

The Canadian School Leader:

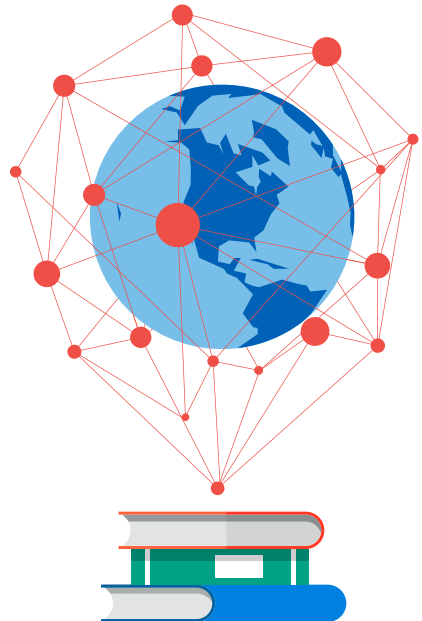
Global Forces and
Future Prospects



What are the global forces affecting the work of Canada's school leaders?

The findings of a national survey—sponsored by the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) and undertaken by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)—of 921 Canadian school leaders reveals how the following key critical forces are influencing principals' work:

- ① The changing contexts of teaching and learning, particularly related to the increasing diversity and complexity of students' needs
- ② The role of commercial interests in education
- ③ District supports for school leaders, particularly related to technology, inclusion and professional development



Key Findings

① Changing Contexts of Teaching and Learning¹

The changing contexts of teaching and learning focused on the growth of diverse and complex classroom configurations.

INCREASING NEED TO ATTEND TO STUDENTS' WELL-BEING

91% of principals perceived increases in **students' anxiety**

85% perceived increases in **depression symptoms** in students

70% perceived increases in students experiencing some form of **psychological trauma**

60% perceived increases in students living in **poverty**

INCREASING NEED TO ATTEND TO STUDENTS' LEARNING NEEDS

56% perceived increased numbers of **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** students and increased numbers of **students new to Canada**

51% perceived that fewer students came to school **prepared to learn**



Principals' perceptions of such increases may stem from a greater overall awareness of mental health issues. However, the sheer scale of the reported concerns demands attention.

¹ Reported percentages in this section do not represent the number of students estimated to be experiencing the condition, but the percentage of respondents who perceived an increase in the stated condition.

② Role of Commercial Interests in Education

Canadian principals share with colleagues in other countries, including Australia, some concerns with the encroachment of commercial activity in public education.²

SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS³ PERTAINING TO COMMERCIALIZATION



51%

of principals are very concerned about increasing costs of technology infrastructures and software



43%

are very concerned about lack of sustained support from provincial ministries leading to greater commercial involvement



33%

are very concerned about the stewardship of student data



31%

are very concerned that schools were “being run like businesses”



Principals place a very high value on public education and the provision of equitable learning opportunities for all students.

² See New South Wales Teachers Federation. 2016. *Commercialisation in Public Education (CIPS): Preliminary Report*.

³ The percentages represent respondents who ranked the item as 6 or 7 on a Likert scale of significance (1=“not at all concerned” to 7=“concerned to a great extent”).

③ District Supports for School Leaders

Principals' responses regarding the extent and array of supports provided by school districts—specifically related to supports for teaching to diversity, professional learning and professional autonomy, and technology—reflect a considerable, ongoing tension between school sites and districts regarding control over resourcing decisions.

DISTRICT SUPPORTS FOR INCLUSION

84% somewhat or strongly agreed that their districts placed a high priority on **inclusion**

only **26%** strongly agreed that their districts were proactively planning for increasing **diversity** anticipated in the future

DISTRICT SUPPORTS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY

74% of principals agreed that their districts had high levels of **trust in school leaders**

76% agreed that their districts had high levels of **trust in teachers**

66% agreed that their districts took a balanced view regarding the **role of standardized testing in assessing school performance**, meaning that about one-third felt that their districts placed less weight on teachers' assessments and professional judgment

DISTRICT SUPPORTS FOR TECHNOLOGY

48% of principals agreed that their school jurisdictions were sufficiently aware of the **effects of technology on administrator and teacher workloads**

77% agreed that their school jurisdictions were taking sufficient steps to address potential or actual **negative effects of technology** on school communities and students' learning and well-being

Implications

School jurisdiction authorities, provincial governments and policy-makers can support the work of school leaders in the following ways:



VISION, COMMITMENT AND STABILITY

Develop and resource a vision for a good public school education that prioritizes the development of their professional capacity to enhance human relationships and the vibrancy of our communities.



PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY GROUNDED IN TRUST

Improve balance between external accountability measures and trust in their professional judgment (and that of teachers).



EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Hire more in-school specialists or offer more (and more effective) professional development for teachers to enable schools to support students with special needs and enhance students' overall well-being.



NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Facilitate more collaboration between school leaders—even across system and geographical boundaries—and more opportunities for principals to work collaboratively with teachers in their schools.



POLICIES AND PROMISING PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

Work with provincial agencies, non-profit organizations, principals and district leaders to build or strengthen partnerships and initiatives to help schools develop healthy social norms surrounding technology use and social media engagement.

Future Prospects

Canada's school leaders, as teachers first, require a commitment of support to fulfill our country's most important promise to young people: a great public school education for all. In this work, school leaders will join with all Canadians in an aspiration to be more than a better version of yesterday—if not for ourselves, then for our children and youth.



This publication summarizes the results of the second part of a major two-part research initiative—sponsored by the Canadian Association of Principals and undertaken by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)—examining the key critical influences shaping the work of school leaders across Canada.

The two research reports stemming from this initiative, *The Canadian School Leader: Global Forces and Future Prospects* and *A National Study of the Impact of Electronic Communication on Canadian School Leaders* Canadian Association of Principals, are available on the ATA website at www.teachers.ab.ca. Click on **Publications>Education Research**. Ordering information for print copies is available under **Publications>Other Publications**.



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

