



Sunny Liu
Principal Fiscal Analyst
Legislative Finance Committee



John Sena
Director
Legislative Education Study Committee

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Joint LFC-LESC Hearing: School Leadership

The School Leader Effect

“Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school...furthermore, effective leadership has the greatest impact in those circumstances in which it is most needed.”

- Kenneth Leithwood, et. al. (2004), *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*

“Principals have large effects on student learning, approaching even the effects of individual teachers. Replacing a principal at the 25th percentile in effectiveness with one at the 75th percentile can increase annual student learning in math and reading by almost three months, annually.”

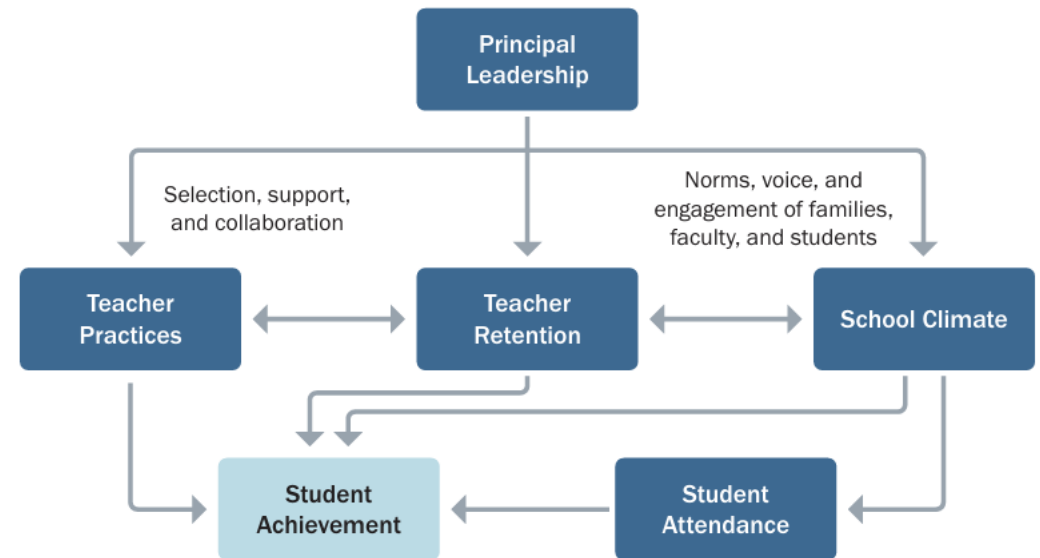
- Jason Grissom, et. al. (2021), *How Principals Affect Students and Schools*

The School Leader Effect

Successful Leadership Practices

1. Setting Direction
2. Developing People
3. Redesigning the Organization
4. Understanding Context

Figure 1. How Principals Influence School Outcomes

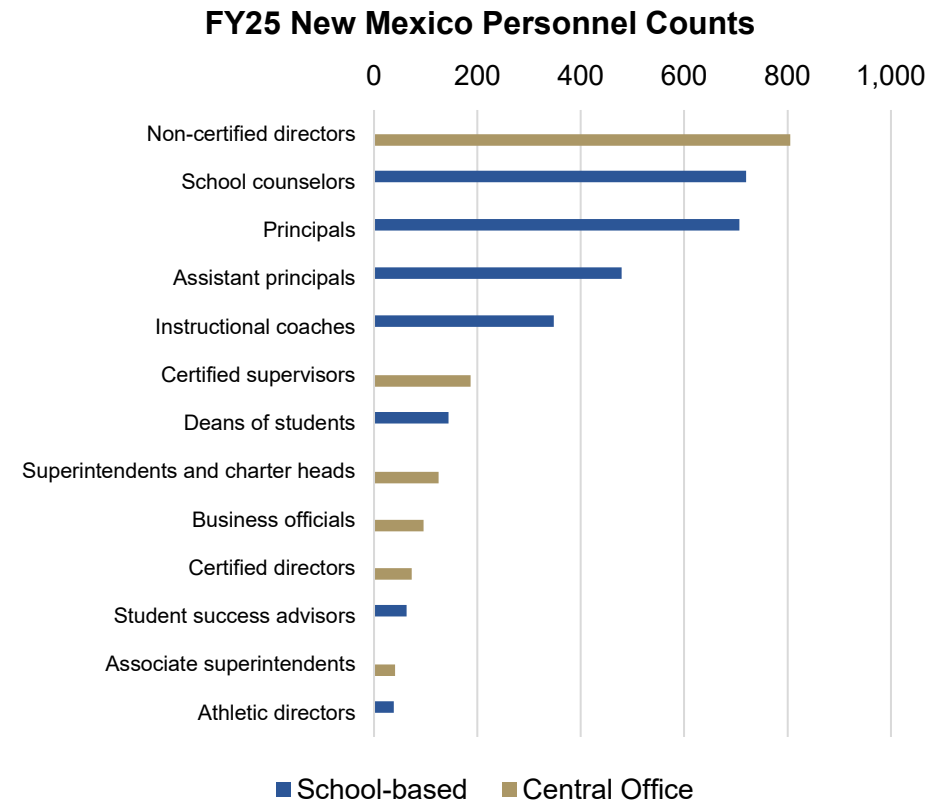


Source: Learning Policy Institute. (2026).

School Administration

Notable Patterns in the Data

- 89 school districts, 66 state charters, and 37 local charters
- 660 of 847 schools have a principal; 526 schools report having a school counselor
- About half of school administrators (1,180 positions) are in schools versus central office
- Schools are adding more deans of students and student success advisors after FY19
 - Fewer principals and instructional coaches in place



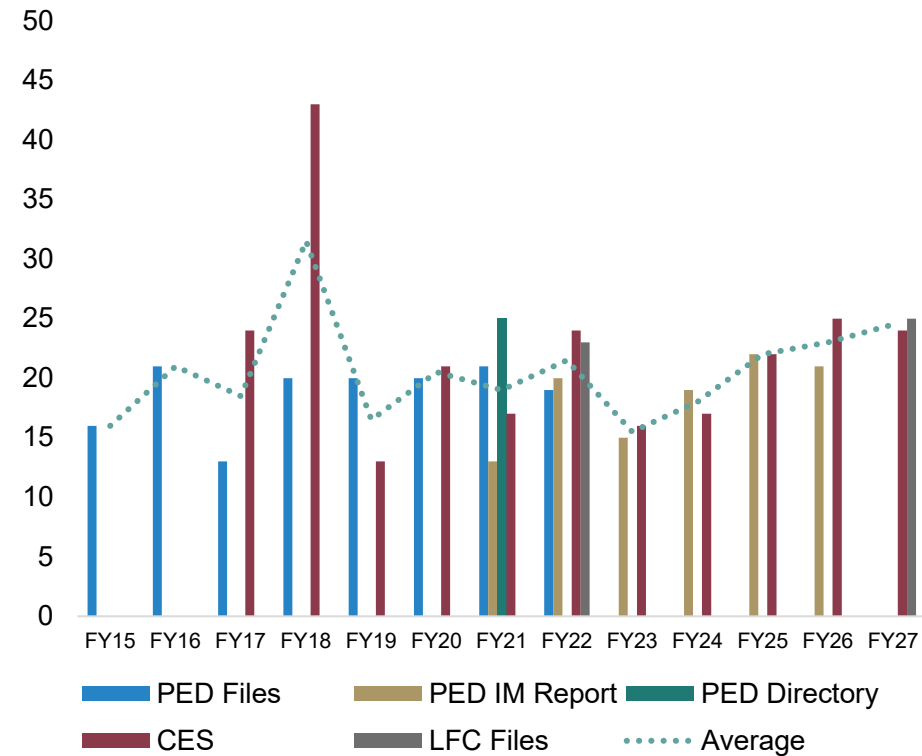
Note: Analysis assisted using code written with Claude, a large language model
Source: PED, LFC files

Superintendents and Charter School Heads

Notable Patterns in the Data

- Districts averaged 3 superintendent changes in the last decade
 - 28 districts changed 4 times or more
 - Charter school heads turn over less
- Half of new superintendents leave in 3 years
 - 61% leave the system; 10% lead another district
- 53 superintendents have 3 years or less in their current position; 14 superintendents have 8 years or more
- Median age was 54 years for superintendents (64% male) and 49 years for charter heads (34% male)

New Superintendents (out of 89)



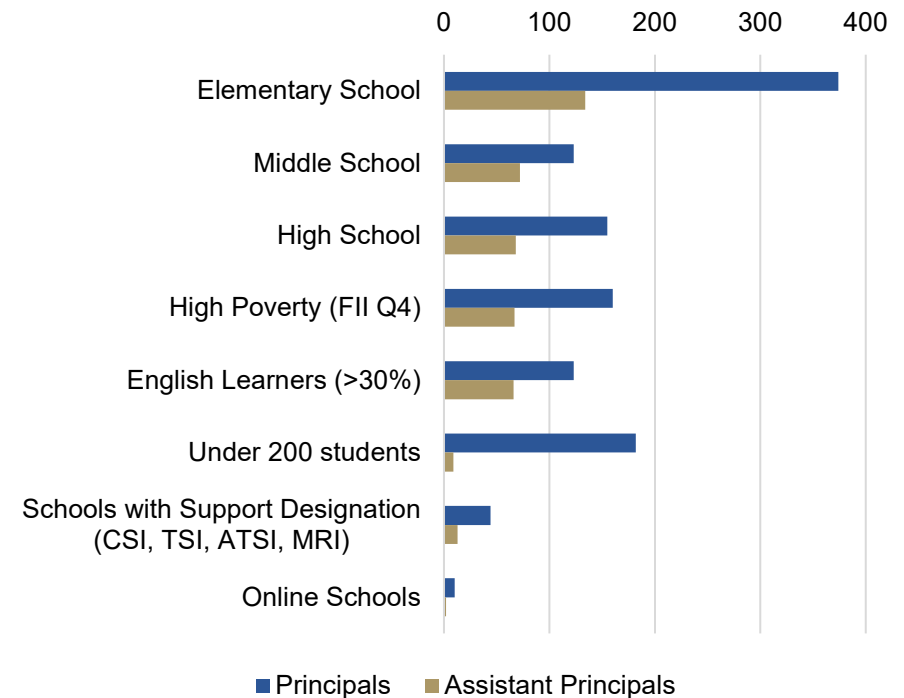
Note: Analysis assisted using code written with Claude, a large language model
Source: PED, CES, LFC files

School Principals

Notable Patterns in the Data

- A third of principals leave their post each year
 - One in six of these principals are promoted to central office, typically from higher-performing, lower-poverty, and larger-sized schools
- 276 of 660 schools report having an assistant principal, mostly in schools with 700 or more students
- Principal retention is higher in schools with larger enrollment and better academic performance
- Principals are more likely to leave if they are over the age of 57, in low-performing schools, or in a district with a superintendent change

FY25 Principals and Assistant Principals



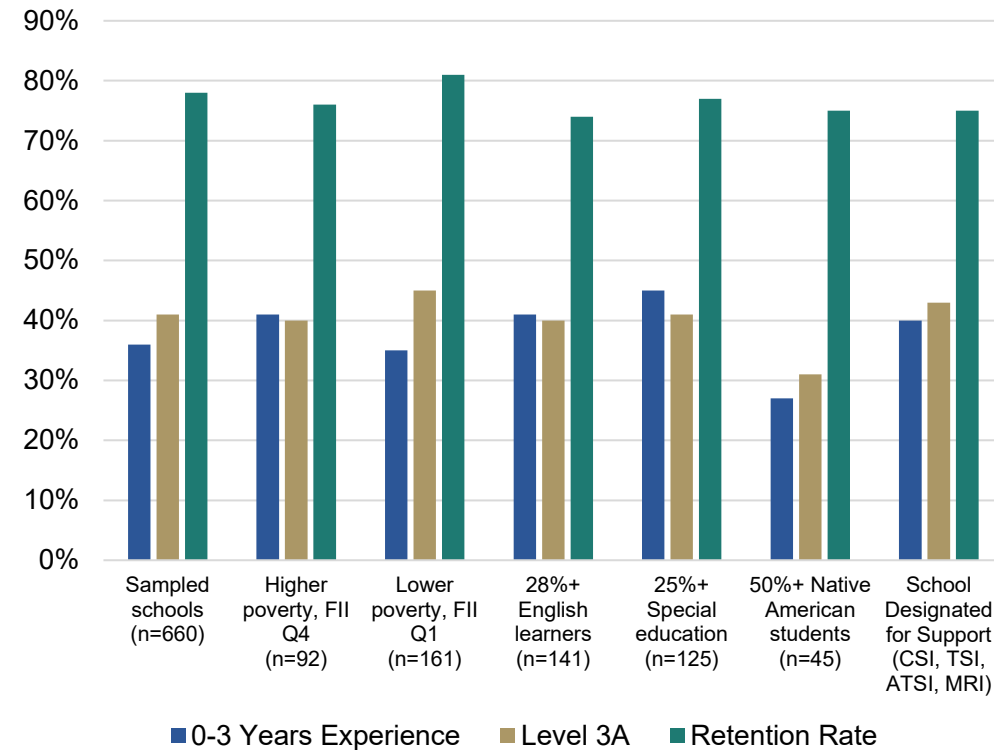
Note: Analysis assisted using code written with Claude, a large language model
Source: PED, LFC files

School Teachers

Notable Patterns in the Data

- Spotlight schools and schools with higher income households have the most Level 3 teachers and the highest retention rates
- Schools with higher special education populations have smaller class sizes but more novice teachers
- Schools with majority Native American students have smaller staffs and recruit more teachers from outside the state and U.S.
- Teachers with a degree from an in-state institution have higher retention rates

FY25 Teachers in At-Risk Schools



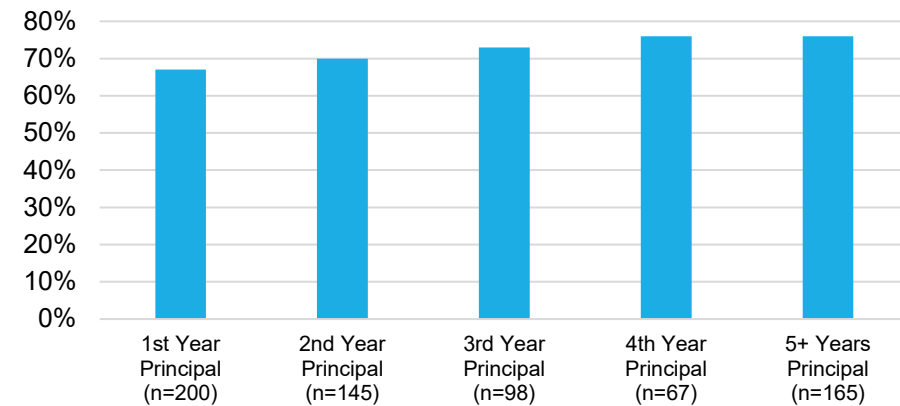
Note: Analysis assisted using code written with Claude, a large language model
Source: PED, school websites, LFC files

Principal Transition Matters

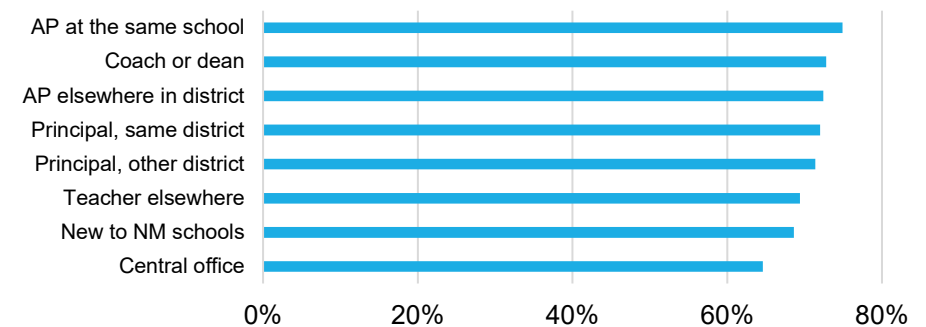
Notable Patterns in the Data

- Principals who hold their seat longer also hold onto their teachers longer
- The year a principal leaves, teacher retention drops notably, from about 75 percent to about 68 percent
- The succession that keeps most teachers during a principal transition is promoting the school's own assistant principal
- When a principal moves to another school, about 1 in 20 teachers follow them to the new school

FY19 Teacher Retention by Principal Experience



FY19 Teacher Retention by New Principal's Prior Role

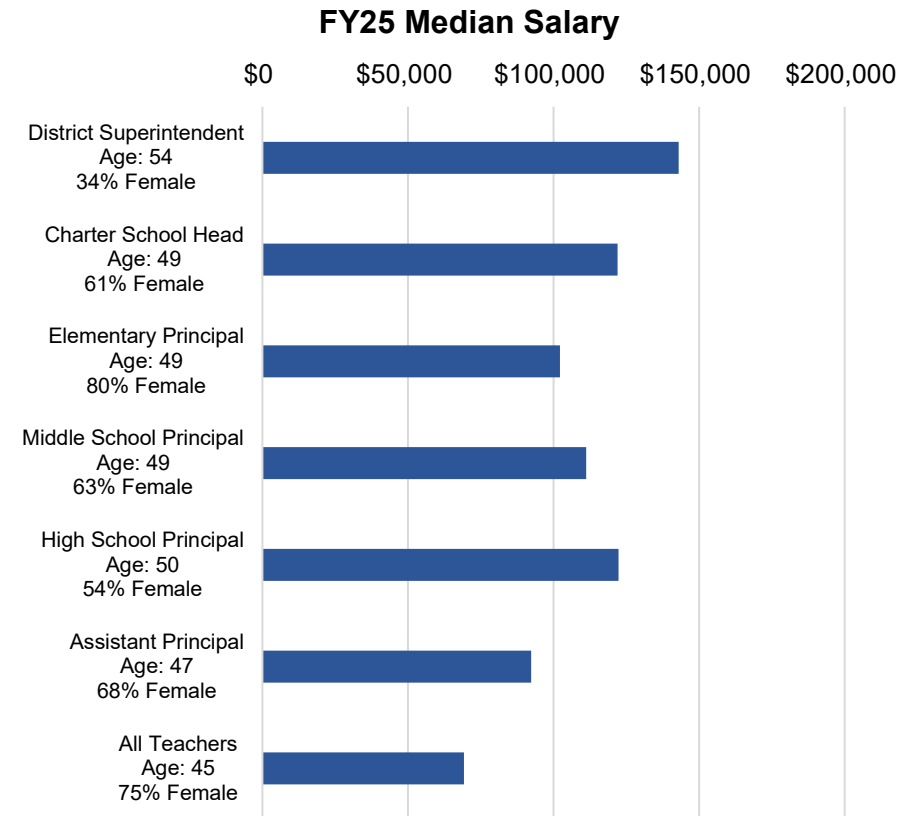


Note: Analysis assisted using code written with Claude, a large language model
Source: PED, LFC files

Principal Pay and Development

Notable Patterns in the Data

- Principals paid little more than their teachers are more likely to leave the system altogether
- PED provides leadership development for some leaders:
 - Launch** (1-year): 40 Teacher leaders
 - Thrive** (2-years): 50 District, school and teacher leaders
 - Climb** (1-year): 35 Instructional coaches
 - Rise**: 50 School principals
 - Soar**: 35 District leaders
- Otherwise, administrators must co-develop a professional development plan as part of their evaluation through the Excel NM framework



Note: Analysis assisted using code written with Claude, a large language model
Source: PED, LFC files

Recent Legislative Actions

Budget Items

- \$5 million for school leader PD
- \$5.6 million for principal residencies
- \$4 million for school improvement

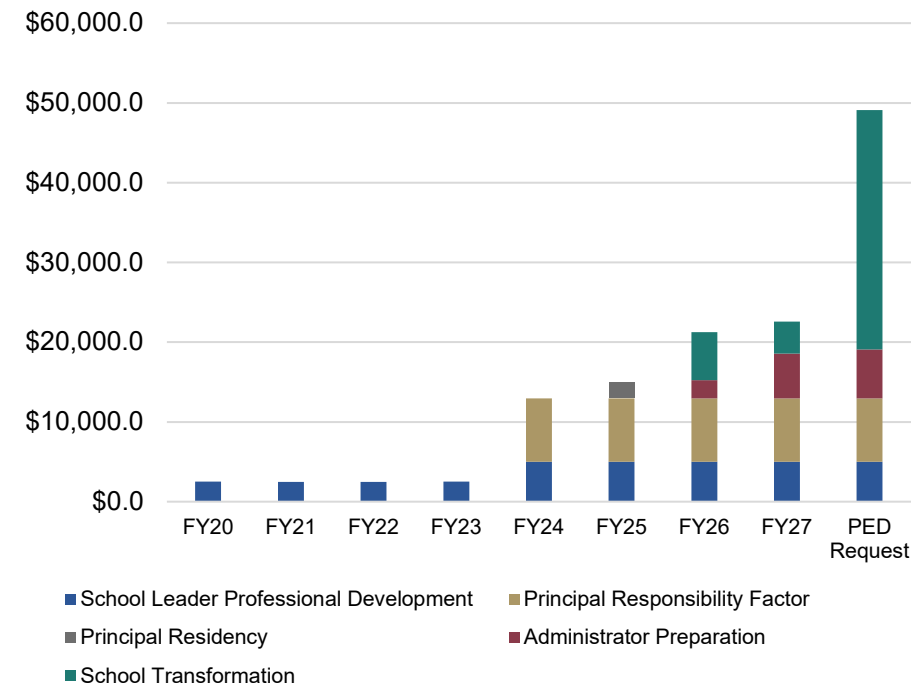
Statutory Changes

- 2023 (HB199): Increased principal responsibility factor to raise salary levels
- 2024 (SB137): Established new school board training requirements
- 2025 (HB157): Created new licenses and preparation pathways for site administrators and superintendents

Regulatory Changes

- 2024: PED replaces HOUSSE administrator evaluation with Excel NM

School Improvement Appropriations
(in thousands)

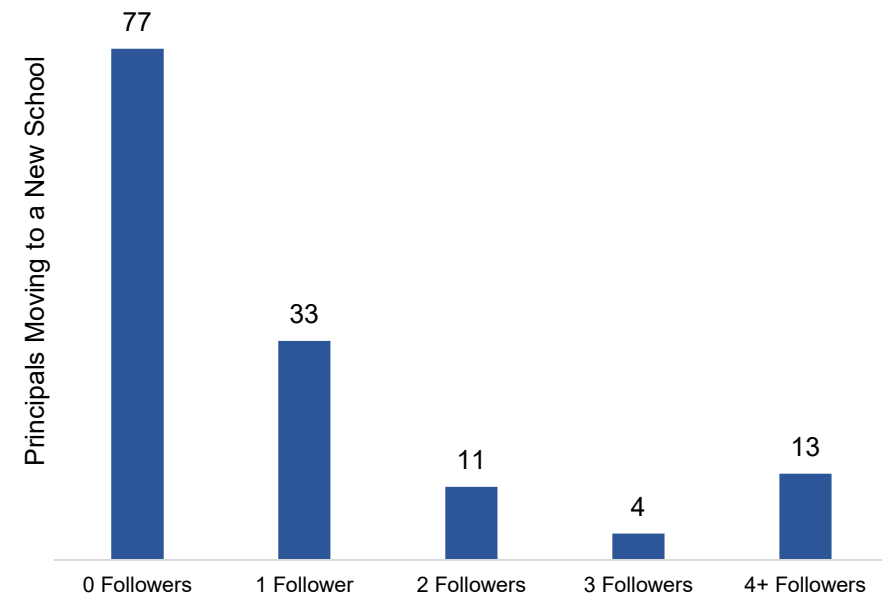


Note: PED's FY28 request for school transformation is a 3-year PERF appropriation at \$10 million per year
Source: LFC files

Considerations

- School leader transitions matter—succession planning should be strategic, not accidental
- Leader preparation is getting a reboot, but not all leaders have access to ongoing development; continuing education will be a requirement for site administrators in FY29
- Turnover is not always a negative outcome, especially if a more effective leader is selected; however, the state lacks a consistent system for identifying talent
- The pay difference between teachers and principals is smallest in elementary schools, but only for a handful of teachers

FY14-FY18 Teachers Following Their Principal to a New School within District



Note: Analysis assisted using code written with Claude, a large language model
Source: PED, LFC files

Contact Information



Sunny Liu

Principal Fiscal Analyst
Legislative Finance Committee

Sunny.Liu@nmlegis.gov

(505) 986-4528

John Sena

Director
Legislative Education Study Committee

John.Sena@nmlegis.gov

(505) 986-4592