A Survey of Day School Principals in the United States

Marvin Schick

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AVI CHAI

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Letter from AVI CHAI's Executive Director – North America

The shortage of educational leaders is a crisis being felt in both the public and private school sectors, across religious and secular lines. The need for additional, qualified leaders has become even more pronounced within the Jewish community, which has been blessed with a groundswell of new day schools as well as the expansion of existing day schools throughout North America. Beyond the new schools created, the day school leadership shortage stems from widespread turnover among heads of schools and principals. There is currently very limited data on the extent of the turnover or the reasons behind it.

Dr. Marvin Schick's survey represents the first effort to obtain broad-based information about day school leaders. Consistent with Dr. Schick's previous work, he obtained an astonishingly high response rate of more than 75%. As a result, this study provides highly reliable data about the personal characteristics and the professional backgrounds of educational leaders in day schools. Because the term "principal" can cover heads of school, division principals and Jewish/general studies principals, it was not possible for Dr. Schick to segregate the data for the top leader at each responding school.

As a background to understanding the reasons behind the turnover in the field, the survey also included questions related to the leaders' satisfaction and relationships with lay people and parents. Based on the highly-positive responses, one would expect virtually no turnover in the field. This leads us to surmise that the respondents' perceptions do not reflect the realities they face in the field. Dr. Schick notes that similar studies in other fields have produced similarly unlikely results. We hope that the researchers developing the next study of day school leaders will be able to better tease out principals' true feelings.

Dr. Schick's study was first unveiled at a Think Tank Consultation in November 2006, planned by an extraordinary range of Jewish organizations concerned about the day school leadership crisis. These organizations included Jewish educational networks, scholarly institutions and national organizations. The Think Tank planning committee has now become the Day School Leadership Task Force. The Task Force has begun work on an implementation plan that was discussed during the 2006 Consultation.

We hope that Dr. Schick's report will continue to stimulate conversation and consideration among practitioners and lay leaders, as we collectively work to secure the future of day school education in North America. We thank Dr. Schick for his ambitious and important work.

Yossi Prager
Executive Director – North America

Executive Summary

The principal is far and away the most important person in elementary and secondary schools, with responsibility for the academic program and usually much more. Because of the small size of most Jewish day schools, the role of the principal — or head of school, the title of choice in a growing number of day schools — is enhanced in these institutions. Yet, for all of the communal attention given to day schools, including the development of training programs for existing and aspiring principals, we know little about these key personnel. We do not have precise information about their educational background, prior day school experience, attitudes toward their career choice and work and the full range of their responsibilities. We have a slew of anecdotal tidbits and speculation, much of it pointing in the direction of job dissatisfaction, but no reliable data. The research reported here is apparently the first comprehensive profile of Jewish day school principals.

This report is based on a survey sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation during the 2005-06 school year of slightly more than 500 day school principals listed in the directories for Community, Solomon Schechter (Conservative), Reform and Modern and Centrist Orthodox institutions. Because they operate differently in crucial respects that are integral to this research, Yeshiva-world, Chassidic and Chabad school principals were not included. There were about 380 returned questionnaires, an impressive rate of about 75%. The pledge of confidentiality and AVI CHAI's record of philanthropic involvement in day schools doubtlessly contributed to the high response rate.

Contrary to what seems to be popular wisdom, there is an astonishingly high degree of job and career satisfaction, with more than 80% of the respondents characterizing their experience as principal as rewarding, with another 14% describing it as satisfactory. Only 4% express negative feelings. In a similar vein, 93% say their decision to make Jewish education their career choice was wise or good. However, one-third indicate that they sense greater dissatisfaction in the ranks of day school principals than they did previously.

The upbeat mood is maintained in responses to questions in relations with the key day school constituencies, as 93% report excellent or good relations with lay leaders. The comparable figures for relations with faculty and parents are respectively an amazingly high 99% and 98%. Qualitative research via focus groups or another process may be warranted to ferret out whether when they speak about their work, principals provide a somewhat less rosy picture. It may be the case that those principals who are dissatisfied with their job or career choice tend to leave the field.

There is a consensus among the principals that the job has gotten harder. The reasons are easy to come by. As in other fields, there is an explosion of paperwork, with email and other relatively recent technology producing a constant flow of communications, written and oral, that require attention and probably more often than not, a response.

Government reporting requirements have also expanded and they take time and thought. Another factor making the job harder is the heightened involvement of parents in the education of their children. They are ready to pounce on the principal when they feel that their child has been treated unfairly by a teacher or parent or in some other manner. Still another factor is the apparent alarming increase in behavioral and emotional problems among the student population that crop up at school, reflecting to a large extent what is happening at home and in the larger society.

To add further to the burden, principals frequently are involved in school-related communal activities, such as the local federation and Jewish education agency. While the involvement is voluntary, a good deal of it is a part of the job description. Furthermore, more than one-half of the principals report that fundraising for their school is also on their plate and five of six report that they are responsible for non-educational activity, including the operation of the school's office and maintenance.

In line with societal and Jewish communal trends, nearly half (45%) of the principals are women. Likely, before long, women will constitute a majority of the principals in the day school sectors covered by this research. Also consistent with what occurs in professional life, women principals are paid significantly below what men earn. As an example, one-quarter of the women who have been at their present school for between five and ten years are paid above $120,000, while the comparable figure for men is nearly 60%. Gender clearly makes a difference, as do the size of the school and whether the job-holder has the "head of school" or "principal" title.

Only one in four principals is younger than 45 and a relatively small number are 65 or older. Of note, 80% came to their present position with day school teaching experience under their belt and about half have served as a department head and/or assistant principal. They come to their principalships with strong educational credentials. More than one-third were ordained. The expectation of school officials that candidates have advanced academic degrees is confirmed because nearly 60% have earned a Masters in education and 30% have a Masters degree in another field. Nearly one in four has a doctorate in education or in another discipline.

One-third of the respondents indicate that they were not adequately prepared when they first became a principal.

For all of their educational and day school background, one-third of the respondents indicate that they were not adequately prepared when they first became a principal. In comments attached to the returned questionnaires, there was great support for mentoring arrangements.

Because the principals generally had years of teaching and day school experience prior to their present position, it may be expected that many would have been promoted from within. It turns out that but one-third were promoted in this fashion. Perhaps it should not be surprising that two-thirds came from other schools because professional and career advancement is often predicated on job mobility. An assistant principal aspiring for promotion may find advancement blocked by the incumbent who is not going anywhere and thus has to find another school for the fulfillment of his/her aspirations. Yet another factor is the tendency of lay

officials who are responsible for selecting the principal to prefer candidates from outside of their institution.

When asked whether this is their first position as principal, a majority (55%) responded affirmatively. Of the majority who served elsewhere in this capacity, half reported that they were principal at but one other day school. Overall, the data does not support the impression of constant movement in the principals' ranks.

Principals who came from another school — whether they served there in this capacity or in a lower position — were asked why they left their previous job. Six explanatory factors, not exclusive of each other, were available. About one-third of the respondents referred to a higher position and about an equal number to a higher salary. One of four pointed to a better geographic area and nearly an equal number said that it was time for a career change. Only one of six gave a more prestigious school as a reason and just 6% said "I was let go." It may be that for some principals whose contracts were not renewed, what occurred is that the school board and the incumbent reached an understanding that it was time to move on.

The following survey is but a snapshot of the world of day school principals taken at a particular moment. Comparative analysis is possible only when the research has predecessors or successors. This is apparently the first comprehensive survey of day school principals. It is to be hoped that there will be a follow-up.

A Survey of Day School Principals in the United States

In elementary schools and high schools, the principal is far and away the key person, the individual with overall authority and responsibility for the educational program and, more generally, for the operation of the institution. It is the principal who is held accountable if educational performance falls short or when other problems crop up and it is the principal who interacts regularly with the school's several constituencies — faculty and staff, outside educational agencies and officials, parents and students, and school officers and board members — that are involved in one way or another in the life of an educational institution. A school is, in short, a complex social reality and the only person with links to all of its elements is the principal.[1]

If only because of the low enrollment in a great number of Jewish day schools, in these institutions principals are of even greater importance than they are in school systems that encompass institutions with large enrollments.[2] Budgetary constraints usually proscribe the establishment of educational mini-bureaucracies within the school that may serve as buffers between the principal and staff or other constituencies. The Jewish day school principal is constantly on the firing line and the job is made more difficult still by the dual curriculum requirement in all of these schools. For good measure, there is at times a smattering or more of fundraising involvement.

As the principal's job has become multi-faceted and more difficult, there has been expanded interest in training programs aimed at providing both existing and aspiring principals with the skills that they need to handle the various tasks that come with the job. The reliance on training programs has become a primary element of American education and the small universe of Jewish schools is no exception to the societal trend.

As the Jewish day school world has expanded, particularly among the non-Orthodox, there is the apparent feeling that the pool of competent principal candidates is not large enough to meet the demand. There is the corollary feeling that the tenure of principals is briefer than what it was in an earlier period, as in some instances principals are found lacking by the lay officials who hired them or they leave because of better opportunities elsewhere.[3] There is a need to learn more about the world of Jewish day school principals.

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[1] While other terms, such as head of school and dean, are also used, particularly by tonier non-public schools and increasingly by non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox Jewish day schools, the term principal remains the preferred usage in elementary and secondary education and it is utilized throughout this report. Interestingly, in the survey that forms the basis for this report, a bit fewer than half of the respondents said that their title is principal, while 30% gave head of school as their title. Only 6% are referred to as dean and 15% said that they had some other title. In the feedback received from persons with whom I shared data included in this report, it became evident that many in the day school world believe that there is a meaningful distinction between the head of school and principal titles, with the former referring specifically to those who have responsibility for all of the curriculum. The research reported in this document clearly indicates that title correlates with salary level, although it is not possible to say that the title per se results in a higher salary. More likely, a higher salary comes with a more exalted title.

[2] According to the 2003 Census of Jewish Day Schools in the U.S. conducted by this writer, nearly 40% of all schools enrolled fewer than one-hundred students. Only about 15% had five-hundred or more students.

[3] Yaron Roni Raab's recently-completed dissertation, "Why They Leave: A Study of Jewish Day School Administrators Who Left Jewish Education" (Florida Atlantic University, 2006, unpublished) provides a useful review of the literature on the subject.

The data and analysis presented in this report arise from a survey of Jewish day school principals conducted at the halfway mark of the 2005-06 school year.

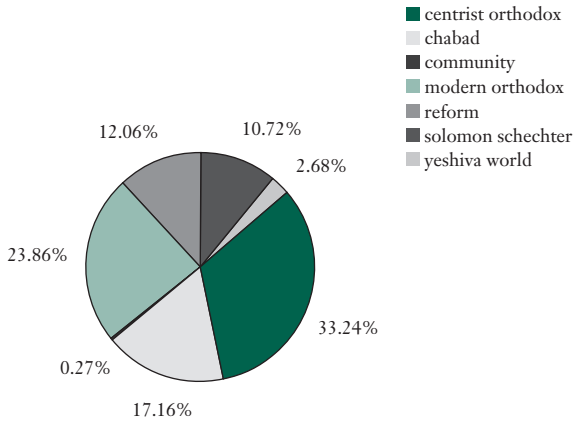
It was sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation which has identified day school education as a philanthropic priority. This report is one of a series of research projects focusing on Jewish day school education. A questionnaire (included in the Appendix), was mailed to a bit more than five-hundred individuals identified as principals in the various day school directories.[4] There were about 380 responses, for an impressive response rate of about 75%.

Included in the survey were the principals of Community, Solomon Schechter (Conservative), Reform and Modern Orthodox and Centrist Orthodox day schools.[5] Not included are Chassidic, Yeshiva-world, Chabad, Immigrant/Outreach and Special Education schools. These exclusions encompass more than one-half of all day school enrollment. Chassidic and Yeshiva-world schools comprise a large majority of those that were not included. More often than not, they operate along different lines than the other day schools and these differences have a direct bearing on the focus of this study. With some exceptions, but not many, lay officials and directors are either non-existent at these schools or play a minor role. Perhaps more critically, because of their entrepreneurial nature, at many, if not most, Yeshiva-world and Chassidic institutions and all Chabad schools, the principal is either a family member or an employee whose position is determined exclusively by the individuals who, in effect, own the school. The educational role of the principal in Yeshiva-world and Chassidic schools is often different from what it is elsewhere, particularly in institutions where a Chassidic Rebbe or Rosh Yeshiva or some other rabbinical figure, and not the principal, has the authority to make key decisions.[6]

As a related consequence of this arrangement, there is in the excluded day school sectors significantly less principal turnover than there is in the day schools that are included in this survey. In other respects, as well, key issues that are the focus of this research are not relevant to the principals in the excluded institutions.

When asked which denominational category describes the school they are now at, this is how the principals responded:

Figure 1: Affiliation



The breakdown is interesting, revealing the borderline or unclear identity of a fair number of day schools. More than 10% of the principals said that their school is in the Yeshiva-world sector. Doubtlessly, this is how they regard their institution, despite the school having characteristics that identify

[4] For schools with more than one division (usually elementary school and high school) or one or more branches, the survey was sent to all who are listed as having the title of principal. Because of the dual curriculum in all Jewish schools, there are institutions with separate principals for Judaic and secular studies. The intent was to include only those who are responsible either for the entire curriculum or just Judaic studies. Inevitably, some respondents were solely in charge of secular studies. More than 70% of the principals reported that they are responsible for the entire educational program. Fifteen percent said that they are in charge of Judaic studies and nearly an equal number said that they serve as principal for secular studies.

[5] The identification of schools as Modern or Centrist Orthodox adheres to the formulation in my 1998 and 2003 Day School Censuses. Interestingly, in response to the question, "which category describes the school that you are now in," 43 principals, or about 12%, identified their school as Yeshiva-world.

[6] This brief discussion of Chassidic and Yeshiva-world schools is not intended as criticism of these institutions. The point is that they operate differently from the schools included in the survey and that is the reason why they were not included. There are clear indications that the distinctive leadership arrangement in these schools, including their entrepreneurial nature, often results in greater stability and other benefits, including in the ability to generate charitable contributions.

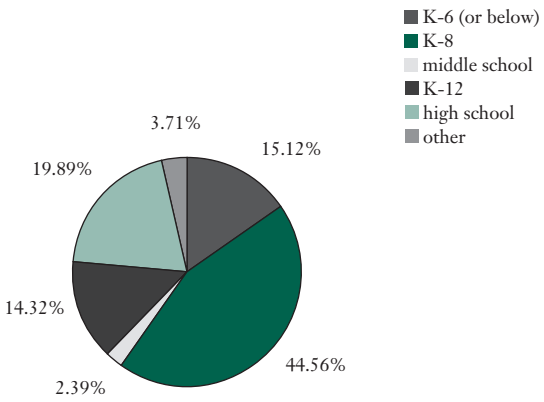
it as Centrist Orthodox. Also, a small number responded that their schools are affiliated with Chabad, a response that likely will become a more familiar refrain as Chabad personnel become more dominant figures in nominally non-Chabad communal institutions.

Principals at the nearly twenty Reform or Pardes day schools were sent the survey, yet there was only one response indicating service at a Reform institution. This is puzzling. At the same time, the response rates for Community or trans-denominational and Solomon Schechter schools are remarkably high. There are now a bit more than sixty Solomon Schechter schools in the United States, yet more than 90 principals said that they are at these institutions. Much of the explanation for this disparity may lie in the administrative set-up of non-Orthodox schools, particularly those that are larger or have separate divisions or branches. In these schools, two or more principals are par for the course.[7] Another explanatory factor may be the blurring of identity lines between the Community and Solomon Schechter day school sectors.[8]

All told, 57.5% and 42.5% of the principals are in non-Orthodox and Orthodox schools respectively.

Grade level is another way to look at schools. As indicated in the following figure, the largest number of principals are by far in K-8 schools, reflecting the pattern of U.S. Jewish day school education, most notably in the non-Orthodox sectors, where the Jewish day school experience terminates for a large majority of students no later than after the 8th grade. Still, nearly 20% of the principals serve in high schools and 15% in K-12 schools. To an extent, these statistics reflect the recent expansion of high schools that serve primarily Conservative, Reform and unaffiliated families.

Figure 2: Grade Level of Present School



There is, however, an indication that the large number of principals serving schools that are high schools or have a high school division arises from other considerations. An overwhelming 85% of the respondents say that their institutions were established more than ten years ago. This statistic is surprising in view of the new schools that have been created over the past decade. Only 7% say that their schools were established within the past five years. Another 8% say that their school has been in existence between five and ten years.

Overall, day school enrollment has risen steadily, resulting in more schools and also some larger schools and, of course, more principals. The increase has not been across the board, as perhaps as many as 20% of the schools have experienced enrollment declines in recent years, as demographic shifts, competition from new day schools and the declining religious commitment in many homes have taken a toll. Solomon Schechter and Centrist Orthodox schools have been particularly vulnerable.[9]

[7] In the Solomon Schechter directory, one school is listed as having six persons with the title of principal.

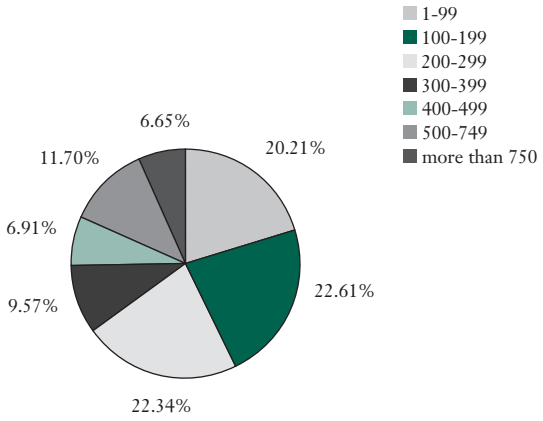
[8] Several Solomon Schechter schools have been transformed into Community schools. The principals may still identify them as Solomon Schechter.

[9] The data is included in the two Censuses of Jewish Day Schools, 1998 and 2003, sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation

Enrollment decline impacts on principals because in some situations they are held responsible for the bad news and/or lay officers believe that a new person at the top may result in a reversal of fortune. Even without this factor, the loss of students has financial consequences that may affect the willingness of the principal to stay on or the ability of the school to pay what the incumbent is asking for.

The respondents provided this enrollment profile for their schools:

Figure 3: School Enrollment

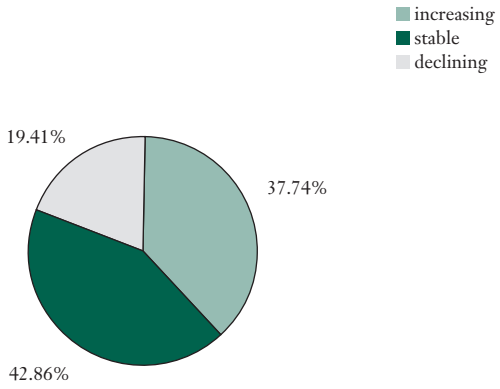


These figures vary somewhat from the data derived in the 2003 census of all day schools conducted by this writer. While 25% of the principals in this survey report that their schools now enroll fewer than one-hundred students, the census figure for schools of this size was nearly 40%. Much of the disparity results from the exclusion from this survey of Chabad and special education schools, most of which are very small, as well as the exclusion of Yeshiva-world institutions, a sector that has an abundance of small mesivtas or boys high schools.

There is substantial congruence between the survey and census regarding the next enrollment category, consisting of schools with 100-199 students. As school size increases, there is once more some disparity between the two research findings, an expected outcome in view of the relatively small number of survey participants who say that they are at small schools.

When asked whether enrollment at their schools is stable, declining or increasing, here is what the principals reported:

Figure 4: Enrollment Pattern



That about 20% say enrollment is declining confirms what the census found. The statistic serves as a signal that not everything is coming up roses in the world of Jewish day schools. Yet, nearly twice the number of respondents report enrollment increases in their schools.

One-quarter of the principals serve schools in New York State. The others are spread across the country, with 20% in the Northeast (excluding New York and New Jersey), another 20% are in the South and Southwest, 14% are in the Midwest and another 14% are in the Far West.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Historically, by a large margin, Jewish day school principals have been men, in line with the general societal tendency to place men in positions of authority and, probably more critically, the Orthodox domination of day school education and the corollary

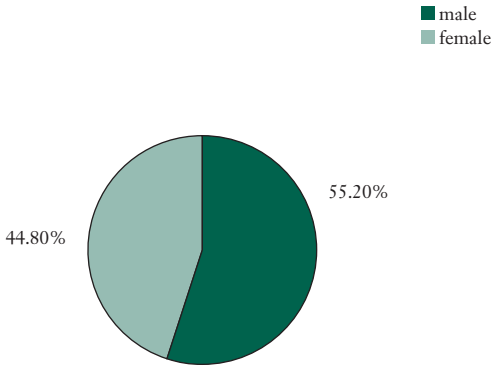
domination of men in Orthodox leadership positions. While, of course, women have played key roles in Orthodox schools or divisions of schools that educate only female students, even in this select area, as often as not, the principals are men. The expectation or preference in Orthodox schools that the top educational official have rabbinical ordination clearly limits the prospect for women educators.

There has been a pronounced shift toward selecting women as day school principals, reflecting the changed role of women in American society, as well as the expanding acceptance of leadership roles for women in Jewish communal life. This development is obviously most pronounced among Conservative, Reform and secular Jews. The trend has also been fed by a shortage of suitable male candidates for principalships.

Figure 5 provides a distribution of principalships according to gender. Because there is no previous research on the subject, it is not possible to know how much the present data diverges from the past. That 45% of the respondents are women is an impressive figure. In all likelihood, it represents a meaningful change over the gender profile of a generation and less ago and it is also the forerunner of women holding a majority of the principalships in these sectors of day school education in less than a generation hence.

The "Head of School" title is generally regarded as more prestigious and encompassing in responsibilities than "Principal." There is the expectation of some in the field that the former title is more likely to be held by men. In fact, gender distribution is nearly identical. Among the men included in the survey, 30% are heads of school, while the comparable figure for women is 31%.

Figure 5: Gender



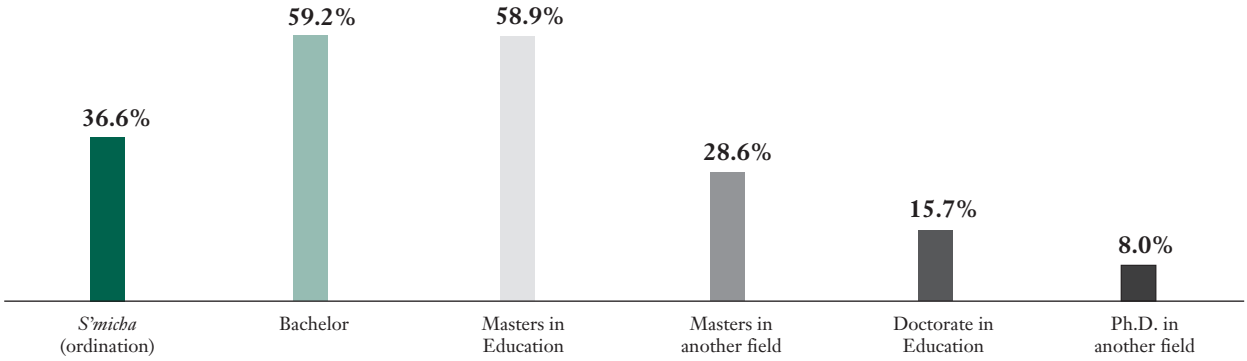
Nearly 60% of the men who are principals serve in Orthodox schools, while among the women, nearly 80% are in non-Orthodox schools. Another way to look at the data is the gender distribution by type of school. In Orthodox institutions, more than three-fourths of the principals are men. Likely, the women serve mainly in all-girls schools or in the girls divisions of Orthodox schools that have separate boys/girls divisions.[10] In non-Orthodox schools, the pattern is reversed, with 60% of the principals being women.[11]

Gender is related to an extent to educational background. The principals were asked to indicate each higher education degree they had attained. The results are included in *Figure 6* (page 12) which shows that more than one in three received *s'micha* or rabbinical ordination. A handful of these respondents are women who were ordained at a non-Orthodox seminary. Overwhelmingly, they are Orthodox-ordained men and the large number points to the importance attached to ordination by many Orthodox day schools.

[10] If all Orthodox schools were included in the survey, the male dominance in Orthodox school principalships would obviously be far more pronounced.

[11] One principal commented, "Women are at a severe disadvantage out of New York. Time and time again, men will be appointed head of school with less education and experience. Why no question on this? It's a huge issue out of New York." Doubtlessly, men have been preferred for principalships. As the data makes clear, this has changed enormously. I imagine that contrary to the comment, women have an easier time becoming principal away from New York than in the New York area.

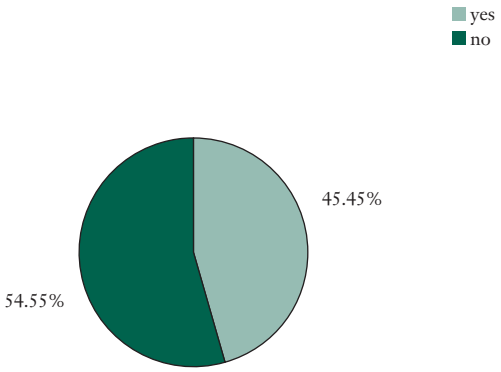
Figure 6: Education Level



There are day schools, notably those included in this survey, that will not consider candidates for principal whose resume does not include a Masters degree. This factor doubtlessly accounts to a large extent for the nearly 60% who have achieved a Masters in Education, with nearly 30% attaining a Masters degree in some other field. It is impressive, as well, that nearly one in four principals has earned a doctorate.[12]

In addition to formal higher education, day school principals now have an array of training programs designed to enhance their skills. These short-term and generally philanthropically-funded activities are for obvious reasons usually scheduled in the summer. As *Figure* 7 shows, 45% of the principals indicate participation in one or more of these programs,

Figure 7: Training Program



a surprisingly high figure in view of the relatively recent vintage of these initiatives and also in view of their selective nature. As we will see, a great number of the principals are new or relatively new to the job and this may help to account for the high rate of participation in training programs. We will also see whether principals regard these training experiences as having contributed significantly to their career preparation.[13]

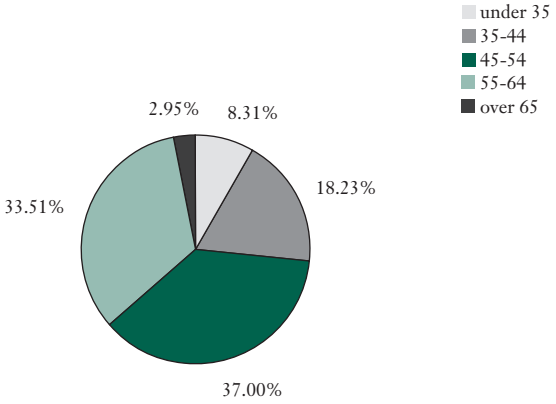
Although there has been a steady flow of Israeli educators to these shores, some for short stays and others as permanent residents, overwhelmingly U.S. day school principals are native born. Only one in twelve was born in Israel, while more than 80% were born in this country. A small number have come from other countries.

[12] In all likelihood, certain of the statistics included in this table are too low. There are principals who indicated that they have a doctorate, who did not check off any lower level of education, although it is a good bet that nearly all earned a bachelors degree of one kind or another. In fact, at many yeshivas, *s'micha* or ordination is generally regarded as equivalent to a bachelors degree.

[13] Harvard's Principals Institute has the largest number of participants, pursuant to an arrangement with The AVI CHAI Foundation. Nearly one-third of the principals who were enrolled in a training program went to Harvard. Some principals who said that they have participated in a training program included formal higher education programs at schools like Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University and Teachers College of Columbia University.

Most principals have risen through the ranks, having started out as classroom teachers. Many then went on to middle and upper level educational administrative positions before becoming a principal. This suggests that, as a group, our respondents should be into middle age or older. This expectation is supported by the age distribution provided in *Figure 8* which shows that 70% of the respondents are between 45 and 64, with the somewhat larger cohort being between 45 and 54. Only about one in four is younger than 45. Surprisingly, I think, a tiny number are 65 or older.

Figure 8: Age



Apparently, like employees in other fields and certainly those in public education, day school principals look toward retirement, many before the conventional retirement age of 65.[14] Few plan to die with their boots on. It is probably also the case that lay leaders may prefer relatively younger and usually more vigorous persons at the top.[15]

While principals were not asked whether they are married, they were asked, "If married, is your spouse employed as a Jewish educator?" Five percent indicated that the question is not applicable, meaning that they were not married at the time of the survey. Nearly 70% answered that their spouses are not Jewish educators. A bit more than one-quarter said that their spouses are employed in Jewish education.

It is to be expected that the wives of men who are in Jewish education are more likely to be Jewish educators than the husbands of women educators. We do not know what proportion of the husbands/wives who are not Jewish educators are employed in other fields or are not working. Nor do we know whether the husband or wife who is in Jewish education earns more or less than his/her spouse who is in another field.

BECOMING A PRINCIPAL

Whatever their initial reasons for going into Jewish education, for those who became principals, day school education turned into a career spanning many years and various school responsibilities. Doubtlessly, some and perhaps most did not think that it would turn out that way, as they originally regarded their teaching as a transient activity while they continued their formal education or were trying to figure out what career they would pursue. The dual curriculum character of day schools affords multiple opportunities for part-time teaching and flexible scheduling and facilitates what may be termed a limited commitment to teaching.

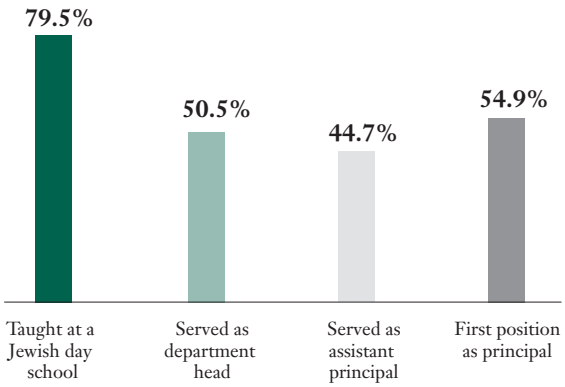
Unlike many of their colleagues during their early day school years, those who became principals stayed on and this became their career and life-work. The career path of day school principals is captured in *Figure 9*.

[14] My hunch is that here, too, the principals included in this survey are in the aggregate, different from Yeshiva-world and Chassidic principals, for there is a greater tendency in the latter schools to continue beyond the age of 65.

It is also my impression that what is happening in the day school world parallels what is happening among pulpit rabbis. Retirement is now occurring at a younger age than in previous periods.

[15] Because the head of school designation is generally regarded as more encompassing in authority and responsibility, it may be expected that older principals who presumably have greater experience in running a day school are more likely to have this title. This supposition is supported, at least to an extent. Among the respondents, those in the youngest age group – under 35 – fewer than 10% are heads of school. The figure jumps to more than one in four in the 35-44 age cohort and then to nearly one in three for those who are 45-54.

Figure 9: History of Service



Eighty percent have taught at a day school, a powerful confirmation that teaching is the opening stage of the career path toward a principalship. It should not be surprising that one out of five respondents did not teach at a Jewish school, since some came from outside of the Jewish day school world, while others went directly to the top.[16]

Figure 10 gives a more precise indication of what the classroom experience entailed. The greatest number of principals were in the classroom five or fewer years, quickly moving to an administrative track, although many continued to teach even as they served as administrators. Nearly as many taught between ten and 15 years. At the other end of the spectrum, there are a small number who have taught for nearly all of their day school careers — 25 or more years. Their service as principal may have been thrust on them by the school's lay officials who could not find or afford a suitable candidate from the outside.

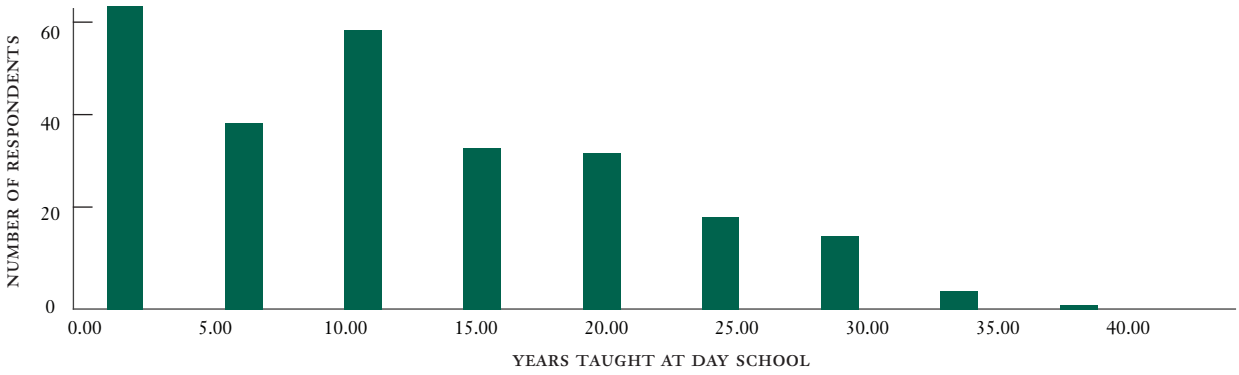
For those who taught, the mean or average number of years in the classroom was 12.6, with the median being 11 years. In the aggregate, currently serving day school principals have had considerable classroom experience.[17] Whether this background has affected their outlook or policies as principal is a question that cannot be answered fully, although we will see that a great number of principals say that this experience helped to prepare them to be principals.

Half of the respondents once served as department heads, a statistic that strikes me as high because the small school size of most day schools and the attendant financial constraints, as well as the limited Judaic offerings in non-Orthodox schools, should translate into administrative arrangements that do not include department heads. However, it is likely that with the possible exception of large day schools, department heads continue to carry a teaching load. For those who were department heads, the period of service was typically brief, two years or fewer for the largest number. Relatively few were department heads for more than six years. The mean or average number of years is 7.1, while the median point is five years.

[16] There are ordained rabbis, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, who have gone directly from rabbinical seminary into Jewish education careers, some starting as principals.

[17] We will see that a considerable number of principals continue to teach. Likely, this teaching is included in the data provided in Figure 10 for the number of years in the classroom.

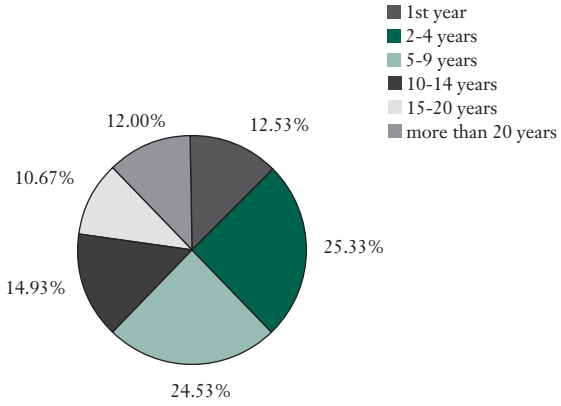
Figure 10: Years Taught at Day School



Being an assistant principal may be regarded as the logical career step before attainment of the top position. It turns out that fewer than half of the principals or 45% served in this capacity. Of these, the largest number were assistant principals for four years or fewer and not many for more than eight years. The mean or average is five years, with the median point being four years.

Obviously, the career stops that preceded becoming principal need not have occurred at their present school. The principals were asked, "how many years have you been at your present school?" The following pie chart provides the responses.

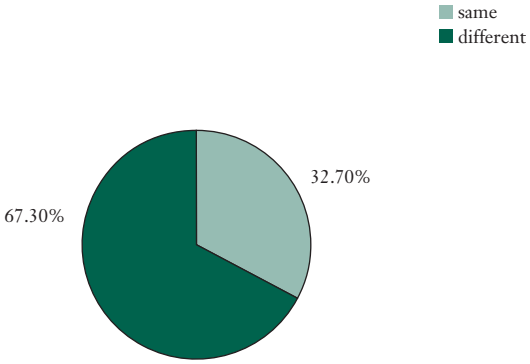
Figure 11: Years at Present School



It turns out that nearly two-thirds of the principals have been at their current school for fewer than ten years, with one-quarter being there for four years or less. For one in eight, this was their first year at the school. About an equal number are long-timers at the same institution, their total years of service as principal and any other positions they may have held extending over 20 or more years. For about 10%, the figure is between ten and 20 years.

When considered in light of what we know about their prior classroom and administrative experience, these figures suggest that a significant proportion of the respondents came to their current position from another school. This is confirmed by the statistics conveyed in the following pie chart that shows that only one-third of the principals were recruited from within the ranks of the school they had been at. The principals were asked, "Before you accepted your present position, were you at the same school or elsewhere?"

Figure 12: Same/Different School



Although the one-third figure may seem low, it should not be surprising that so many principals have come from other schools because in professional life career advancement is often predicated on job mobility. Also, an assistant principal aspiring for promotion may find advancement blocked by the incumbent principal who isn't going anywhere and therefore looks elsewhere for the fulfillment of his or her career aspirations.

Another factor contributing to the high number of principals who were recruited from the outside is the tendency of lay officers who are responsible for selecting the principal to seek candidates from outside their institutions.

When asked whether this is their first position as principal, a majority (55%) responded affirmatively, a remarkable statistic that provides justification for the training programs mentioned earlier that have proliferated in recent years, as well as for mentoring arrangements. It also adds to what may be termed the emerging profile of Jewish day schools as being in a state of expansion and development. Yet, the data

contradicts the impression that there is great movement in the principals' ranks, with many who have the title, being well-traveled from one school to another. It turns out, that of the minority (45%) of respondents who served in this capacity elsewhere, half report that they had been principal at but one other day school.[18]

The principals were asked, "if you were previously at another Jewish day school, why did you leave your former position?" Six possible explanations, not mutually exclusive, were offered: 1) higher position, 2) higher salary, 3) more prestigious school, 4) better geographic location, 5) "I was let go" and 6) It was time for a career change.[19]

[18] The indication is that first-time principals are marginally more likely to have that as their title rather than to be designated as head of school.

[19] While the responses reported in the text reveal much about the factors that account for principals moving from one position to another, upon reflection I have concluded that the question that was responded to was not properly phrased. My intention was to inquire why principals who came to their present position left their former school, irrespective of whether they had served there as a principal. Doubtlessly, there were respondents – I believe a significant majority – who viewed the question in these terms. I also believe that there are principals who interpreted the question as inquiring about a move to their present position from a former principalship. Nonetheless, the responses reported in the text are revealing.

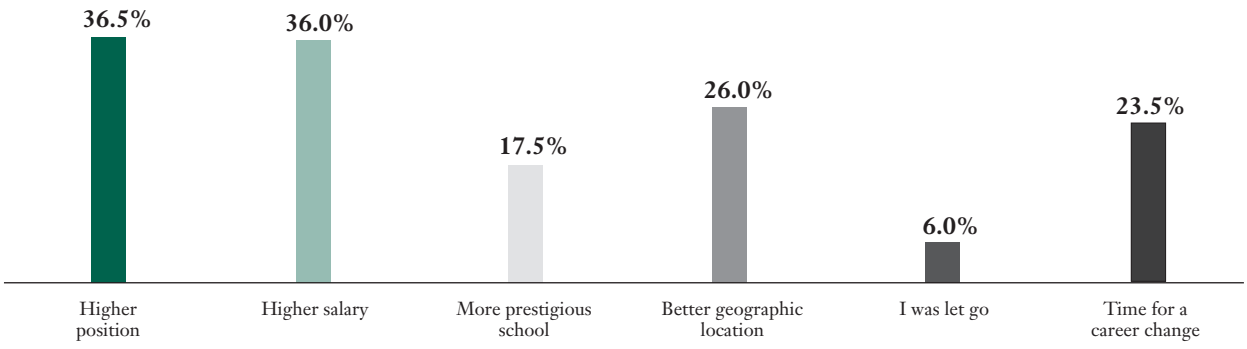
Principals were able to indicate more than one explanatory factor. More than one-third offered a higher position as the reason for their career move and a similar number gave higher salary as their reason. Since career movement is often tied to salary enhancement, that only about one-third offered this explanation may be surprising.

About one-quarter of the principals said that they changed their position because of the better geographic location of their present school and nearly the same number said that it was "time for a career change." One in six gave a "more prestigious school" as the reason for their move.

Only 6% – or 23 principals – acknowledged that they changed jobs because "I was fired." This seems surprising in view of all of the anecdotal reports of principals being let go. As someone involved in day schools who looked at the data said, "I personally know of many principals who were fired."

One way to look at this low number is to conclude that there are principals who are in denial regarding what transpired in their careers. Denial creates an emotional comfort zone for persons who have experienced rejection or disappointment. Still, there may be another explanation, which is that their experience may have been more nuanced or

Figure 13: Why Did You Leave Former Position?



ambiguous than their simply being fired. Principals are usually under contract for a fixed number of years. It is possible that for some whose contracts were not renewed, what happened is that the board and the incumbent reached an understanding that it was time to move on. The principal interpreted this not as a one-sided firing but as a mutual decision that the time had come for a career change. This factor was cited by one in eight principals as the reason why they left their previous school. The shortage of candidates for principalships furthers this interpretation because invariably there is a new job to be had around the corner.

Apart from their own career moves, the survey sought to ascertain whether principals now sense that there is greater movement from one school to another than previously. About an equal number responded that there was more movement as responded that there was no appreciable change. It may be telling that nearly half of the principals believe that nowadays there is more movement.

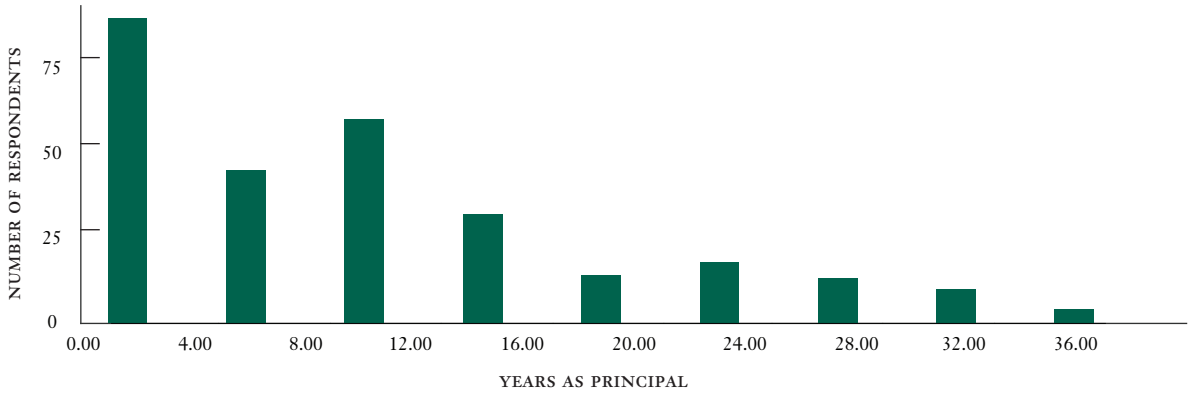
The following figure shows total years of service as principal for all respondents, the largest number by a comfortable margin, having served as principal at one or more schools for four or fewer years. This statistic is, in a sense, a corollary to the previously noted finding that for a majority, this is their first job as principal. At the other end of the service spectrum, a fairly large number of principals have been on the job 15 or more years, with a handful being in the saddle for 25 or more years. For all principals, the mean or average number of years of service is 11.5, with ten years being the median point.

For all of their education and prior day school experience, do the principals feel that they were adequately prepared when they first attained that position? Nearly two-thirds said that they were well-prepared and a bit fewer than one-third said they were not. For whatever it is worth, gender was not a factor in the responses to this question, as 66% of the men and 65% of the women said that they were adequately prepared.

The interpretation of their responses depends largely on whether greater emphasis is placed on the two-thirds of the cup that is full, representing the principals who say that they were adequately prepared, or on the one-third that isn't. In view of their background and aspirations, we might expect a high degree of preparedness, so that one-third saying that their past activity was not sufficient should be regarded as significant.

It is common in other professions to hear that specialized education geared to prepare practitioners for their careers they are embarking on is not

Figure 14: Years as Principal



regarded as sufficient. Lawyers often say that, for all of the top-flight classroom education they received, what was important for their career development was what they learned in the early years on the job. Perhaps the principals who say that they were not adequately prepared are not criticizing the preparation they received, but saying that no prior experiences can sufficiently prepare an educator for the multiple challenges that he/she faces in running a school.

However, with exceptions, principals have been in schools and classrooms for a considerable number of years before they reach the top. They are no longer youngsters, people in their twenties, as most starting lawyers and medical doctors are, or even in their thirties. They should have experienced much of the learning curve by the time they became principals, even as they continue to learn in their new position. Yet, one-third of the principals reported otherwise.

For those who say they were prepared, *Figure 15* provides a profile of what they believe contributed to their preparedness. They were able to select as many prior experiences as they regard as relevant.

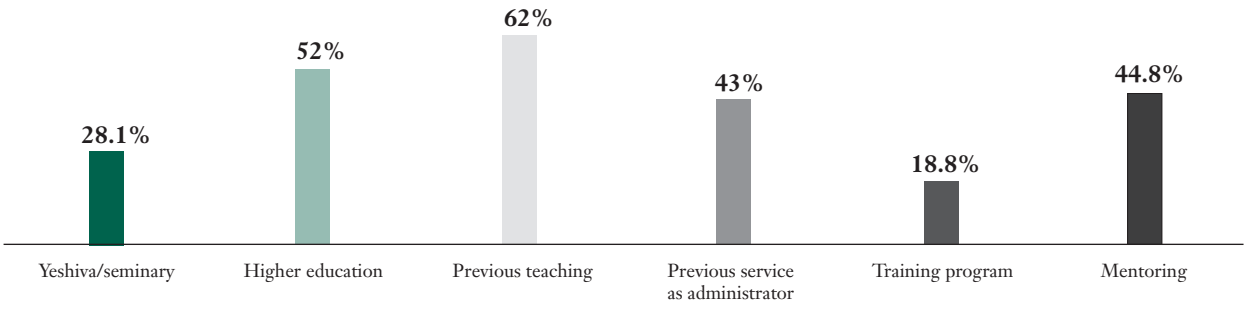
[20] A considerable number of day school principals continue to teach.

The largest number by far indicate previous teaching as the crucial preparatory factor, a result that takes on added weight because, as we have seen, one principal in five has never taught at a Jewish school, so that more than three-quarters of those who have taught, identify this experience as an important preparatory factor. Classroom experience allows future principals to have a practical and not merely theoretical understanding of what the classroom is like. It also affords greater appreciation of the full range of encounters with parents and all others who comprise the daily life of a school. Teaching presumably imbues future principals with empathy for those who teach.[20]

In suggestions appended to their responses, a number of principals wrote that to be an effective principal, it is a good idea to continue to teach. As one respondent put it, "great teachers make great principals. Stay in the classroom as much as possible."

Although fewer than half of the principals said that prior administrative experience helped prepare them, this statistic should not be regarded as low because a substantial number of principals never served in lower administrative positions. It stands to reason, that being an assistant principal or department head helped prepare the way toward more effective tenure as a principal. This point was underscored in various comments appended to the completed questionnaires.

Figure 15: Influences on Preparedness



For all of the recent emphasis on training programs, not as many as one in five credit this activity as helping to prepare them. The low figure is probably attributable to the large number of principals – more than half — who have never participated in a training program. Another possible explanation arises from the wording of the question which focuses on preparedness at the time that the respondent became a principal. Probably a majority of those who have been enrolled in specialized training programs have had several years or more of principalship under their belt.

What about formal higher education? More than half credited it as an effective preparatory experience. I imagine that they are referring, in the main, to the graduate education and advanced degrees that they received. Yeshiva and seminary education, however, is ranked as less important, with only slightly more than one-quarter saying that this experience helped them when they became principal. It is relevant that only a relatively small proportion of the principals have received *s'micha* or ordination. Furthermore, the primary thrust of yeshivas and seminaries, to the extent that they prepare students for careers in education, is the classroom experience.

The respondents lend support to the advocates of mentoring activities that link new principals with veteran or retired principals who serve as mentors. Since it is certain that many of the principals were never mentored — and certainly not before they became principal — it is meaningful that nearly half credit mentoring as a vital preparatory experience. It should be noted that the survey does not distinguish between formal mentoring arrangements through organized programs and informal mentoring relationships in which new principals seek the guidance of those who have had much experience.

Additional support for the efficacy of mentoring comes from the supplementary comments offered in response to the question, "How better to prepare principals?" Of the 220 principals who offered suggestions, by far the largest number — more than half — underscored the importance of mentoring, most making it their sole recommendation. It is striking to read these comments and see how often the concept is advocated. As one respondent put it, "formalize a mentoring program within the context of the local school." Another principal wrote, "my experience has been that mentoring — formal and informal, on-site and off-site — is the best training." A final example, "every new head of school needs an experienced successful former head of school as an executive coach."

A strong case can be made for greater communal and philanthropic investment in mentoring arrangements that become part of the fabric of American Jewish education.

What comes across in these comments is the feeling of principals who are new or relatively new to the job, that they need help, that their previous education and school experiences did not adequately prepare them. Since, as has been demonstrated, a large proportion of day school principalships are held by educators who are relatively new to the large challenges they now face, a strong case can be made for greater communal and philanthropic investment in mentoring arrangements that become part of the fabric of American Jewish education.

Like other educational reforms, the mentoring concept is high on appeal but not easy to implement because of the high cost and formidable administrative and logistical barriers. Like all educational reforms, the results are certain to be mixed because, every inch

of the way, it is critical for those who are involved in either side of the mentoring arrangement to be on the same wavelength and to have the determination and the time to make mentoring work. This is easier said than done. Different approaches need to be explored, including the use of the Internet to link veteran and newer principals.[21]

BEING A PRINCIPAL

Much of the ground covered thus far provides information about the world of day school principals and the schools they serve, including their size and enrollment trends, grade level and denominational affiliation. What about the principal's work and relationship with the school that he or she serves?

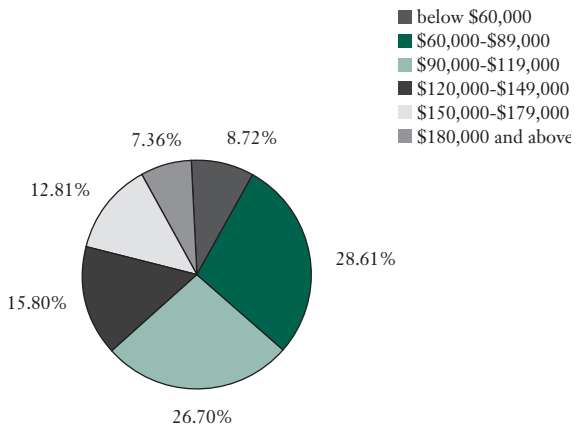
As in all professions, salary is a key part of this relationship. For all of their dedication to Jewish education, being principal is a job — a way of making a livelihood — and altruism is scarcely a barrier to these job-holders seeking the best deal for themselves. Anyone who has served on a day school board will confirm that salary is a critical part of a principal's relationship with the school. It is evident that with few exceptions, classroom teachers employed by day schools are badly underpaid. They earn far below what public school teachers earn in the same communities and this is not taking into account the huge differential in fringe and other benefits. The attitude seems to be that very low pay is the fate of those who teach our children and because of the fragile financial structure of most day schools, there is little that can be done about this.

Principals are a different story. Their salaries have risen considerably over the past two decades, reflecting the consensus in day school circles that the principal is the one essential person and every effort must be made to engage the best possible candidate. The obvious shortage of candidates who have the necessary credentials and qualities to lead a school has resulted in salaries being driven up. Although many principals are still low paid, in the aggregate, salaries are quite decent.

In examining the salary picture, it is important to keep in mind the small size of most day schools. If a day school has one-hundred or fewer students and the principal is paid $100,000, exclusive of benefits, at least $1,000 of each student's tuition goes toward paying the principal's salary.[22] This isn't a justification for holding down what is paid to principals, but it indicates that what is now being paid to good and at times not too good day school principals is a powerful factor in the financial structure and viability of these institutions.

Figure 16 gives a breakdown of salaries, exclusive of fringe benefits. The data was provided, of course, by the respondents who were promised confidentiality and there is no reason to question the accuracy of their self-reporting.

Figure 16: Salary



[21] Chabad may provide some guidance. Its *shluchim* network relies heavily on an internal website that is available only to *shlichim* and serves as a mechanism for the exchange of ideas and for giving guidance in response to questions posed by *shlichim* around the world.

[22] Day school principal contracts typically include more than the customary fringe benefits for health coverage and pension. The school may also be committed to provide a travel allowance, tuition for children, participation in professional conferences, membership payments and much more. The high cost of maintaining a principal can result in friction, as school officers and board members fret over whether they are getting their money's worth.

Mention should be made of parsonage allowances that allow at least the principals who are ordained to achieve significant tax savings.

It is astonishing that there are principals who earn below $60,000. I wonder whether some are part-timers. It may also be regarded as surprising that one-quarter of all principals earn below $90,000 and that this constitutes the largest group. It should be kept in mind that nearly 40% of all day schools enroll fewer than 100 students. Nearly as many are paid between $90,000 and $120,000, a salary that is comparable to what public school principals are paid in many, perhaps most, parts of the country. The highest three salary categories encompass more than one-third of all principals who are reasonably well-paid for their work. Although there is no comparable data for previous periods, the statistics support the impression that in the recent period there has been a marked increase in the salaries paid to day school principals.

Gender is a powerful factor in salary determinations, with women principals being paid significantly below what men earn. The following tables illustrate the point. In their first year of service at their current school, no men earned below $60,000, while 10% of the women did. At the other end of the pay scale, there were men who earned above $180,000 in their first year, but no women. Ten percent of first-year women are in the three highest salary categories of $120,000 or above. The comparable statistic for men is nearly 40%. For principals who have served between 5-10 years at their present school, one-quarter of the women were paid above $120,000, while for men the figure is close to 60%. A statistical analysis of the data demonstrates that there is a significant gender difference at $p < .05$ level. There can be no question that gender is a major factor in what principals are paid.

Table 1: Salary and Gender (in percentages)

	<$60,000	**$60,000-$89,000**	**$90,000-$119,000**	**$120,000-$149,000**	**$150,000-$179,000**	**$180,000 and above**
Men	6.0	23.5	21.0	21.0	17.5	11.0
Women	12.1	34.5	33.3	9.7	7.3	3.0
Total (for all respondents)	**8.7**	**28.6**	**26.7**	**15.8**	**12.8**	**7.4**

Table 2: Salary and Years of Service as Principal (in percentages)

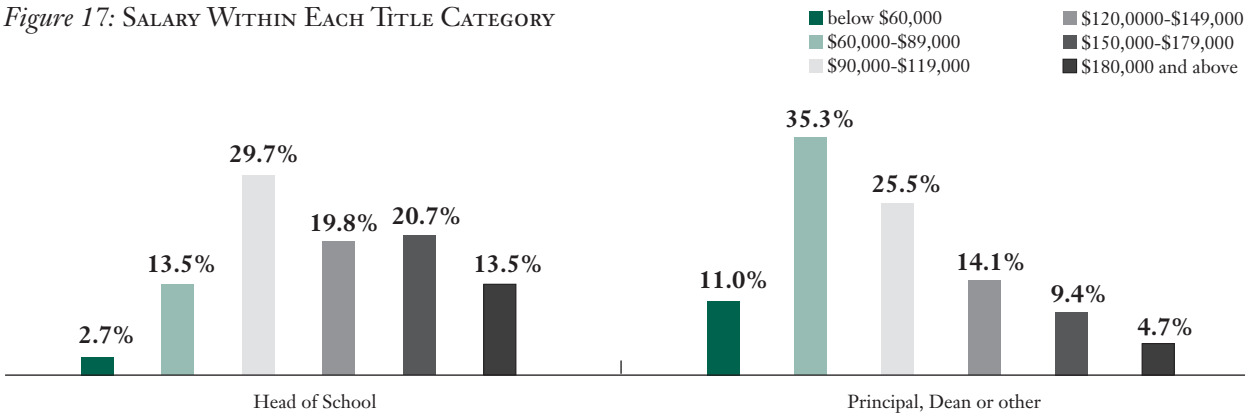
	<$60,000	**$60,000-$89,000**	**$90,000-$119,000**	**$120,000-$149,000**	**$150,000-$179,000**	**$180,000 and above**
1st year	4.3	43.5	26.1	13.0	10.9	2.2
2-4 yrs	12.8	18.1	30.9	21.3	12.8	4.3
5-9 yrs	6.7	18.0	30.3	20.2	16.9	7.9
10-14 yrs	13.0	27.8	16.7	11.1	14.8	16.7
15-20 yrs	5.4	43.2	27.0	5.4	8.1	10.8
>20 yrs	4.7	44.2	23.3	14.0	9.3	4.7

Table 3: Salary, Years in Current School and Gender (in percentages)[23]

	<$60,000	**$60,000-$89,000**	**$90,000-$119,000**	**$120,000-$149,000**	**$150,000-$179,000**	**$180,000 and above**
			Men			
1st year	0	42.3	19.2	19.2	15.4	3.8
2-4 yrs	12.5	17.9	23.2	25.0	16.1	5.4
5-9 yrs	5.3	14.0	24.6	24.6	22.8	8.6
10-14 yrs	6.7	20.0	16.7	13.3	16.7	26.7
15-20 yrs	0	53.3	13.3	0	13.3	20.0
>20 yrs	0	20.0	20.0	33.3	13.3	13.3
			Women			
1st year	10.0	45.0	35.0	5.0	5.0	0
2-4 yrs	13.2	18.4	42.1	15.8	7.9	2.6
5-9 yrs	9.4	25.0	40.6	12.5	6.3	6.3
10-14 yrs	20.8	37.5	16.7	8.3	12.5	4.2
15-20 yrs	9.5	38.1	38.1	4.8	4.8	4.8
>20 yrs	7.1	57.1	25.0	3.6	7.1	0

[23] This table reflects the total years of service at their present school, whether only as principal or previously in other positions at the same school.

Figure 17: Salary Within Each Title Category



It is not a primary goal of this research to provide principals or perspective principals or school officers and board members a detailed roadmap of the salaries being paid these days to day school principals. However, in the feedback to the preliminary draft of this report it became clear that because salaries are a vital issue in the life of the typical day school, those on either side of the bargaining table want detailed data. One issue they have raised is the possible difference between what is paid to those with the "head of school" or some similar title and what is paid to those whose title is "principal." The above figure provides strong evidence that there is a significant difference.

There are six salary categories, the lower three ranging from $60,000 to $120,000 and the higher three from $120,000 to $180,000 and above. For heads of school, 46% were in the lower range, while for principals the comparable figure is 72%. More than one-third of heads of schools earn above $150,000, while for principals, the figure is 14%.

As noted, the principal's salary can be a big chunk of a day school's budget, particularly for the smaller schools. Larger schools are far better equipped to meet the salary expectations of prospective candidates, especially in the recent period when market realities and other factors have resulted in a substantial escalation of what principals ask for and what they are being paid. The following tables convey salary data in terms of school enrollment. What leaps off the page is the extent to which enrollment is a determinant.

Of the principals earning below $60,000, more than half are in schools with enrollments below 100 while no principal in these schools was paid as much as $180,000 and only 4% were in the $150,000-180,000 category. On the other side of the enrollment picture, not a single principal paid below $60,000 is in a school with 400 or more students and, more tellingly, but a third of the principals in these larger schools earned below $120,000. I leave further analysis of these two tables to the professionals and lay people who have a heightened interest in the subject.

One additional point: because low-enrollment schools invariably pay low salaries and as salaries at the other end of the pay scale continue to go up, there is inevitably a powerful and usually irresistible inclination on the part of principals in the smaller

Table 4: Salary Range Within Each Enrollment Category

Enrollment	Below $60,000	$60,000-$89,000	$90,000-$119,000	$120,000-$149,000	$150,000-$179,000	$180,000 and above
1-99	23.0%	44.6%	17.6%	12.2%	2.7%	0%
100-199	9.4	31.8	38.3	9.4	8.2	2.4
200-299	4.8	25.3	28.9	26.5	10.8	3.6
300-399	8.6	22.9	28.6	17.1	11.4	11.4
400-499	0	16.7	20.8	8.3	45.8	8.3
500-749	0	16.3	20.9	16.2	20.9	25.6
750 or more	0	18.2	18.2	18.2	22.7	22.7

Table 5: Enrollment Category Within Each Salary Range

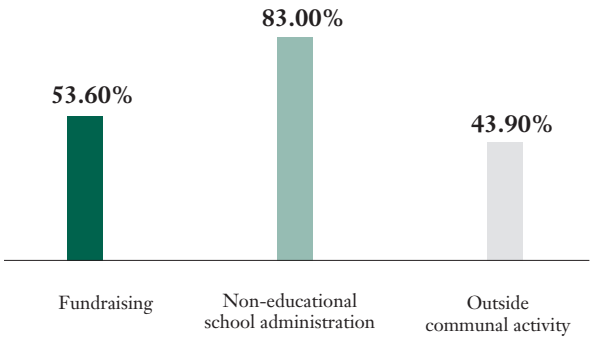
Enrollment	Below $60,000	$60,000-$89,000	$90,000-$119,000	$120,000-$149,000	$150,000-$179,000	$180,000 and above
1-99	53.1%	31.7%	13.3%	15.5%	4.3%	0%
100-199	25.0	26.0	33.7	13.8	14.9	7.4
200-299	12.5	20.2	24.5	38.0	19.1	11.1
300-399	9.4	7.7	10.2	10.3	8.5	14.8
400-499	0	3.8	5.1	3.4	23.4	7.4
500-749	0	6.7	9.2	12.1	19.1	40.7
750 or more	0	3.8	4.1	6.9	10.6	18.5

schools to move quickly to larger and greener pastures. As a consequence, small schools are subject to frequent changes at the top, a condition that must reduce their attractiveness to prospective parents.

Principals are, of course, hired for their presumed skills as educational leaders, for their ability to manage a dual curriculum institution. The small size of a great majority of day schools, as well as their communal role and fundraising needs, may impel them to rely on the principal for additional tasks. One survey question asked whether the principals are engaged in any of these three additional activities: 1) school-related communal activity, 2) non-educational school administration and 3) fundraising.

The following figure provides their responses. Clearly, faculty supervision, curriculum management, involvement with parents and other core educational responsibilities are not all that day school principals do. Eighty percent are also engaged in general school administration, which can include responsibility for facility maintenance, office management and much else. It is not uncommon for the principal to be, in effect, the de facto executive director, at times even when there is an executive director on the premises.[24] Of the principals who have additional in-school responsibilities, 55% indicate that this is a primary responsibility, not merely an incidental or secondary aspect of their job.

Figure 18: Additional Responsibilities



Considerably fewer but still more than half are involved in fundraising, perhaps because if they were not involved there would be no one else who focuses on this vital activity. Unlike Yeshiva-world and Chassidic schools where tuition is relatively low and scholarship assistance is relatively bountiful, in the day school sectors included in this survey, tuition can cover as much as 90% or more of the operating budget. My hunch is that the principals who are engaged in fundraising, do so only on an occasional basis. It is indicative that only one in five who responded that they are engaged in fundraising say that this is a primary responsibility.

About 45% of the respondents are engaged in school-related outside communal activity, such as involvement in federation or the local Jewish education agency. It is likely that in most instances this responsibility is not too time-consuming, yet it adds to the burden on persons who have a good deal already on their plate.

Once more in line with the expectation that heads of school are likely to have broader responsibilities than those designated as principal, 90% of the respondents

[24] In my experience, there are principals who insist that their role and authority extend beyond their core educational responsibilities, their feeling being that they cannot ensure that the school will operate properly unless they are totally in control.

with the former title are engaged in fundraising, as compared to 40% of those designated as principal. Furthermore, nearly all heads of school are involved in non-educational school administration and two-thirds are engaged in school-related outside communal activity. The comparable figures for principals are 80% and 40% respectively.

We know that 80% of the principals taught at one point or another in their day school careers. Many also say that their teaching was a vital experience that helped prepare them for their present positions. Do they continue to teach while serving as principal, a job that usually requires a great deal of energy and attention? It is notable that just shy of half say that they do teach, perhaps a remarkably high figure. I wonder whether anything comparable is found at other non-public schools.

We do not know whether their continued teaching arises from their preferring to remain a bit in the classroom or is a responsibility that is mandated under their contract with the school. I imagine, but cannot be certain, that in most instances teaching is discretionary, perhaps because there are principals who believe that this activity enhances their ability to run the school. It may also be true that financial conditions at their school and/or the difficulty to recruit competent teachers for certain subjects contribute to the phenomenon of the integration of teaching into their core work.

As *Figure 19* shows, for many principals who teach, this activity encompasses but a handful of hours per week, generally five hours or fewer. These principals were asked to indicate how many hours they teach each week. A small number carry a full or nearly full teaching load and they raise the mean or average number of hours per week to 6.25, with the median being five hours. Apparently, for most principals who teach, the usual pattern is one subject or course, perhaps extending over one period each day.

Without the additional activities that have been described, there are reasons to believe that a principal's job has become harder. As in other fields, there is an explosion of paperwork, with email and other technological advances fostering a nearly constant flow of communications that require attention and a response. There has also been a steady increase in government-required reports and documents and they take time.

There are reasons to believe that a principal's job has become harder.

The greater involvement of parents in the education of their children also affects the workload. Nowadays, parents often act like big sisters or brothers who are on top of everything that occurs in the schools attended by their children. They are ever-ready to pounce if they feel that their child has been unfairly treated by a teacher or fellow student or in another fashion.

Figure 19: Teaching Hours for Principals

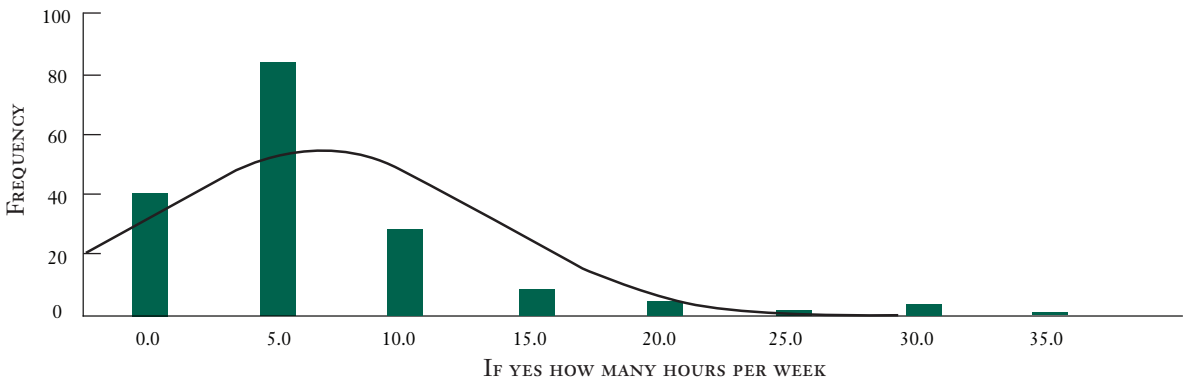


Table 6: Relations with Lay Leaders, Faculty and Parents

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Not too good	Terrible
Lay leaders	65.8%	27.5%	4.4%	0.8%	1.4%
Faculty	69.5	29.4	0.8	0.3	0
Parents	60.4	37.6	1.4	0.3	0.3

Another contributory factor is the growing number of behavioral problems that crop up at school, as many children are beset by emotional or learning disorders, some arising from the heightened societal awareness of behavioral issues and, perhaps more likely, from an excess of social dysfunction, including divorce and family breakdown, drugs and sexual activity among the young. Each behavioral or emotional issue is likely to land on the principal's desk.

The survey asked whether principals perceive the workload as having gotten harder. The question may be problematic since, as noted, the tenure for most of the respondents has been relatively brief. Still, most have been day school educators for all or nearly all of their adult life. They also are in ongoing contact with veteran principals and doubtlessly the workload is a topic that is discussed.

It turns out that 82%, or five of six principals, say that the workload has gotten harder. Only one in six say that it is about the same and only three principals are of the opinion that the job has become easier.

As noted in the opening paragraph of this report, principals interact with all of the constituencies that have a stake in the school, primarily faculty, parents and lay leaders. These interactions comprise much of the job. They are also what makes the life of the principal difficult, at least at times, because where he sits they do not sit and their narrow interests and goals may not be shared by him. The principal alone has an encompassing view of the school as an institution that serves a multiplicity of needs and goals, some of which may be in conflict. Even without conflict, the separate constituencies inevitably have a parochial view of the school, while the principal's view includes or should include the needs of the community that is being served.

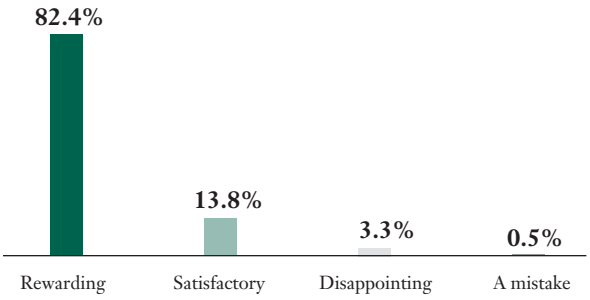
If a principal has job-induced headaches, likely they arise from the following sources: 1) lay leaders who focus invariably on the bottom line and who have the authority to allocate funds, hire and fire principals and decide on much else that is of importance; 2) faculty whose focus understandably is on their bread and butter, as well as on what happens in their classroom; and 3) parents who care mainly about how their children are doing.

We asked the principals to assess their relationship with each of these constituencies, offering for each five possible responses: excellent, good, fair, not too good and terrible. Based on what principals seem to be saying, including in their comments appended to their completed questionnaires, the expectation was for a fairly high degree of unhappiness. What the responses show is anything but, for in the aggregate they describe a nearly blissful state. For each of the three constituencies, the relationship, at least from the principal's perspective, is close to a love-fest, as overwhelmingly we are told that relations are excellent or good, with "excellent" outranking "good" by a wide margin. *Table 6* conveys the degree of good feeling.

In characterizing their relations with lay leaders, fewer than ten of nearly 400 respondents say that they are not good or terrible, while only 16 or 4% responded that relations were only fair. For faculty, an astonishing low number — only four principals or 1% — describe the relationship as fair or not too good and none said that it was terrible. For parents, the three non-positive response categories, including fair, were checked off by a total of seven principals.

The point of a survey is to ask questions and to report what the responses indicate. No analysis can alter the responses, especially when the questions are straightforward and the responses are clear, as is true of the questions regarding relations with lay leaders, faculty and parents. It still is appropriate to note that this set of data smacks of what may loosely be referred to as grade inflation. The principals seem to want to give themselves high marks for maintaining excellent relations with their key constituencies. It is also the case that the responses run counter to what is often heard throughout the world of day school education.

Figure 20: How Would You Characterize Your Experience as Principal?



In view of what the principals have said about their interaction with several constituencies, it is to be expected that when asked to characterize their experiences as principals, we likely would be told that there is a high degree of satisfaction. *Figure 20* provides confirmation, as considerably more than 90% say that their experience as principal has been rewarding or satisfactory, with "rewarding," receiving by far the larger share of the responses. It is amazing that only thirteen principals or 3% say that their experience has been disappointing or a mistake. It is appropriate to point out once more that these data run counter to what is heard in day school circles.[25]

When probed for the reasons why they characterize their experience in such positive terms, this is what the principals said:

The principals were obviously able to select more than one factor. If it matters, "Jewish education is a noble career" was by a considerable margin the least acknowledged factor.

Although good relations with their major school constituencies and career satisfaction cover different experiences and feelings, it is a good assumption that the strongly positive responses of principals regarding their intra-school relationships serve as a cue that when asked about career satisfaction, once more their

[25] There is a good possibility that the inclusion in the question about career satisfaction of the option "rewarding" rather than "very satisfactory" may have resulted in a more favorable response rate. Likely, there are principals who have had serious difficulties on the job yet who feel that their service as principal has been rewarding because they have made a contribution to Jewish education. I hypothesize therefore that had the most favorable response option been "very satisfactory," it would have been selected by fewer than four-fifths of the respondents. Yet, I believe that the overall rate of satisfaction would have been quite high.

Statistics showing a high degree of career satisfaction among principals, whether in day schools or in other educational systems, and also positive feelings about their relations with lay leaders, faculty and parents may not be as surprising as they appear to be when they are compared to what has been reported by professionals in other fields. A useful illustration are survey results of career satisfaction among physicians. As reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association, despite reports of dissatisfaction among practicing physicians and a 22% decline in applications to U.S. medical schools between 1997 and 2001, "recent data suggest that the majority of physicians remained satisfied with their careers…. In a nationally representative telephone survey of physicians from 1997 to 2001, we found that more than 80% of physicians with direct patient care responsibilities were somewhat or very satisfied with their careers." The actual breakdown between "somewhat satisfied" and "very satisfied" was about equal. (Dr. Bruce E. Landon, "Career Satisfaction Among Physicians," JAMA, 2004; 291:634.)

Of additional relevance to career satisfaction among principals, those who conducted the physicians survey report that career satisfaction is greatly affected by "their ability to manage their day-to-day patient interactions and their time" and by "their ability to provide high-quality care." As discussed in the text, the reality that the principal is in charge of the school surely is a significant contributory factor to the high degree of career satisfaction among principals.

responses will be strongly positive. It is possible, but not likely, that principals who feel that they have done well on the job will express reservations about their career, perhaps because they believe that they have missed other opportunities — for example, of a financial nature — by being committed to Jewish education.

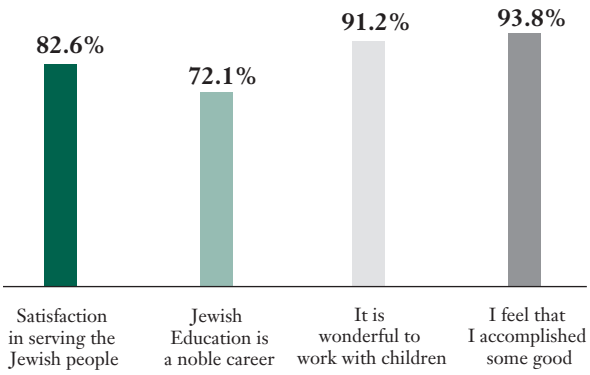
It turns out that overwhelmingly principals say that the decision to make Jewish education their career was either a wise or good choice, with only 1% saying that it was not too wise or a mistake. About 4% took a lukewarm position, saying that it was a so-so decision.

Furthermore, 60% indicate that their career satisfaction has increased over time, while a bit more than 30% say that it has remained about the same. Fewer than 10% say that it has decreased. The high incidence of career satisfaction is not especially surprising because, after all, in the aggregate, these are men and women who began years before in the classroom, probably with little expectation of becoming a principal, and now they are, in a meaningful way, at the top of their profession. It stands to reason that as their rank has risen, so has their career satisfaction.

It may be of note that more principals feel that their level of satisfaction has declined than the number who characterize their career choice of Jewish education as not wise or a mistake.

What emerges from this set of questions is a pattern of satisfaction regarding career and intra-school relations that seems to run counter to societal trends. In their responses to the survey, there is scarcely a trace of a mid-life crisis or burn-out, nor any complaints that the principals would have been better

Figure 21: Factors Influencing Response of "Rewarding" or "Satisfactory"



off had they pursued other paths. The explanation, if one is needed, of this pollyanish outlook may be that, as we have seen, a great number of the respondents are fairly new to the job and there is contentment because of their still recent career advancement.

Another possible contributory factor may be a sense of satisfaction in that the principal is, in effect, the boss, empowered to make all kinds of decisions regarding the school. It can also be that the educators, including former principals, who were discontented have been weeded out, either by voluntarily leaving the profession or in some other fashion. Finally, a strongly positive viewpoint may be the product of a degree of denial about the pressures and disappointments that inevitably crop up.

When asked not about their personal satisfaction but whether they sense that, within the ranks of day school principals, satisfaction is greater or about the same or less than it had been, their responses are somewhat less upbeat, as indicated in the following figure.

Figure 22: How Would You Characterize Your Decision to Make Jewish Education Your Career?

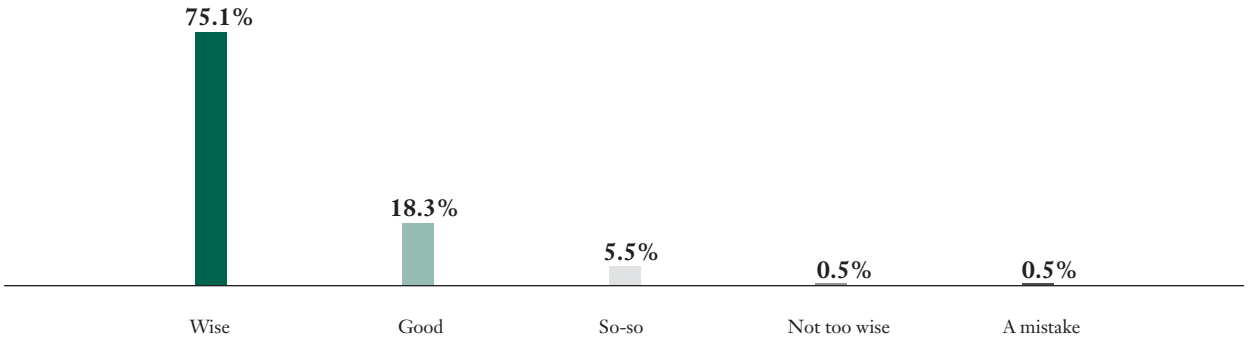
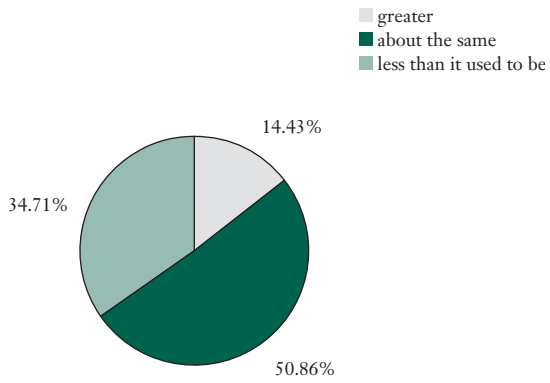


Figure 23: Overall Satisfaction



Only 15% believe that there is now a greater degree of satisfaction, while more than double this number say that there has been a decline in satisfaction. A majority indicate that there has been no appreciable change. It could be that when they report what they hear in the field from other principals, their responses are more sober because they are reporting complaints that they have heard from professional colleagues. As for themselves, there is a good feeling about their job and career because they have been successful.

CONCLUSION

The research reported in this paper is, I believe, the first comprehensive survey of Jewish day school principals in the United States. For this reason alone, it is hoped that there will be a follow-up survey covering much of the same ground, perhaps within five years. Doubtlessly, certain questions will be rephrased and other information will be sought. Because some of the findings presented in this report are quite surprising, there is a heightened need to examine the subject sometime fairly soon.

Principals Questionnaire

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender: Male ___ Female ___

2. Age: Under 35 ___ 35-44 ___ 45-54 ___ 55-64 ___ Above 65 ___

3. Education (check all that apply):
   S'micha ___ BA ___ MA in Education ___ MA in another field ___
   Doctorate in Education ___ Doctorate in another field ___

4. Country of Birth: U.S. ___ Israel ___ Elsewhere ___

5. If married, is your spouse employed as a Jewish educator? Yes ___ No ___

6. Have you participated in a training program for day school principals? Yes ___ No ___
   If Yes, which program _____

JEWISH EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

7. Have you taught at a Jewish day school? Yes ___ No ___
   If Yes, for how many years? _____

8. Have you served as a department head or in a similar capacity? Yes ___ No ___
   If Yes, for how many years? _____

9. Have you served as an assistant principal? Yes ___ No ___
   If Yes, for how many years? _____

10. Is this your first position as principal/head of school? Yes ___ No ___
    a) If you have served elsewhere, at how many previous schools? _____
    b) How many total years have you served as principal? _____

11. When you first became a full-time principal, do you feel that you were adequately prepared for the position? Yes ___ No ___
    If Yes, which of the following contributed to your preparation? (Check all that are applicable.)
    a) Yeshiva and/or seminary ___
    b) Higher education ___
    c) Previous teaching ___
    d) Previous service as a school administrator ___
    e) A training program ___
    f) Mentoring from an experienced principal ___
    g) Other _____

12. How many years have you been at your present school?
    1st year ___ 2-4 years ___ 5-9 years ___ 10-14 years ___
    15-20 years ___ More than 20 years ___

13. Before you accepted your present position, were you at the same school ___or elsewhere ___?

14. Present title: Principal ___ Head of School ___ Dean ___ Other _____

15. Do you serve as principal of Judaic Studies ___ Academic/Secular Studies ___
    Entire educational program ___

16. Excluding all fringe benefits, your salary is:
    Below $60,000 ___ $60,000-89,000 ___ $90,000-119,000 ___ $120,000-149,000 ___
    $150,000-179,000 ___ $180,000 and above ___

    (We recognize the sensitivity of this question. The requested information is needed for a complete picture of the field. Again, we pledge full confidence.)

SCHOOL INFORMATION

17. Which category best describes the school that you are now in:
    Centrist Orthodox ___ Chabad ___ Chassidic ___ Community ___ Modern Orthodox ___ Reform ___
    Solomon Schechter ___ Yeshiva World ___

18. Your present school is: K-6 (or below) ___ K-8 ___ Middle School ___ K-12 ___
    High School ___ Other _____

19. Was the school established: Within the past 5 years ___ 5-10 years ___ More than 10 years ___

20. Enrollment: 1-99 ___ 100-199 ___ 200-299 ___ 300-399 ___ 400-499 ___
    500-749 __ 750 or more ___

21. How would you characterize the enrollment pattern: Increasing ___ Stable ___ Declining ___

22. The school is located in: New York City ___ New York State (outside of NYC) ___ New Jersey ___
    Northeast (outside of NY or NJ) ___ South ___ Southwest ___ Midwest ___
    Far West (including Rocky Mountain area) ___

23. In addition to your core educational responsibilities, are you involved on behalf of your school in:
    a) Fundraising: Yes ___ No ___
    b) School Administration (non-educational): Yes ___ No ___
    c) Outside communal activity, such as Federation: Yes ___ No ___

    23A. If you answered Yes to Fundraising, is this a Primary ___ or Secondary ___ responsibility?

    23B. If you answered Yes for School Administration (non-educational),
    is this a Primary ___ or Secondary ___ responsibility?

24. Do you teach at your school? Yes ___ No ____
    If yes, how many hours per week? ____

CAREER ATTITUDES

25. How would you characterize your decision to make Jewish education your career?
    Wise ___ Good ___ So-so ___ Not too wise ___ A mistake ___

26. How would you characterize your experience as a principal?
    Rewarding ___ Satisfactory ___ Disappointing ___ A mistake ___

27. If you responded: "Rewarding" or "Satisfactory" which of these factors account for your attitude:
    (Check all that are applicable)
    a) Satisfaction in serving the Jewish people ___
    b) Jewish education is a noble career ___
    c) It is wonderful to work with children ___
    d) I feel that I have accomplished some good ___
    e) Other _____

28. If you responded "Disappointing" or "A mistake," which of these factors account for your attitude:
    (Check all that are applicable)
    a) There is little job security ___
    b) School officials and directors interfere and/or are difficult
    c) Parents are overbearing ___
    d) There is too much work or too much pressure ___
    e) Salary and benefits are inadequate ___
    f) I could have done better in another career ___
    g) Other _____

29. How would you describe your relations at your present school with:
    a) Lay leaders: Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Not too good ___ Terrible ___
    b) Faculty: Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Not too good ___ Terrible ___
    c) Parents: Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Not too good ___ Terrible ___

30. If you were previously at another Jewish day school, why did you leave your former position:
    (check all that are applicable)
    a) Higher position ___
    b) Higher salary ___
    c) More prestigious school ___
    d) Better geographic location __
    e) I was let go ___
    f) It was time for a career change ___
    g) Other _____

31. Has your personal career satisfaction over time:
    Increased ___ Remained about the same ___ Decreased ___

OTHER ATTITUDES

32. Within the ranks of day school principals, do you sense that satisfaction is
    Greater ___ About the same ___ or Less than it used to be ___

33. Do you sense that there is greater movement from position to position than previously ___
    or is it about the same ___ or is there more stability___

34. As to the principal's workload, has it gotten harder ___or is it about the same ___
    or do you find things easier ___

35. Your recommendations, if any, as to how to better prepare principals:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please feel free to append additional comments or suggestions.

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