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Survey of Elementary School Principals in Illinois

Number of Responses

- 403 completed surveys
- Sent to approximately 2,600 elementary schools

Geographic Location of School

- 56% (218) Small Town/Rural (pop. less than 25,000)
- 29% (114) Collar County (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, & Will)
- 13% (51) Large Town (pop. over 25,000)
- 3% (10) Chicago (note: Chicago Public School principals were not actively recruited for this survey to avoid conflicts with Chicago Public School's research/data collection efforts)

Age Levels of Children Served

- Predominately Pre-K through 8th
- A few principals led Pre-K through 12th schools

District Pre-K Programs

- 91% (367) of principals' districts have a Pre-K program

Location of Pre-K Programs

- 41% (163) In principal's school
- 28% (111) In another elementary school
- 16% (65) In a district-owned stand-alone building
- 8% (30) In another school (not elementary)
- 49% (198) of Pre-K programs in the principals' building are located near the early (K-3) elementary classrooms

Number of Children Enrolled

- Average 423 children

Race/Ethnicity and Income of Children Served

- 25% average percentage of minorities served in principals' schools
- 37% average percentage of students qualify for free- or reduced-lunch in principals' schools

Average Number of Years as Principal

- 8 years

Principals' Teaching Credentials

- 83% (251) Type 03
- 23% (71) Special Education
- 15% (46) Type 04
- Others listed include: Type 75, Type 09, Type 73, Type 06, Type 10, NBCT, Reading Specialist, ELL, Superintendent Certificate

Grade Levels Taught Prior to Becoming a Principal

- 11% (38) Pre-K
- 51% (178) K-3
- 73% (257) 4th – 9th
- 27% (94) High School

Teaching Credentials of Teachers in Principals' Schools¹

- 81% average percentage of teachers who hold the Type 03 in principals' schools
- 17% average percentage of teachers who hold the Type 04 in principals' schools

¹ Type 03 is a K-8 teaching certificate, and Type 04 is a Pre-K -3 teaching certificate

When you are hiring teachers in the early elementary positions (Pre-K -3), what criteria do you consider most important? Responses included:

- Appropriate certification/meet Highly Qualified criteria
- Previous experience with this level
- Understanding of developmentally appropriate learning theory and practice
- Ability to use differentiated instruction with diverse learners
- Knowledge of literacy and numeracy development
- Educational background/recommendations
- Student-centered educational philosophy
- Caring disposition
- Enthusiastic and positive attitude
- Social skills, including communication with parents and being a team player with colleagues

School Policies and Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to identify policies and practices in your school aimed at coordinating and aligning your school and local early care and education providers.

Please rate the extent to which the following statements apply to your school (place a check in the appropriate box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent	Average (mean) Rating
My school has a written policy or policies that recognizes the learning and development of children ages birth to 5 as the foundation for students' lifelong learning.	23% (87)	35% (131)	22.7% (85)	19.0% (71)	2.37
Our school improvement plan includes goals and activities for working with programs and services that children experience before they enter our school.	48.0% (180)	23.7% (89)	19.7% (74)	8.5% (32)	1.89
My school has criteria for measuring a child's readiness for Kindergarten.	15.0% (56)	19.3% (72)	26.0% (97)	39.7% (148)	2.90
I make sure that the culture in my school focuses on educating the whole child which includes using teaching strategies that develop children's motor, social, cognitive, language, and emotional	0.8% (3)	6.1% (23)	25.6% (97)	67.5% (256)	3.60

development.					
I make sure that the staff in my school use the early care and education field to provide appropriate learning resources that inform our school's teaching and learning practices.	6.6% (25)	25.4% (96)	32.5% (123)	35.4% (134)	2.97
I make sure that teachers in my school have adopted curricular practices and teaching strategies from early learning theories and early care and education providers.	6.1% (23)	21.5% (81)	28.9% (109)	43.5% (164)	3.10
The curriculum in the elementary classrooms in my school is aligned with the Illinois EARLY Learning Standards for 3 and 4 year-old students.	16.3% (60)	15.8% (58)	19.0% (70)	48.9% (180)	3.01

Curriculum and Teaching Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to explore the current practices of your school in coordinating and aligning the curriculum practices within grade levels, and with early learning community providers.

Please rate the extent to which you do the following (place a check in the appropriate box):

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent	Average (mean) Rating
I monitor and evaluate classrooms, the school building, and other learning environments to ensure they are conducive to student development and	0.0% (0)	1.6% (6)	12.5% (47)	85.9% (322)	3.84
I observe classroom activities to ensure that they are age	0.0% (0)	2.1% (8)	18.1% (68)	79.7% (299)	3.78
I include Pre-K teachers in common planning time with elementary teachers.	39.3% (140)	22.5% (80)	17.7% (63)	20.5% (73)	2.19
I encourage elementary teachers to observe each other's classrooms to learn about the teaching practices and curricular expectations in other grades.	4.6% (17)	31.7% (118)	35.2% (131)	28.5% (106)	2.88

I encourage Pre-K teachers to observe elementary classrooms to learn about the expectations and learning experiences of students in elementary classrooms.	37.2% (132)	27.9% (99)	24.5% (87)	10.4% (37)	2.08
I encourage elementary teachers to observe Pre-K teachers to learn about the learning experiences of students in Pre-K classrooms.	44.0% (160)	29.7% (108)	17.0% (62)	9.3% (34)	1.92
I invite early childhood center teachers and directors to observe Kindergarten classes to learn about the curriculum and classroom expectations on	37.6% (137)	30.5% (111)	19.8% (72)	12.1% (44)	2.06
I invite family child care providers to observe Kindergarten classes to learn about the curriculum and classroom expectations of	67.4% (246)	21.9% (80)	6.6% (24)	4.1% (15)	1.47
I encourage my teachers to research and adopt teaching and learning practices from early care and education providers.	26.8% (98)	31.2% (114)	24.7% (90)	17.3% (63)	2.32

Professional Development Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to explore current professional development practices of your school that supports efforts to coordinate and align teaching and learning experiences within grade levels, across grade levels, and with early care and education providers in your community.

Please rate the extent to which your school does the following (place a check in the appropriate box):

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent	Average (mean) Rating
Within-grade level teams of teachers participate in professional development activities together.	1.6% (6)	4.8% (18)	23.3% (87)	70.2% (262)	3.62
Across-grade level teams of teachers participate in professional development activities together.	0.3% (1)	9.1% (34)	30.9% (115)	59.7% (222)	3.50
Professional development is offered to teachers focused on aligning curriculum, teaching practices, and assessments across	0.0% (0)	8.1% (30)	24.8% (92)	67.1% (249)	3.59

grade levels.					
Professional development is offered to teachers on early childhood learning theories and how to adopt these theories in their classroom.	19.2% (71)	35.0% (129)	23.8% (88)	22.0% (81)	2.49
Professional development is offered to teachers about theories and practices for educating the whole child.	2.7% (10)	22.3% (83)	37.6% (140)	37.4% (139)	3.10
Professional development opportunities are offered to early childhood teachers and providers in your community on curriculum and teaching practices in your school.	29.1% (104)	28.6% (102)	17.6% (63)	24.6% (88)	2.38

Student Assessments

The purpose of the following questions is to explore your school's current practices in using student data to improve and align your school's teaching and learning experiences and students' readiness to learn within grade levels, across grade levels, and with early care and education providers in your community.

Please rate the extent to which your school does the following: (place a check in the following box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent	Average (mean) Rating
I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with fellow teachers in their grade level to guide discussions on	1.3% (5)	7.5% (28)	19.7% (74)	71.5% (268)	3.61
I expect teachers to use student data to identify learning problems and modify teaching	0.0% (0)	2.4% (9)	14.9% (56)	82.7% (310)	3.80
My school uses aggregated student data results to guide professional development.	0.5% (2)	8.8% (33)	25.1% (94)	65.6% (246)	3.56
I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with fellow teachers across grade	0.5% (2)	11.0% (41)	26.6% (99)	61.8% (230)	3.50

I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with Pre-K teachers to guide discussions on strengthening classroom practice at the	33.2% (120)	28.8% (104)	19.4% (70)	18.6% (67)	2.23
I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with early childhood teachers in our community to guide discussions on strengthening classroom practice at the elementary grade	50.3% (185)	23.6% (87)	14.7% (54)	11.4% (42)	1.87
Our school allows student information to be shared with early childhood center or program providers to provide them with data on childrens'	44.0% (160)	26.6% (97)	15.9% (58)	13.5% (49)	1.99
Our school allows student information to be shared with family child care providers to provide them with data on	59.9% (217)	22.1% (80)	9.4% (34)	8.6% (31)	1.67
I expect teachers to use individual child's assessment data to guide discussions with parents and set learning and	1.6% (6)	8.0% (30)	22.3% (83)	68.1% (254)	3.57

Barriers to Aligning and Coordinating Learning Experiences

The purpose of the following questions is to identify those issues that serve as a barrier to your school's work with early care and education providers to align and coordinate teaching and learning experiences for children as they move from birth to K-12 schools.

Please rate the extent to which the following issues are barriers in your work with the early childhood community (place a check in the following box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent	Average (mean) Rating
Differing philosophies between early childhood programs and your K-12 school (for example, curriculum, pedagogy, purpose)	45.7% (165)	38.0% (137)	13.6% (49)	2.8% (10)	1.73
Early childhood community is so vast that I do not know where or how to start building partnerships	52.4% (187)	30.8% (110)	11.5% (41)	5.3% (19)	1.70
Not enough time to build partnerships	22.7% (82)	35.9% (130)	18.0% (65)	23.5% (85)	2.42
Not a priority for my school and/or district	46.6% (165)	33.6% (119)	12.7% (45)	7.1% (25)	1.80

Teachers do not receive their student enrollment lists in time to be able to meet with children’s early care and	49.4% (177)	26.8% (96)	14.0% (50)	9.8% (35)	1.84
Lack of awareness of the Illinois EARLY Learning Standards	68.9% (248)	23.6% (85)	3.6% (13)	3.9% (14)	1.43
Lack of knowledge of developmentally appropriate teaching practices	71.4% (257)	22.5% (81)	4.7% (17)	1.4% (5)	1.36
Incompatibility of schedules between my school and early care and education providers	42.6% (152)	32.8% (117)	10.9% (39)	13.7% (49)	1.96
NCLB accountability demands inhibit using certain teaching and learning practices (e.g., play-based, hands-on learning)	48.3% (173)	30.4% (109)	13.7% (49)	7.5% (27)	1.80
FERPA laws inhibit sharing student information	43.5% (154)	30.8% (109)	12.4% (44)	13.3% (47)	1.95
Language and/or cultural barriers between my center and the school district(s)	71.1% (253)	19.7% (70)	5.9% (21)	3.4% (12)	1.42

Please list any other barriers not listed above:

- Lack of resources and limited availability of early childhood programs in rural communities
- Time
- Early childcare providers do not have knowledge of early elementary school expectations
- Distance between the elementary school and the early childhood programs

What policies (state and/or local) would reduce the barriers that inhibit your school’s ability to work with the local early childhood community?

- Funding (e.g., state needs to adequately fund the schools so they can hire the personnel and offer a high quality education, especially needed to provide quality programs for minority students)
- Time (e.g., union contracts, too much to do to meet demands of schools)
- Location (e.g., distance between schools and programs does not foster collaboration, Pre-K and K classrooms need to be reunited with elementary schools)
- State, federal, and local policies (e.g., funding, FERPA, NCLB, teacher autonomy)
- Cross-sector collaboration (share data; align transitions, standards, and curriculum; and offer “Community inservice days” for professional development of Pre-K and elementary school teachers)

Your Preparation and Professional Development

The questions on this page ask for information about the context and content of the education and professional development in which you have participated.

1. When did you complete your Type 75 program?
 - 20% (70) 20+ years ago
 - 35% (117) 10+ years ago
 - 46% (157) Within last 10 years

2. Did your Type 75 program (education administration program) provide content and learning experiences related to these issues (check all that apply)
 - 58% (193) Child development theories and practices
 - 48% (160) Developmentally appropriate practices (research-based practices for young children)
 - 61% (203) Standards and curriculum alignment between early childhood and K-12
 - 34% (111) Assessments for young children
 - 75% (248) Building coalitions of partners across educational sectors and the community
 - 26% (87) Advocating for high quality early care and education environments for children

3. What could Type 75 programs do to prepare principals like you so that you could better understand and partner with early care and education providers to coordinate and align curriculum, pedagogy, and transitions?
 - Include concepts related to building the learning continuum and early childhood education in program courses:
 - Convey that cross-sector collaboration is a priority, include team-building and working with partners/community relations in courses
 - Focus the curriculum on all classes on preparing future administrators with educating the “whole child” from pre-school through graduation
 - Teach developmentally appropriate practices, early learning standards, curricula for young children, assessments of young children, and the administrator’s role in IEPs and RTI
 - Include information in courses on how to collaborate with community organizations, including early childhood centers/organizations
 - Provide a course on each level of schooling (e.g., early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school)
 - Hire a faculty member/course instructor with early learning experience
 - Provide information to aspiring principals on laws and funding opportunities in the state for birth to five programs;
 - Include working with early care and education providers as experiences in the internships
 - Internship experiences can be carried out in an early learning center/program
 - Provide opportunities for observing early care and education providers
 - Provide an option for a specialized program in which candidates can choose to focus on Pre-K-elementary, middle school, and high school

4. Within the past five years, have you received professional development on these issues (check all that apply):
 - 55% (184) Child development theories and practices

- 72% (239) Developmentally appropriate practices (research-based practices for young children)
- 81% (268) Standards and curriculum alignment between early childhood and K-12
- 73% (243) Assessments for young children
- 50% (165) Building coalitions of partners across educational sectors and the community
- 38% (126) Advocating for high quality early care and education environments for children

5. What professional development would you like to see offered so that you could better understand and partner with early care and education providers to coordinate and align curriculum, pedagogy, and transitions?

- Continue the workshop that currently exists for principals on understanding the PreK program;
- Offer workshops (preferably Illinois Administrator Academy courses) on topics such as:
 - opportunities to partner with early childhood,
 - building coalitions,
 - assessment for young children,
 - brain based learning and developmentally appropriate practices,
 - early childhood theory and best practices,
 - how to address early childhood philosophy in NCLB/ISAT world of elementary schools,
 - mental health resources for students and families,
 - how to engage parents as partners in the early childhood to elementary education transition,
 - screening instruments such as AimsWeb, Dibels, PSI, PSAl,
 - how to work with special education early childhood students, and
 - how to get taxpayers to want to fund these types of projects;
- Provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to observe schools and classrooms where this collaboration is already taking place;
- Professional development focused on cross-school articulation of student curriculum relations;
- Provide opportunities for cross-sector professional development in which school leaders, early childhood leaders and teachers from early childcare and K-12 can participate together
- Convey that cross-sector collaboration is a priority, include team-building and working with partners/community relations in courses
- Include practical experiences in which school leaders work with early care and education providers

Cross-Sector Collaboration

1. Is your school involved with any programs, services, or formal or informal partnership whose goals is to improve children's transitions from Pre-K to elementary school? For example, these partnerships might focus on aligning curriculum and the learning experiences for children before and after they enter the K-12 schools, improve the curriculum and teaching practices across the education sectors to be more developmentally appropriate, and/or even have the broader goal of improving student learning outcomes.

- About half of the principals said that they were involved in some type of collaboration with early childhood providers.

The responses fell into three broad categories described below:

- Working with pre-K programs in their buildings or districts: Principals said that their collaborations included working with the directors and teachers in the pre-K centers in their

own buildings and/or other pre-K programs in their own district. The most common goal and focus of the activities was to improve the transition experiences for students upon entering kindergarten. These activities included providing screenings for pre-k children, holding family information events, and allowing pre-k children to tour the elementary school. To a lesser extent, some principals said that pre-k and elementary teachers worked collaboratively to share data on incoming kindergarten students, map the curriculum, and participate in team-based professional development activities.

- Working with preschool programs in the community: Principals wrote about partnering with community-based early care and education providers. These included birth to 3 programs, programs at park districts and churches, and private early childhood centers. A few said they worked with their ROE. The focus and goals of these partnerships also centered on improving transition experiences for pre-k children to kindergarten using the same strategies as mentioned in the bullet above. A few said that they worked with the preschool providers to align curriculum and observe each other's learning environments. Quite a few said they were partnering with programs that had a Preschool for All grant or were Head Start programs.
- Working to improve services for students with special needs: Many principals said that the primary goal and focus of their collaborations were to identify students who are at-risk. These partnerships included working with families to ensure that the students and families were receiving the services their children needed to ensure successful development. These activities include screenings, sharing transition information with families, sharing information about their children's needs and resources accessible to them, and including IEPs in the transition process. NOTE: this category is really a subset of the first two bullets. Working to improve the learning experiences for students with special needs was mentioned frequently in both of the first two categories, frequent enough to be its own subcategory.