <li>Accountability</li> <li>Job security</li> <li>District context</li> </ul>	<b>Working relationships in the larger educational system:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With other administrators</li> <li>With the central office</li> <li>With the school board</li> </ul>	<b>Personal context:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on personal life and health</li> <li>Events in personal life</li> </ul>
<b>Compensation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salary</li> <li>Pension and other benefits</li> </ul>		

# Ready or Not: What School Leaders Expect and Do to Meet Demands

<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities Working Conditions &amp; Relationships:</b>	<b>Expectations:</b> Instructional leader Strong teachers Working with teachers Long hours Working for common goal	<b>Reality:</b> Management Overload Many instructional needs Adversary to teachers All-consuming work Political demands
---	---	--

## *How do leaders meet demands and challenges?*

Preparation	On the Job	Coping Mechanisms
Teacher leadership and experience	Internships	Support systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional peer</li> <li>• Family/social</li> </ul>
	Assistant principalships	
Formal education (coursework and degrees)	Learning as principal	Personal strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral</li> <li>• Philosophy/lessons learned</li> </ul>
	Mentoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal</li> <li>• Informal</li> </ul>	
	Professional development	

**A Wish List:** Residency/internship, more teaching experience, mentoring, better preparation in: budgeting, data use, politics, teacher evaluation, and balancing management and instructional leadership

# Career Path Decisions

- Entry
- Decision to change
- Decision to stay
- Decision to leave
- Future plans

## Career Path Decisions

- Entry: tapping key, especially for women
- Decision to change: many push & pull processes (self initiating, recruiting, requesting, reassigning, promoting, pushing)
- Decision to stay: intrinsic motivation key (“the kids”, support, efficacy/challenge, working relationships)
- Decision to leave: many pushes (conflict, family, health) and some pulls (opportunities)
- Future plans: retired but not done, retirement math



Dimensions	Expectations	Results
Process of career development	Rational decision-making	Non-decision-making
Academic preparation	Management focus	Instructional leadership focus
Practical preparation	Assistant principal	Sometimes AP
Major de-motivator	Accountability & time	Affective issues
Motivation to stay/move within	Extrinsic (advancement, \$)	Intrinsic
Career paths	Few	Many
Post-principalship	New career, retirement	“Retired but not done”

# Dilemmas of School Administrator Transitions

- Instructional Leadership versus Management Roles
- Informal versus Formal Preparation
- Change versus Status Quo
- Extrinsic versus Intrinsic Motivation
- Stability versus Mobility
- Autonomy versus Accountability

**Changes needed to recruit, develop, support, and retain school leaders will need to confront tensions in the process of career development.**

## How Can We...

- **PREPARE** school administrators to deal with “rude awakenings”?
- **PREPARE** assistant principals for the support role they play while also preparing them for the principalship?
- **RECRUIT**, keeping in mind that tapping produces a representative group of school administrators (e.g. by gender and race) while encouraging those with the most potential?
- **SUPPORT** principals in their efforts to spend more time on instruction when management issues still dominate a principal’s day-to-day reality?
- **SUPPORT** principals by encouraging supportive working relationships?
- **What are the policy levers that will address these questions?**

## Next Steps

- White Paper Focus Group Meeting  
February 22<sup>nd</sup>
- University District Advisory Council  
March 7<sup>th</sup>
- Policy Briefs  
Spring, 2011
- Individual district meetings when requested

Questions?