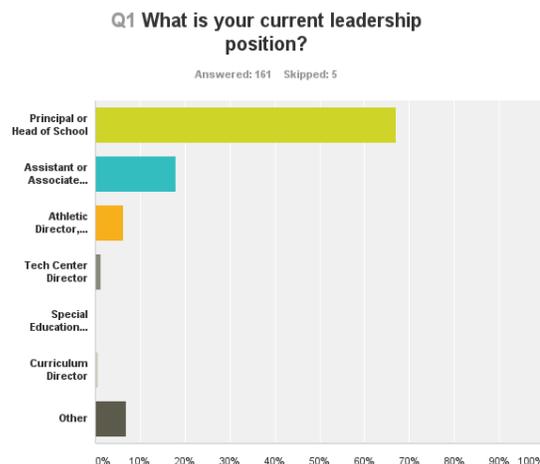


VPA 2016 Annual Education Leadership Survey Summary

Thank you to those who completed the Vermont Principals' Association survey this fall. The invitation to participate in our 18-question survey was sent to over 750 education leaders around the state, VPA members and non-members alike.

We received 165 completed surveys, up eleven from last year, our first annual – and, like last year, a 22% response rate.

85% of respondents are Principals (67% or Assistant/Associate Principals (18%). Most of the 'other' titles included 'principal,' director,' or 'head of school' so, we believe, the responses arise from a common professional experience. Thank you to the handful of Athletic Directors (6%) who completed the survey. *(maybe we should do one specifically designed for you?)*



This year's survey attempted to:

1. Establish a base-line for a few key data items that the VPA would like to track over time
2. Learn more about the actual what and why of turnover among education leaders
3. Dig deeper into the specific challenges to your leadership and your professional development needs/interests.

To track over time:

Membership rates are critical to our work

Membership rates of respondents: 91% of survey respondents are VPA members. This didn't change from last year and compares well to the VPA professional membership rate among all Vermont Principals, Heads of School, Tech Center Directors, Assistant & Associate Principals and Athletic Directors. Of reported members, 60% have their membership dues included in their contract.

Leaders' self assessments on scales of 1 to 8

<u>Feeling prepared for the job:</u>	5.50	
<u>Ability to effect sustainable change:</u>	5.94	(5.70 last year)
<u>Ability to be proactive, intentional and thoughtful in leadership:</u>	5.83	

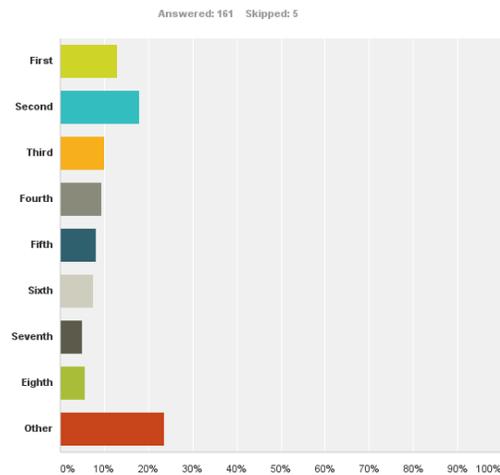
Principal Turnover:

Twenty-nine percent (29%) of you have been in your current position for eight years or more. A somewhat greater number of you are in your first or second year (31%). As expected, there is a relatively large drop in the number of leaders in their third year (from 18% in the second year to 10% currently in the third). This is followed by a slight decline each year from then on.

[Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover](#)

(2014 School Leaders Network publication)

Q2 This is my (select from drop-down list) year in this position:



Lifestyle – the Work Week

The average workweek for full-time respondents is 54 hours. The most common response to the question about how many hours you work per week was, “50 to 60.” Other comments included, “as many as it takes” “really?” and “a ton.”

It is interesting to note the long workweek AND the many comments about not having enough time.

Performance Review – does it happen and, if so, is it thorough?

72% reported having received a performance review in the last two years. 28% had not.

Of the 93 comments about thoroughness of the review, 59 were positive and 46 were negative (some held both sentiments)

It is not surprising to see that one of your common professional development interests is teacher/staff supervision and evaluation. It looks like this is highly valued, for them and for you.

Networks of Support

It was nice to see that 90% of you reach out for help, and/or respond to peer outreach, a few times a month (67%) or at least once a month (23%). In addition, personal Isolation was identified least often among the challenges we proposed to your leadership (10.5%). (see chart below*)

Many comments, too, reflect networks of support within your school and/or in your district. The value of a mentor – at least for the first year or two – is mentioned over and over. The Snelling Center’s VSLP, the League of Innovative Schools, Vermont Adult Tech Education Association, the VPA and other organizations are resources, too. A few mentioned on-line resources and social media.

One comment was, “Wow, I am thrilled to be asked this questions. I find that almost no one understands the job or the hours.” There are a few of you who undoubtedly experience real isolation. If you don’t mind, we will follow up with those of you who sounded dispirited.

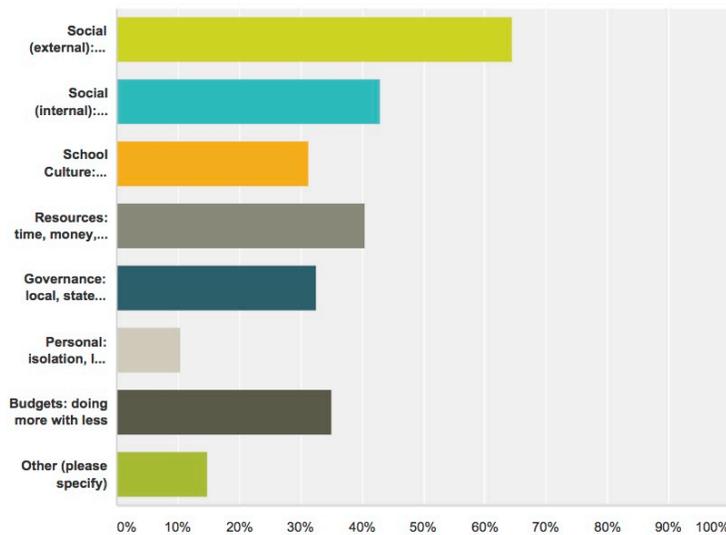
Professional Development Interests/Needs and Challenges to Leadership:

The responses to these two questions were consistently and intimately related. The following chart reflects the enormous and growing burdens of responding to social and cultural issues, outside and inside the building while trying to manage limited, and sometimes dwindling, resources.

Vermont Principals' Association Annual Survey 2016

Q15 Last year’s survey identified current challenges to your leadership. If possible, can you please identify the (up to) three that most interfere with your ability to lead?

Answered: 163 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
Social (external): poverty, trauma, substance abuse, etc.	64.42% 105
Social (internal): equity, achievement gap, behavior issues, discipline, etc.	42.94% 70
School Culture: relationships, morale, capacity	31.29% 51
Resources: time, money, staff, PD opportunities, technology, other.	40.49% 66
Governance: local, state and/or national reforms and initiatives.	32.52% 53
Personal: isolation, lack of support, reflection time, skills.	10.43% 17
Budgets: doing more with less	34.97% 57
Other (please specify)	14.72% 24
Total Respondents: 163	

To complement the chart above, these are the broad categories (many interrelated) that emerged from responses to the open-ended question about professional development interests. These are offered, generally, in order of 'popularity':

- Leadership and school culture: change creation and management, instructional leadership, effective supervision and evaluation, using data to inform action, coaching and motivating teachers, shared leadership, creating a collaborative culture of learning and compassion – for self and others
- Trauma-informed schools; social/emotional growth; effects of poverty on learning and school culture, better coordination of organizations and support services
- Closing the achievement gap; Proficiency-Based Learning, Graduation and Technology
- Budgets and resource management
- Policy and the law: Act 46, special ed, professional conduct processes, state mandates, athletic eligibility policy, professional learning communities, and more
- Best Practices and Examples for: restorative Justice, effective discipline, literacy and math curricula, global studies curricula

The Principal Pipeline

Q: Where do Principals come from? A: Teaching

Probably not a surprise, and this was anything but a thorough, scientific study, but here is a basic assessment of responses to Q1: What is your current position? And Q3: What was your previous position?

Now: 107 Principals, 39 Assistant/Associate Principals and 31 'other'

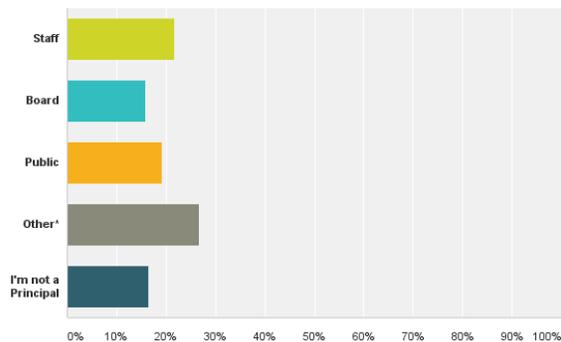
Previous: 44 Principals, 36 Assistant/Associate Principals, 49 TEACHERS and 24 'other'

Working with Various Constituencies

It appears that challenges come from everywhere. Next time, we'll take an asset-based approach to this inquiry.

Q16 Assuming that Principals have three important constituencies to work with, which one do you find most challenging, and why?

Answered: 157 Skipped: 9



The responses to 'other' were, mostly, parents, Central Office/SU and state agencies/legislature.

Oh, here's that asset-based data!

What do you love about your job? In your own words:

In addition to many responses of, "The Kids! The Students!" –

- Love Kids and love to work with a great Team and great parent feedback!
- Every day is different. The small changes I can see from the efforts I have put into it.
- What makes my work worthwhile is to see the learning that takes place in our building. Staff and students are active learners. Our families see this and feel that their students are well cared for and educated. I believe in the direction we are taking.
- What don't I love about my job? The students, staff and families are terrific. I am so fortunate to be the leader at a school focused on learning and caring for all.
- The people, all constituencies. The opportunities to grow and lead a culture.
- It's completely a act of service. The job is very hard; sometimes extremely hard. There is very little down time, if any (I am working all through the Thanksgiving Break!). But, together, staff and students are building something very unique in Rutland. Our students and teacher have done some absolutely amazing things. The school community really wants to make a difference, to "take action," and improve the world - local and global - for the better. I absolutely love being a contributor to this. I love playing a role in helping adults and students achieve beyond what they could ever imagine before. There is no doubt we are changing lives for the better. Who could ask for more? It is all very rewarding.
- I love working with young people. I love mentoring young people. I love collaborating with hard working, inspiring, innovative educators. I love using technology and the teaching others how to leverage technology to improve student engagement. What makes the work worthwhile for me is the ability to enable educators to do the work they feel called to do (remove barriers) and to support them in this hard work.

- I love the opportunity to help direct a community to honor the strengths of all its individuals
- My Administrative team and the kids are the best - this is a great place to work!
- Having students excited about learning and teachers excited about teaching.
- I love the small family atmosphere. Faculty and staff take seriously our motto of "Learning, Community, Respect."
- The time, limited as it is, to focus on student learning, growth and development.
- I love working with the students and teachers. Awakenings, realizations, and "ah ha moments" are some of the many things that make the work worthwhile.
- Every day is different, every day is a good professional challenge, working as a team with others, and I love learning and putting what I have learned to use. I like watching kids reflect and be accountable. I like seeing hard work make a difference.
- Working with students and teachers that are motivated to build a great educational experience.
- I love the opportunity to serve this community - we have a deeply professional faculty & staff and an engaged, passionate community. The work is worthwhile because of the team we have established and the opportunities to grow!
- To make a difference in the future lives of children. To have a stake in strengthening our communities. To be a patriot, if unrecognized.
- I have the best job in the world! After teaching for 21 years and being an assistant principal for 9 and dealing with the stressors that come with the AP job, to be an Activities Director is like dying and going to heaven. I work in a wonderful school system, with tremendous administrative and community support, beautiful facilities, and an amazingly talented student population...I get to organize and oversee hundreds of kids participating in a large and varied co-curricular program and I get paid very well to do it...what could be better? ;-)
- Empowering students
- Seeing the kids everyday. Interacting with them and helping them learn. Working with teachers. Problem-solving issues.
- Kids, and playing a role in shaping and sustaining my community.
- Celebrating together, so often we harp on what's not working and students and teachers are thriving in our school!
- I love seeing students achieve and grow and not just academically. It's also gratifying to see a new teacher's confidence and skills rise. Having a student or teacher give a genuine thank you.
- Problem solving and creative solutions--finding hope and working to make education better--even if it's a pinprick of hope.
- Service to students and staff.
- Knowing that I am making decisions that make a positive difference in the lives of children makes the job worth it. For example, seeing students excel in reading after providing teachers with two years of professional development in the Reader's Workshop model.

- Helping students have the most positive school experience and leave happy and proud of their accomplishments.
- Working everyday to improve the lives of the children I/we interact with on a daily basis.
- The students, staff, and families! The positive impact that we can have on students!
- The students, the faculty and support staff.
- The students who display a joy for learning; Staff who embrace high expectations for themselves and our students.
- I LOVE my job! We are a haven for students who have had difficulty in other settings. The very best part of my job is watching students who are anxious, under-confident, or who are coming from challenging social settings open up and start to reach their intellectual and personal potential
- Less than three months in with students, I have been told by parents, staff, and students that the climate is better already this year. I lose focus of this when things are difficult. At the end of the week, if I can remind myself that I am making a positive difference in both schools, I know that the work that I am doing is worthwhile. I have many students who come to my office because they want to see me, not because they have to.
- Children and families make this work worthwhile. I love looking at data to inform systems change and seeing the benefit of such change. I love supporting teachers who are passionate about their work, who take leadership and accountability in what they do.
- I love when I sense that students (or others) appreciate being taken seriously and having their concerns heard. I am inspired when teachers (especially veteran teachers) share an "aha" about how they can improve their pedagogy.
- Working with kids.
- Each and every child!
- I love knowing that children and families have a supportive school community that I am fostering.
- I have never worked in a PK-12 building. I absolutely love it! Our kids and staff grow together and take care of one another. I travel 1 hour and 20 minutes each way to get here. That's why!
- Supporting staff in students in their growth each day.
- I love these kids. I love that I am gifted with their presence each day. I love that there are teachers that are kind, firm, and with high expectations that help these kids discover a love of learning. I love that teachers are shifting to understand that they are lead learners and that if they don't walk the walk of a learner kids will not be as willing to buy into their instruction. I love a strong leadership team that is invested in improving Tier 1 instruction. I'll stop now...but there is more!
- Love working with students and staff. Everyday is an adventure and I learn something new.
- Greeting students every morning, finding successes for students, seeing teachers grow and successfully engage students, graduation smiles.
- At the start of this year as a faculty we discussed what is our "purpose." Why do we do what we do everyday, through good times and tough times. We all agreed that we "change lives." That is why I have stayed in this

sometimes difficult, demanding, and complex job for over 25 years as an Associate Principal, Co-Principal, and Principal.

- Working with middle-schoolers and the adults who work with them. Loved the fast pace and variability of each day. Seeing the excitement from both students and staff as their new learning sparked creativity, forward thinking, and possibilities.
- students students students and of course knowing that I am making a difference
- I enjoy the relationships with students, faculty and staff, and most parents. The feeling of accomplishment for the benefit of others.
- I am the principal of the elementary school in the community in which I live. This is a true honor. I get to interact with the children and families of my community on a daily basis both in and out of school, and I (fortunately) get great satisfaction from this.
- I love being in constant communication with the students. Everything we do should be for the kids
- Relationship; Watching everyone "grow/move/dance" through all stages of their lives, staff and students
- Working with students and staff on large projects that will make a positive impact on learning. Reading to and with students and helping them with their work. Thinking with teachers about how to improve what we have.
- Children; making a difference for them; providing outstanding teaching and learning to all our students; Reading to Kindergarten and 1st grade classes every week!!!
- Seeing things come together after working on a project and seeing student athletes succeed in the athletic arena, in the classroom and most importantly in their community.
- Creating opportunities for students to build positive connections and relationships to the school outside of the classroom.
- Making positive changes in the day-to-day lives of students and supporting staff to do this meaningful work.
- I love working with students through this period of their development. They are figuring out their strengths and interests - and many are, for the first time, finding interest and success in an educational setting. It is great to support and guide them through the process of self-discovery - even in the moments of challenge.
- Seeing students inspired and engaged in learning
- The children of course! And knowing despite all the heartache we are doing this work for the right reason, they are our future!
- Students and staff are great
- The kids and going into classrooms to see great learning and teaching happening.
- Making positive change in individual students, groups of students and ultimately producing a positive and productive community member.
- Helping guide students and staff while continually focusing on what is in the best interest of students.
- Every day is different. I can be the difference in someone's life on any given day.

- We commit to "what we have", not "what we wish we had"...we embrace everyone who comes through the door and own our opportunity to build the future within them.
- Positively impacting the lives of young people.
- Helping others to succeed. If I can make a difference in one kids day or for one staff member's day, then I go home feeling like I did a good day's work.
- I love that I get to build relationships with students. The students that I may have to have a discussion with regarding their behaviors are the same ones who are happy to see me at their soccer game. If I can make a positive difference in one child's life and help them see what they are capable of, it is worth all the long hours.
- I love being in a position to help make positive change and sustain successful efforts for our kids.
- Helping clear the way so teachers can do the work
- I love connecting with students and working with others who want to have a positive impact on their students.
- Working with the people - all stakeholders. The children bring much joy to my life and my job.
- I love the students who are challenging in the most positive ways, my staff who go above and beyond for students, and my administrative team who isn't afraid to tackle the tough issues in a collaborative manner.
- I get to see students develop based on the work we do as a school and as individuals collectively.
- Every day I am excited to get up to go to work. Every day is an adventure. There are always problems to solve, joyful moments with students and staff, and sense of accomplishment when the day is done; I follow the Mark Twain reference to "eating a frog" every morning. I try to take care of the difficult, challenging tasks first thing in the day so I can appreciate the rest of the day.
- I love the staff and students. There is a true dedication to all students and the community is positive and supportive.
- The ability to help young minds grow.
- Every day is a new day. I see students at their best and their worst, Sometimes that's the same student on different days. There is so much potential for growth and change.
- I love helping children and adults work towards self-actualizing academically and professionally. I see my job as removing barriers and connecting people to resources so students can learn and adults can facilitate learning.
- Working with kids, solving problems, developing new programs to meet the needs of students
- I love watching growth of students and staff.
- I really enjoy helping students, teachers, staff, and families resolve problems; I like to see collaborative efforts on the parts of staff and students; I love the people with whom I work; I love that this work is so important to our society, our democracy, and to individual students and families.
- The ability to make a difference in the lives of children - particularly those who are in need of a model/mentor connection. The challenge of helping adults explore their beliefs/ mental models and they, too, continue to grow. Connecting with others who are doing this same important work. For many of our children we are their safe place where they are always "encouraged, fed, nurtured, warm, and appreciated"!

- The kids and positive feedback from stakeholders.
- The students, faculty and staff.
- Every day is different! The variety of the work is stimulating. I love supporting staff and students and making a difference for children. It's incredible to see all of the amazing learning that happens in our school on a daily basis. I am also well paid for my efforts.
- Working with the kids. Building systems that are successful.
- That on any one day a student (past or present) will come to my office and thank me for helping them. That makes my job all worthwhile!
- Anything is possible, every day some one could learn how to read, or add :)
- Seeing the positive changes in student behavior and learning
- I love being at meetings (EST, 504, SPED, Team, Data) to find ways to help support all our students in my school. I love school events where we welcome our community members to be apart of our learning such as the Veterans Day dessert social, parent night, back to school picnics, kindergarten picnic, open house, parent conferences, Thanksgiving Feast, fire prevention and other our last day staff entertainment for our students and parents.
- Working with students
- Watching students grow and prosper!
- The students and my staff.
- Students and their achievement
- Relationships with students, staff, and faculty
- Right now the challenge of developing a rigorous program for all students.
- The kids! I love seeing the students work together and with their teachers to develop a deep understanding of their learning. When students walk across the stage at graduation, we are all so proud of them.
- I worked with 6-12th graders for 32 year and am now working with K-6. They are so cute, innocent, and eager it's like playing with puppies. How could you not smile? And my staff is so amazingly caring and dedicated that they are a joy to work with.
- Watching and hopefully helping students learn and grow personally and professionally.
- My staff, my superintendent, my board and my community are all exceptional. I am very fortunate (and selective) regarding who I surround myself with to ensure student learning and support. Additionally, VPA PL&S has given me opportunities for networking with others in the state.
- The administrative staff I work with are very supportive and skilled which makes my job a lot easier.
- The students, the staff and knowing that I can make a difference in each of their lives with a smile and encouraging word and showing my appreciation for them.
- The work that improves achievement and creates safe learning environments for my students.

- I love the closeness of my school community. The staff is amazingly hard-working and dedicated to their profession. They are always willing to think outside the box and go above and beyond on behalf of the students. We are working to shift the culture to one in which students support one another in learning and in life. I love holding safe the vision of what we want to be as a learning environment and being a person who can help make that a reality. Every teacher and student deserves to work and have fun in that kind of environment.
- Helping students and staff and knowing that I can positively make a difference
- Our students are running into school in the morning and feel strong ownership in our school. I love watching teachers, staff and students grow and learn. I love helping teachers improve their teaching. I feel very strong support from our community, too. As I write the buzz of student learning can be heard from our library. This is a special place.
- The variety. It is never boring. I have impact in the classroom directly as well as on the school as a whole (as a half-time administrator)
- Seeing students succeed at becoming self-directed learners.
- The school is small and the community is amazing. We are very tuned in to the student as a whole and work hard to support students to be the very best, well-rounded individuals they can be.
- The fact that no two days of work are the same. I enjoy working with people and attempting to figure out what they need and how I can help facilitate change
- Students and great teaching. Feeling I am supportive of good change and great instruction
- Every day is different :)
- The students, the staff, the parents,, and the Board. Knowing that students are growing a little bit each day in all facets.
- This is a hard question because it seems as though the deck is stack against us due to the heroin problem and so many young children now in foster care. There are many days when I feel like a social worker and not an educational leader. I still enjoy interacting with students.
- I love working with the kids. I think we have great kids. Watching them succeed on and of the playing fields.
- Working with students to support their learning, working with amazing teachers.
- Reasonably well compensated; reasonable level of autonomy but act 46 is a challenge; by acting out of desire to help kids and marginalizing those who don't, I can change kids' lives for the better; I am grateful its my hand on the button and not a less trustworthy person in it for all the wrong reasons
- KIDS!!!! Awesome Staff!!!!
- I love the kids, the educators, the parents, the community members, the variety of tasks, the integrity of the mission, the school environment, the creativity of problem-solving, the opportunity to move constantly between the big picture and the details, the constant opportunity to grow and the importance of the role. I love being a principal!!
- The students, seeing initiatives through to completion, and seeing students succeed

- Colleagues, students, and the opportunity to help make individual lives turn out better and happier, and to make communities stronger and better.
- My students, my staff and my families.
- I love the variety of my role. The mix of working with students and adults is interesting. You never know what problem or challenge will come through the door --so it keeps me on my toes.
- Making a difference
- The students, the staff, and the long-term positive outcomes that come with a sustained leadership team.
- I love that I get to know my students and their families on such a personal level. I love having the students for multiple years. I love having such small class size. I love the trust the community places in me. I love the impact we have on students that is long lasting. I love that my former students come back to tell me what a special school we have. I could go on forever!
- Working directly with the students, and developing ideas together to improve the culture and outcomes for our students.
- Working with kids every day
 - Empowering parents to become involved in their child's learning
 - Building relationships with students, staff, and families
- I love working with children, families and teachers, even when I need to address things and solve problems. I feel as though I make a difference somewhere, somehow, every day.
- Every day is different and working with the students is amazing.
- I love the fact that every day brings new challenges and that no two days are the same. I love trying to build consensus, momentum, and meaningful change.
- The kids!!! ...and a sense that I am helping create a better future and world.
- Working with kids who are interested in improving and becoming invested in the school community.
- I love working with the positive people who enjoy their work. The students bring smiles to my face and watching them present at their student led conferences is an example of why I love to come to school. I was so proud of what I observed.
- The students love being here, it makes teaching them very easy.
- The students, staff and community
- Trying to make it a better system for students and faculty.
- Following contact with the mentee, observing changes that take place and the increased comfort level of the principal.
- Partnering with staff to provide the best educational experience we can for the students of our town. The good work we are doing for students. The relationships and care we provide to students.

And, here's a little 'word cloud,' or five, summarizing the adjectives you shared about your school climate:

Q17 What five adjectives or short phrases describe your school climate?

Answered: 146 Skipped: 19

Positive Warm Friendly Strong Hard Working
Calm Student Community Supportive
Tense Positive Child Centered
Welcoming Population Caring Vibrant
Collaborative Growing Inclusive Safe
Creative Skeptical Challenging Staff Accepting
Overwhelmed Energetic Growing Caring Healthy
Positive Dedicated Supportive
Friendly Student Isolated Collaborative
Respectful Inclusive Welcoming Busy Connected
Growth Growing Dedicated Engaging Supportive
Welcoming Staff Safe Hard Working
Community Collaborative Commitment
Student Cooperative Respectful Trusting
Caring Willing Fun Passionate Friendly Learning
Energetic Positive
Work in Progress Mindful High Expectations
Tired Caring Positive Stressed Happy
Supportive Committed Fun Collaborative
Community Evolving Hard Working
Inclusive Thoughtful Safe Student Centered
Understanding Challenging
Student Stressed Growing Learning Challenging
Respectful Friendly Evolving Positive
Energetic Collaborative Welcoming
Caring Engaged Supportive Inclusive
Community Fun Loving Needs Dedicated
Warm Safe Unsure

Thank you for your tremendous dedication to education, your staff and Vermont's kids. The Vermont Principals' Association appreciates your help as we support the profession by understanding. (12/10/16)