

The following are significant challenges facing school leaders today.

Workplace Violence

The number and severity of violent incidents in schools continues to be on the increase, and is a critical concern for our school communities. As front-line leaders, responsible for the day-to-day management of the school, principals and vice-principals (P/VPs) are especially concerned that these incidents are not declining, despite our attempts to bring this to the government's attention over many years.

In 2025, a survey of 2,298 of our Members indicated that [1](#)

- **88%** of P/VPs have personally witnessed violence or threats against staff
- **77%** say the level of violence is interfering with learning in the classroom
- **75%** have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event in their school in the past three years
- **73%** say the level of violence is increasing.

Violent incidents can stem from a variety of factors, including bullying (physical and cyber), mental health issues, inadequate social supports and resources, large class sizes and inadequate supervision. These incidents underscore the pressing need for comprehensive strategies to ensure safe learning environments for students and staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure a full complement of school staff every day.
- Provide adequate funding to ensure schools are properly supervised every day.
- Train and recruit additional mental health and social service personnel in schools (counselors, Child and Youth Workers, psychologists, social workers).
- Empower P/VPs with greater authority to suspend or exclude students without excessive procedural barriers.
- Provide specialized classes and services for our students with additional needs.

Recruitment and Retention

Not only is the intensification of the P/VP role impacting physical and mental health, it also directly impacts the ability of school boards to attract and retain the best people for the job. More and more teachers who had aspired to the role are now reconsidering, or rejecting it outright, because it has become so unsustainable. If we can't attract the best people to this role,

none of the priorities and successes expected by the Ministry of Education and school boards will be achieved. Without a strong leader, schools cannot thrive or succeed.

While P/VPs are supposed to be instructional leaders, we are now tasked with many other roles including business manager, accountant, safety inspector, medical professional, mental health professional, supervisor, social worker, secretary, custodian and attendance manager. These additional responsibilities have drastically reduced the time we can spend doing what we are supposed to be doing – mentoring teachers and supporting students. This excessive workload is having an increasingly negative impact on our students, school communities and the system at large. While many new expectations and responsibilities are added to the plate of a P/VP, few duties come off, resulting in ever increasing workloads and recruitment concerns.

In addition, socio-political issues of racism, discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment are increasing in schools, making the role more challenging for administrators with underrepresented identities.

Data from the 2025 survey indicates that

- **98%** of P/VPs say the number of responsibilities they have are increasing
- **89%** feel overwhelmed by the volume and number of duties
- **85%** say their work environment is constantly changing and it is hard to keep up
- **77%** say their current workload is unmanageable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide funding for mentorship and training of new P/VPs, similar to what has been offered to the teaching profession under the New Teacher Induction Program.
- Ensure a full-time administrator in every school.
- Conduct a review of ministry initiatives and eliminate those that are unrelated to instructional leadership, mentoring or direct student achievement.
- Streamline ministry and school board priorities, eliminating outdated or unnecessary initiatives and administrative tasks.
- Balance new responsibilities by removing existing ones that require as much time.
- Support, develop and fund job-embedded leadership development.
- Collect data, offer resources and establish working groups of racialized and other identities to help the ministry and boards make decisions about needed supports.

Mental Health and Well-being

There is a direct correlation between the work intensification of the P/VP role and the increasing incidents of negative mental health and well-being among P/VPs. Continuous staff shortages, an increasing and unmanageable workload, challenging expectations, violent incidents in schools and the declining mental health needs of students and staff contribute to the number

and severity of school leaders facing a decline in their own mental health and well-being. Mentally healthy staff and students need mentally healthy school leaders.

Racialized administrators are facing discrimination, harassment and violence that go unreported out of fear of reprisal. Harm is experienced by administrators who must deal with issues of racism on an ongoing basis (e.g., student discipline, suspension appeals, social media posts, community social media accounts, exclusion from in-groups).

Since 2019, Long-term Disability files for P/VPs have increased 680%, an unacceptably high and shocking number.

While needing access to mental health practitioners and resources, our provincial benefits plan continues to be reduced, due to a lack of adequate funding from the government.

Data from the 2025 survey indicated that

- **96%** of P/VPs report accessing their benefits this year, compared to 55% in 2023
- **82%** of P/VPs report that their increasing workload is negatively impacting their well-being
- Only **43%** believe there are sufficient resources to support their mental health and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase funding to the P/VP ONE-T Benefits Plan to ensure sufficient access to mental health practitioners and resources.
- Ensure P/VP workload is manageable and sustainable to prevent illness and burnout.
- Offer support and release time to P/VPs who have witnessed or been involved in a traumatic event at their school.
- Offer support to racialized P/VPs who have experienced harm due to their identity.

Ontario's public school principals and vice-principals want to work with our school boards and the government to help every student reach their potential. We want to oversee schools that are safe, adequately supervised and fully staffed. We want to create positive and engaging learning environments. But we can't do it alone.

We need these issues addressed and resolved immediately. We're willing to do the work. We're asking you to join us and help get it done.

Abacus Data Survey October 2025