

21st Century Lutheran Principal Initiative 2022 Update

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MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE & COMMISSION ON LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



21st Century Lutheran Principal Survey January 2022

Background

Martin Luther College, the Commission on Lutheran Schools, and the Conference of Presidents began a new approach to the WELS principal position called the 21st Century Lutheran Principal Initiative in 2017. The name changed to WELS Principal Credential Cohort in 2021. The goal of the initiative is as follows:

Every WELS principal is fully trained prior to receiving a school leadership call and receives the administrative release time and compensation needed to ensure success.

The goal addresses the areas of principal time, training, and compensation. A 2022 survey gathered goal-related data that could be compared to the 2017 baseline survey.

Survey

The survey had ten questions, seven of which required a numerical response to be entered and three of which were multiple choice. A copy of the survey can be found at the end of this report. This survey is identical to the 2017 survey.

The electronic survey was facilitated through Survey Monkey and was open from July 26 – August 18, 2022. The Commission on Lutheran Schools provided a list of 315 email addresses for principals of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) affiliated elementary and high schools. Temporary principals, such as pastors serving as a vacancy principal, were removed. Presidents or executive directors at Lutheran high schools were removed if a principal was also listed. As a result, 290 emails invitations were sent. Reminder emails were sent on August 2 and 9 to any who had not previously responded. Of the 290 invitations, 207 people responded for a 71% response rate.

Email Invitations	290	Surveys Responses	207
Emails Opened	265	Partially Completed	14
Surveys Clicked Through	222	Fully Completed	193

The sample is representative of school types. According to the 2021-22 WELS School Statistics published by the Commission on Lutheran Schools, 91% are Lutheran elementary schools (LES) and 9% are high schools (HS). The survey sample consisted of roughly 90% LES and 10% HS.

The responses are skewed toward larger schools. According to the 2021-22 WELS School Statistics published by the Commission on Lutheran Schools, the average WELS student population is 94 students per elementary school, 237 per high school, and 106 students per school overall. The average student population among respondents was 120 students per elementary school, 246 per high school, and 132 per school overall. A similar skew toward larger schools occurred with the 2017 survey.

Findings

Administrative Release Time

Most WELS principals are both classroom teachers and administrators. The number of hours each week that principals are released from teaching to do administrative tasks is known as Administrative Release Time (ART). The WELS adopted a minimum standard of ART in 2013 of one hour per week of ART for every 7.5 students in the school. The summary shares the percent of responding schools that follow the WELS guideline with comparisons to 2017 in parentheses. Often principals either receive no ART or have

administration time only when the pastor is teaching Catechism class. To get a handle on how common that happens, the percentages of principals who receive three or fewer hours of ART are calculated.

Administrative Release Time (ART)							
	2021-22 ART Status (2016-17)				Comparison to 2013 Synod Guideline (7.5 students / 1 Hour ART)		
	Average ART / week	Percent of full time principals	Percent with zero ART	Percent with 3 hours or fewer ART	Average Students / ART	Percent of schools that meet or exceed guideline	Percent of schools that fall below guideline
Elementary Principals	16.1 (12.8)	5% (5%)	8% (5%)	21% (18%)	10.5 (13.2)	53% (36%)	47% (64%)
High School Principals	31.3 (25.2)	19% (7%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	7.17 (11.9)	76% (38%)	24% (62%)
All Principals	17.5 (13.8)	10.7% (6%)	7.3% (5%)	18.4% (16%)	10.1 (13.03)	56.3% (37%)	43.2% (63%)

The 2022 survey demonstrated some positive trends regarding principal administrative time. The average amount of administration time per week is increasing, with principals receiving four hours more than in 2017. This difference are statistically significant ($t(407) = -3.03$, $p = 0.0026$). The 10.1 average student/ART ratio or is getting closer to the synod guideline of 7.5. Overall, more schools met or exceeded the synod ART guideline than those who did not, which is inverse of and statistically different ($t(407) = 2.37$, $p = 0.018$) than in 2017 (see figure 1).

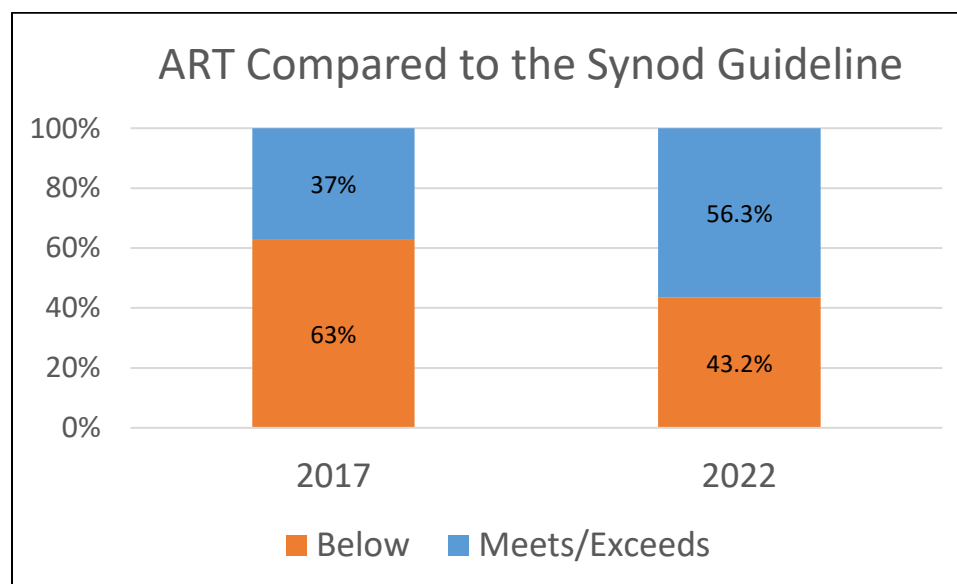


Figure 1: Percentage of responding Lutheran schools that either meet/exceed or are below the synod guideline of 7.5 students per 1 hour of Administrative Release Time (ART) each week. The change from 2017 to 2022 is statistically significant.

While the change in ART is encouraging, not all principals are affected by the improvement. The percentage of principals receiving fewer than three hours of ART each week increased.

Compensation

Compensation has several variables and is not standardized across WELS schools. Trying to get a handle on the salaries is difficult. We attempted to separate health and housing benefits from the base salary to create applicable comparisons, but some schools wrap housing into the salary and some do not. Overall, the reported salaries ranged from \$32,000 to \$80,800, and housing supplements ranged from \$581 to \$35,000 per year. Most housing allowances were in the \$14,000 to \$15,000 range. We did not inquire about health insurance benefits.

Compensation						
	Salary & Housing		Percentage of Housing by Type			
	Average Salary	Average Housing Allowance	Teacherage	Apartment	Housing Allowance	None
Elementary Principals	\$50,496 (\$43,100)	\$12,073 (\$9,500)	21% (19%)	0.6% (0.6%)	65% (69%)	15% (11%)
High School Principals	\$61,338 (\$56,700)	\$15,934 (\$12,200)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	86% (64%)	10% (36%)
All Principals	\$51,604 (\$44,100)	\$12,502 (\$9,800)	19% (18%)	0.5% (0.5%)	67% (70%)	9% (11%)

The average salary for both elementary and high school principals has increased relative to the synod guidelines (see figure 2). The synod guidelines designate principal salary rates in columns E – H according to years of experience. Reported principal salaries corresponded to column F in 2017 and to column H in 2022.

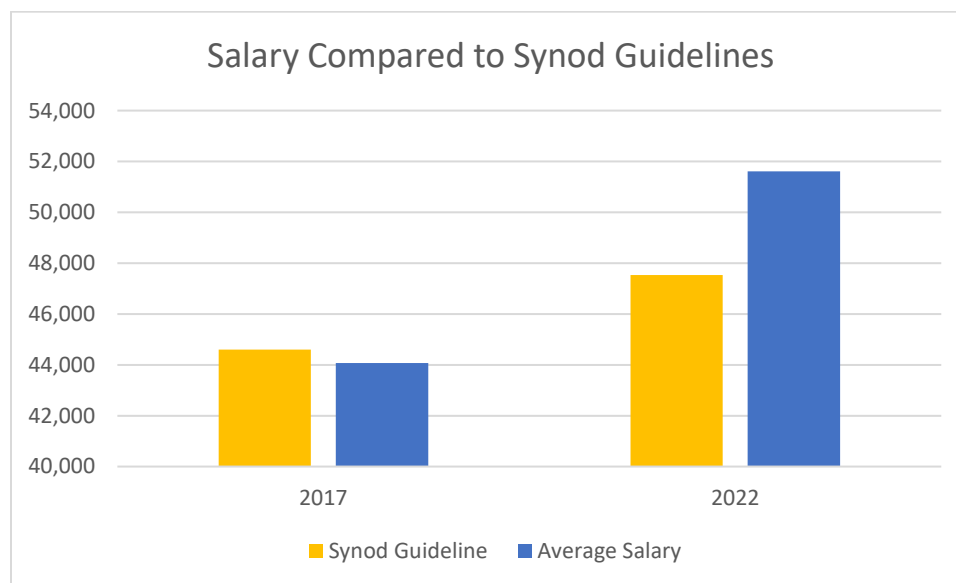


Figure 2: The reported average WELS principal salaries in 2017 and 2022 compared to column F of the 2017-18 and 2022-23 synod guidelines. The average reported years of experience in 2017 was 20 years and 21 years in 2022.

We compared the salaries in 2017 and 2022 to school size, years of experience, and degree. Salaries are moderately correlated with a principal's years of experience ($r = .49$) and weakly correlated with school size ($r = .30$) and degree ($r = .29$). In other words, it appears that principal salary has more to do with how many years a person has served in Lutheran ministry than on his responsibilities or degree.

Training & Experience

Training and experience are a particular focus of this initiative. The WELS Assignment Committee has prioritized eliminating the assignment of college graduates as principals. Additionally, the Commission on Lutheran Schools and Martin Luther College created programs designed to increase principal training and teaching experience prior to assuming the principal position. These programs are the Principal Training Program (PTP) and the WELS Principal Credential Cohorts. For example, expectations for the WELS Principal Credential Cohort is that a person has a) a minimum of three years of teaching experience before beginning training, and b) completes the equivalent of a master's degree in educational administration before becoming principal.

Training and Experience								
	Level of Training				Experience			
	Bachelor's	Pursuing Master's	Education Master's	Other (non-Education Master's, Doctorate)	Average in Years		Percentages	
					Experience in Ministry	Experience before Principal	Assigned as Principal	>3 Years Experience before Principal
Elementary Principals	24% (44%)	15% (18%)	48% (35%)	3% (2%)	20.6 (20.3)	5.1 (3.9)	39% (48%)	45% (37%)
High School Principals	10% (0%)	7% (7%)	71% (86%)	19% (7%)	30.05 (29.2)	5.93 (6.9)	43% (36%)	40% (50%)
All Principals	32% (42%)	14% (17%)	50% (39%)	4.9% (2%)	21.6 (20.9)	5.2 (4.1)	39% (47%)	45% (38%)

The data summary above includes the percentage of respondents who became a principal before they completed three years of experience. Encouragingly, the percentage of people with more three years of teaching experience prior to becoming a principal increased while the percentage of assigned principals (0 experience) decreased (see figure 3). These trends reinforce the value of this synod-wide effort.

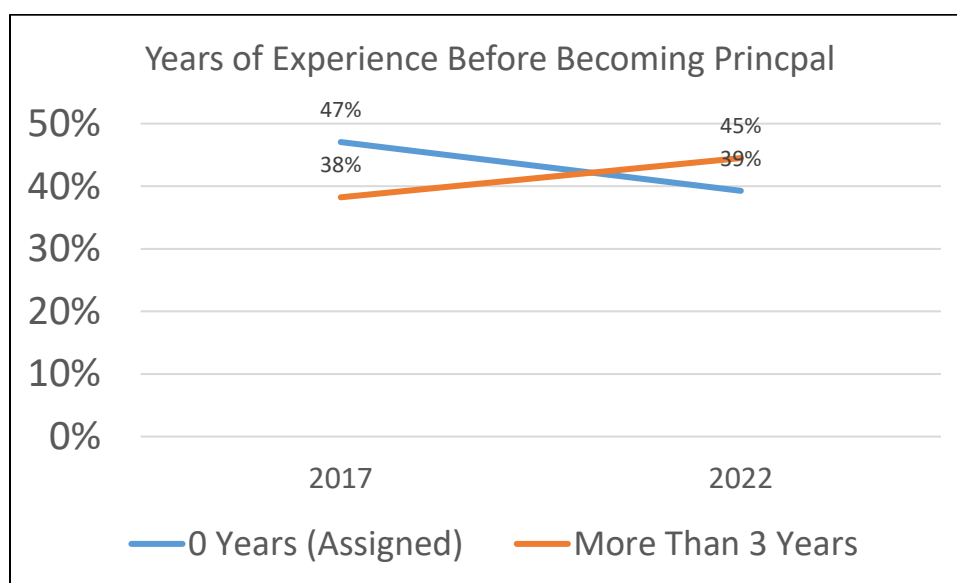


Figure 3: The percentage of principals who were assigned as principal with zero years of experience and those who became principal after 3 or more years of teaching experience first. This information never changes throughout a person's career.

More principals report having a master's degree(see figure 4). Overall, 55% reported having a master's degree or higher, which is up from 41% in 2017. The shift towards more master's degrees is statistically significant ($t(329) = -2.36, p = 0.019$). This is an encouraging trend from previous studies that found only about 26% of WELS principals having a master's degree or higher (US Department of Education, 2004).

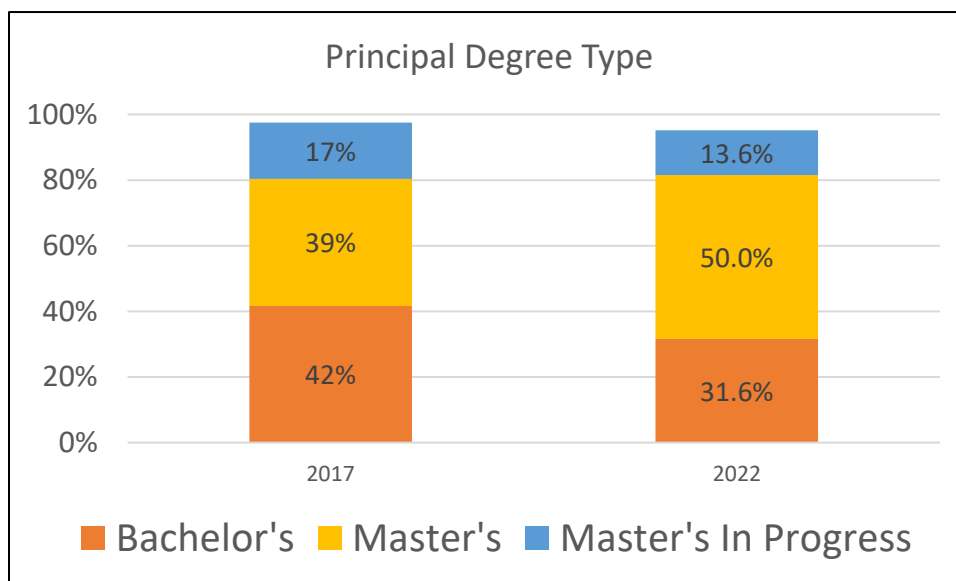


Figure 4: Reported degree types held by WELS Principals. Not included in this graph are those with a doctorate or a non-education master's.

Conclusions

The results of this study are very encouraging when compared to the 2017 baseline survey. WELS principals reported statistically significant improvements in Administrative Release Time (ART) and degree level. Additionally, the percentage of principals who were assigned out of college is decreasing.

These are important trends in light of a 2015 study that found “a sufficient number of individuals are willing to serve as WELS principals—especially if adequate levels of time, training, and compensation are provided” (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 16). For example, that study found that among all male respondents not currently serving as principals, the interest jumped from 39% to 62% interest if they had adequate time, training, and compensation. Given the current number of principal vacancies, improvements in time, training, and compensation should aid recruitment and retention.

Based on the data, we recommend the following actions for continued improvement:

1. *Emphasize principal salary based on degree-level and responsibilities (school size) rather than years of experience.* Experience has value, but rewarding advanced degrees and responsibilities can help encourage principals to expand their skills and accept calls into challenging areas of service.
2. *Continue to avoid assigning principals.* While challenging for some schools, the value of teacher experience and principal training prior to assuming the role serves both the school and principal well, in most cases.
3. *Encourage experienced teachers to proactively train for the principal position.* The WELS Principal Credential Cohort has provided strong candidates. To this point, none of the candidates have resigned. They obtain a degree before becoming principal and so can focus entirely on their calls.

4. *Require Administrative Release Time for all principal call positions.* While the average ART increased, so did the number of principals with three and fewer hours of ART. Requiring schools meet the synod's ART guideline to receive principal call lists can help.



WELS 21st Century Principal Initiative

Introduction

The WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools is beginning a new initiative to strengthen the Lutheran school principal position. This effort includes providing the time, training, and compensation principals need to be successful. Your responses to this survey will provide a baseline against which we can measure future progress. We thank you for taking a few moments to provide this valuable information.



WELS 21st Century Principal Initiative

Part One: Time

1. How many students are in your school?

2. How many hours of Administrative Release Time (ART) do you receive each **week**.

3. Please calculate and record your rate of students per weekly release time hours. (Students / ART)



WELS 21st Century Principal Initiative

Part Two: Compensation

4. What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)

5. What kind of housing benefit do you receive?

- ☐ Parsonage / Teacherage
- ☐ Apartment
- ☐ Housing or Rental Allowance
- ☐ None

6. If your school **provides a housing allowance** to own or rent your home, please list the annual housing allowance you receive.

7. To the nearest whole number, how many total years of experience do you have in public ministry?



WELS 21st Century Principal Initiative

Part Three: Training

Appendix A – Survey Questions

8. How many years of classroom teaching experience did you have before becoming a WELS principal?

9. What category best describes your WELS principal training thus far? (select one)

- ☐ Bachelor's in Education
- ☐ Bachelor's in Education + Experience
- ☐ Bachelor's in Education, Experience, and Formal / Informal Learning
- ☐ Current Enrollment in a Master's program
- ☐ Master's Degree in Administration
- ☐ Master's in Education or a related field (examples: Curriculum & Instruction; Educational Technology; Special Education)
- ☐ Master's Degree not in Education (examples: History; Music; Science; Business)
- ☐ Master's Degree plus Additional Formal Training
- ☐ Doctoral Degree



WELS 21st Century Principal Initiative

Other Information

10. What type of school do you serve?

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Appendix B – Selected Statistics

Table 1: Comparison of Bachelor's and Master's from 2017 to 2022

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	2017	2022
Mean	1.969325	2.22619
Variance	1.005226	0.95452
Observations	163	168
Pooled Variance	0.979488	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	329	
t Stat	-2.3607	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.009412	
t Critical one-tail	1.649498	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.018823	
t Critical two-tail	1.967201	

Table 2: Average Student to ART ratios in 2017 and 2022

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	2017	2022
Mean	13.03426601	10.13068612
Variance	162.5415342	143.3480018
Observations	203	206
Pooled Variance	152.8740302	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	407	
t Stat	2.3745805	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.009015869	
t Critical one-tail	1.64860612	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.018031738	
t Critical two-tail	1.965809738	

Appendix B – Selected Statistics

Table 3: Average Administrative Release Time (ART) per school

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	2017	2022
Mean	13.82758621	17.54291262
Variance	126.0722303	181.0078461
Observations	203	206
Pooled Variance	153.7425036	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	407	
t Stat	-3.02984196	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.001301446	
t Critical one-tail	1.64860612	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.002602892	
t Critical two-tail	1.965809738	

Table 4: 2017 Correlation Coefficients for salary, school size, years of experience, and degree level.

	<i>How many students are in your school?</i>	<i>What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)</i>
How many students are in your school?	1	
What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)	0.499031	1
	<i>What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)</i>	<i>To the nearest whole number, how many total years of experience do you have in public ministry?</i>
What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)	1	
To the nearest whole number, how many total years of experience do you have in public ministry?	0.554905	1
	<i>What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)</i>	<i>What category best describes your WELS principal training thus far? (select one)</i>
What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)	1	
What category best describes your WELS principal training thus far? (select one)	0.333298	1

Appendix B – Selected Statistics

Table 4: 2022 Correlation Coefficients for salary, school size, years of experience, and degree level.

	<i>How many students are in your school?</i>	<i>What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)</i>
How many students are in your school?	1	
What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)	0.308649	1
	<i>What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)</i>	<i>To the nearest whole number, how many total years of experience do you have in public ministry?</i>
What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)	1	
To the nearest whole number, how many total years of experience do you have in public ministry?	0.488463	1
	<i>What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)</i>	<i>What category best describes your WELS principal training thus far? (select one)</i>
What is your annual salary? (Do not include benefits.)	1	
What category best describes your WELS principal training thus far? (select one)	0.290044	1

Table 6: Years of Experience Before Becoming Principal

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances

	2017	2022
Mean	4.11	5.196335
Variance	36.9	45.97309
Observations	204	191
Pooled Variance	41.3	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	393	
t Stat	-1.7	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.05	
t Critical one-tail	1.65	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.09	
t Critical two-tail	1.97	