

PRINCIPAL JOB SATISFACTION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Following a survey about principal burnout, five Utah principals participated in qualitative interviews to discuss what impacts their level of job satisfaction and best supports their retention in the role.

From 184 principals who completed the Utah Principal Burnout Survey, 19 met an identified threshold for low Emotional Exhaustion. Thirteen of these principals provided contact information and were contacted for follow-up interviews. Ultimately, we interviewed five principals using a semi-structured interview protocol.

Matthew Dias
Bonneville Elementary School
Alpine School District

Lindsey Heinig
Monticello Academy

Kirk Johnson
American Fork Jr. High School
Alpine School District

Matthew Teitter
Backmon Elementary School
Salt Lake City School District

Suzie Williams
Aspen Elementary School
Jordan School District

Solidifying the principal pipeline and retaining administrators have become critical concerns. Following the administration of the Utah Principal Burnout Survey in 2023, qualitative interviews were conducted with Utah principals reporting the lowest levels of emotional exhaustion to determine what practices contributed to their job satisfaction. The qualitative findings of those interviews, along with relevant literature and highlights from the mixed methods Utah Principal Burnout Survey, are included in this report.

Existing literature indicates **principals have a profound and pervasive effect on their schools**, including impacting critical aspects such as teacher retention and student achievement. This study sought to **understand how Utah principals are best supported** across the six areas of worklife, namely workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values.

Analysis of the quantitative survey instruments administered to principals revealed Utah principals tend to be satisfied with their jobs despite having substantial and stressful workloads. Outlier principal interviews revealed four strategies for supporting principals to minimize stressors leading to burnout, including:

- **Communicate Needs**
- **Reduce Workload**
- **Foster Positive Relationships**
- **Provide Support and Resources**

Many factors contribute to increasing principal job satisfaction and reducing burnout, and most rely heavily on adequate support for principals, including **workload reduction and plentiful resources**. Principals offered a range of supportive strategies, such as having veteran principal supervisors; surveying principals and creating spaces for them to openly discuss their needs, concerns, and support mechanisms; and prioritizing and managing workloads. Key elements of principal support included consistent, structured meetings with supervisors and follow-through on offered supports.

Read the full report: <https://bit.ly/4aJ34cM>

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education was created to find, research, and highlight proven practices in Utah schools for replication statewide. ULEAD partners with practitioners, researchers, and education organizations to develop and curate resources, foster collaboration, and drive systemic change for improved student outcomes. The ULEAD Clearinghouse is a growing repository of innovative, effective, and efficient practice resources and tools to support educators.

The ULEAD Steering Committee, composed of current Utah educators and stakeholders, meets quarterly to inform the focus priorities that ULEAD will research. ULEAD uses data to find positive outliers in each focus area and create reports, such as this one, illuminating the practices and policies that lead to positive outcomes. This report addresses the policies and practices that principals identify as contributing to their levels of job satisfaction. ULEAD collaborates with Institutes of Higher Education and education practitioners to develop Innovative Practice Reports. This report was developed in partnership with Utah Valley University.

RESEARCH TEAM

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Dr. Meghan Everette is the Director of Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic Education. She has been an elementary school teacher, mathematics coach, and School Ambassador Fellow at the U.S. Department of Education.

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Jordan Green is the ULEAD Researcher and is certified as a Senior Data Scientist by the Data Science Council of America. He has previously worked in research and government including the Department of Health and Human Services and the Epidemiology field.