

For release September 16, 2014.

Canada's principals hopeful about the future but often overwhelmed

While Canada's school leaders find their work very fulfilling, the growing complexity and competing demands of school and community life make the job untenable at times. This is one of the key conclusions of a national research study undertaken by the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA).

The Future of the Principalship in Canada project involved 500 principals from across Canada who participated in 40 focus groups over a two-year period. Participants identified the trends shaping their day-to-day work, also taking into account the emerging critical influences that will impact schools in the next two decades. The report provides detailed provincial and regional analysis; yet, overall the experiences of school leaders are remarkably similar across the country. For example, while policymakers stress the importance of the school principal as an instructional leader, the competing demands during a typical 58-60 hour work week limit most of the country's principals to only 5 hours a week to work directly with teachers to support exemplary instructional practice.

Bookended by analyses from two of education's leading experts, David Berliner and Dennis Shirley, this study makes a valuable contribution to the goal of supporting the work of principals, now and in the future.

School leaders appreciated the opportunity to provide their perspectives on the current and future forces shaping their work and the teaching and learning conditions in schools across Canada. While an international research team contributed to the study, the authoritative views of Canada's principals clearly emerge. As the study argues, "In order to understand the work of school leaders—as it is now and as it will be in the future—the voices of those undertaking that role must be heard by stakeholders and policymakers." Though focused on Canada's principals, this study also makes productive global comparisons based on the recently published Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) Results sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Advance reviews signal the significance of this study. "In this important pan-Canadian study, the authors set out what is happening to the principalship from sea to sea," says Andy Hargreaves, Thomas More Chair in Education at Boston College's Lynch School of Education, who further observes that "principals are, in many ways, at the centre of a rapidly changing society and the impact it is having on its children."

The full report and an executive summary are available at www.teachers.ab.ca (Publications>Other Publications). For more information on the national findings please contact the lead researcher, J-C Couture (jc.couture@ata.ab.ca), by telephone at 1-800-232-7208 or the CAP President, Tina Estabrooks (tina.estabrooks@nbed.nb.ca), by telephone at 506-658-5334.



**The Alberta
Teachers' Association**