

Administrative Release Time (ART) for School Principals of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

*A summary of the thesis completed by Greg R. Schmill
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Focus of Thesis:

1. 363 WELS LES and ALHS school TEACHING principals (258 responded / 71%)
2. Average years in ministry = 18; Average years as principal = 13
3. Participants completed a 48 question on-line survey.
4. Main focus points of the research:
 - a. Current status of ART in the WELS
 - b. The change of the status of ART in recent years
 - c. Relationship between ART and Effectiveness
 - d. Relationship between ART and Attitude
 - e. What can be done to improve ART in the WELS
5. General information
 - a. Teaching/principal model will continue to be the WELS model because of
 - i. School size
 - ii. Tradition
 - iii. Finances
 - iv. Limited mission/vision of our schools
 - b. WELS school size (39% under 50, 75% under 100 students)
 - c. Decrease in LES size from 32,000 – 25,289 (1990 – 2008)
 - d. Loss of 6000+ students and 27 schools (10 closing for 2009)
 - e. ALHS now experiencing enrollment decline
 - f. Preschools enrollment grew by 4000 since 1990

Reasons for choosing to research ART

1. Personal experience of researcher
 - a. LES 13 years as a teaching principal with little to no ART
 - b. ALHS 12 years administrator plus teaching
 - c. Lived with constant struggle to balance roles and do it all
2. Steve Granberg recommended follow-up study to his 2003 ART study
3. Anecdotal evidence that ART was being cut back . . .
 - a. Because of declining enrollments and accompanying staff reductions
 - b. Because of funding concerns

4. Tremendous need in the WELS for true leadership for change
 - a. It is a time of challenge and change
 - b. Need for proactive leadership and establishing clear mission and vision
5. Duties of principals – traditional and new (have grown geometrically)
 - a. The old: Lead teacher, organist, choir director, athletic director, supervision and evaluation, administrivia
 - b. Now – true leadership in time of challenge and change, marketing, school outreach coordinators, technology director, development director, strategic planner, CEO, family ministry, parent training, tuition monitor, etc.
6. Burnout concerns – loss of good principals
7. Lack of administrative training among principals
8. Ineffective schools in the WELS.
9. Outdated model of ART – Catechism class is the only release time
10. FWLS and Second Wind: FWLS's desire to help our schools be stronger

Goals of research on ART

1. Measure current status of ART
2. Raise awareness level of ART
3. Serve as a catalyst for change so that CPS, FWLS, principals, and congregations do all they can to provide and utilize sufficient ART
4. Have opportunities to share results –
 - a. Teachers conferences
 - b. CPS publications
 - c. Individual principals, congregations, and boards.

The Survey Results

1. Current state of ART

a. Satisfied and Not satisfied

- i. 55% *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied* (Granberg 58%)
- ii. 45% *Dissatisfied* or *Very Dissatisfied* (Granberg 42%)
- iii. Principals are generally more dissatisfied than they were in the Granberg study of 2003.
- iv. *Very Satisfied* principals have 85% of ART standard, *Satisfied* have 84% of standard, *Dissatisfied* 46%, *Very Dissatisfied* 19%. (Principal satisfaction correlates well to the amount of ART.)

b. Current amount of ART compared to Self-Study and WELSSA standards

- i. **WELS self-study recommended amount 1 hour/ week for every 8.6 students.**
- ii. **WELSSA recommends 1 hour/week for every 7.5 students.**
- iii. Percent of WELS self-study standard ART being met:
 - 1997 Thiesfeldt 53% of ART standard
 - 2003 Granberg 65% of ART standard
 - 2008 Schmill 72% of ART standard
- iv. WELSSA standard: WELS schools are meeting just 63% of this standard

c. Ideal amount of ART as expressed by principals

- i. *Very Dissatisfied* principals desire 156% of standard (currently have 19%).
- ii. All except *Very Satisfied* want more than the standard (115%, 138%, 156%).
- iii. Survey stated ideal amount of ART was 1 weekly hour for every 7.4 students.
- iv. Ideal amount of ART is significantly above what is provided; principals sense they need more time to do a complete job as principal.

d. Role preferences of teaching principals

- i. 38% wish to be a full-time teacher rather than a principal. (up from 34% in the Granberg study)
- ii. 29.8% of *Very Satisfied* or *Satisfied* prefer to be a full-time teacher
- iii. 48.2% of *Very Dissatisfied* or *Dissatisfied* prefer to be full-time teacher

2. How has the state of ART changed

- a. Level of satisfaction has changed very little (58% before, now 55%)
- b. 65% of ART standard being met (2003) has now risen to 72% of ART standard
- c. Slight improvement in ART amount
- d. Went from 53% to 65% (12% points) in 6 years from 1997-2003, and up just 7% points from 2003-2008
- e. But the standard has also changed – WELSSA says 1 hour/week for 7.5 students or 10 hours per week for every 75 students. (current ART now meet 63% of WELSSA standards vs. in 2003 when 65% of self-study standards were met)

3. Relationship between ART and Effectiveness

- a. There is a strong connection between ART and the principals' perceived effectiveness in the principalship.
- b. 81% of *Very Satisfied* perceives themselves as *Effective* or *Very Effective*.
- c. 61.5% of *Very Dissatisfied* perceive themselves as *Ineffective* or *Very Ineffective*
- d. 77.2% feel that their satisfaction with ART *Affects* or *Greatly Affects* their perceived effectiveness as principals
- e. 83% (of *Sat.* and *Very Sat.*) felt that decreasing ART (to the point they would be *Dissatisfied* or *Very Dissatisfied*) would negatively impact their effectiveness

- f. 85% (of *Dis.* and *Very Dis.*) felt that increasing their ART (to the point where they would be *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied*) would make them more effective

4. Relationship between ART and Attitude

- a. There is a strong connection between Attitude and ART.
- b. 85% of the principals surveyed indicate that the satisfaction with ART *Greatly Affects* or *Affects Somewhat* their attitude as a principal.
- c. 65% of principals feel that they have *Very Positive* or *Positive* attitudes toward their role as principal
- d. 97.3% of the *Very Satisfied* principals reported having a positive or very positive attitude toward the principalship.
- e. 69.2% of the *Very Dissatisfied* principals reported themselves to be Negative or Very Negative
- f. 92% of *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied* principals indicate that reduced ART (to the point of being *Dissatisfied* and *Very Dissatisfied*) would negatively impact their attitudes toward the principalship
- g. 92% of the *Dissatisfied* or *Very Dissatisfied* principals indicate that increased ART (to the point of being *Satisfied* or *Very Satisfied*) would positively impact their attitudes toward the principalship.

6. Major Obstacles to Increasing ART

- a. Lack of funds (84%) (Granberg 64%)
- b. Lack of Personnel (53%) (Granberg 42%)
- c. Lack of Awareness or Perceived Need (31%) (Granberg 36%)
- d. Tradition (27%) (Granberg 27%)

7. Other areas connected to ART

a. Secretarial Assistance

- i. 84% now receive secretarial help (Granberg's 80%).
- ii. The more satisfied principals have secretarial help.
- iii. 55% say having a secretary *Greatly Affects* the principal's attitude, with another 34% *Affects Somewhat*

b. Professional Growth

- i. Those receiving financial support dropped from 92% to 86%.
- ii. 76% of principals do not have advanced degree.
- iii. Of those without a degree 24% are working on one, up from 7%.
- iv. Of those not working on a degree, 52.4% indicate that a lack of funding *Greatly Affects* or *Affects Somewhat* their seeking of a degree.
- v. Of those not working on a degree, 50% have no desire to work toward such a degree.

c. Additional duties

- i. 214 of 258 have duties in addition to principal and teacher
- ii. 118 coach, 95 are technology directors, 91 are athletic directors, 68 run VBS, 39 teach Adult Bible Class
- iii. Time spent on additional duties ranges from 1-18 hours each week
- iv. Areas on which principals would like to spend more time on
 - 1) Personal spiritual development (this impacts attitude also)
 - 2) Promotion of school in community
 - 3) Strengthen school spiritual focus
 - 4) Parent communication and involvement
 - 5) Promotion of school in congregation
 - 6) Cultivation of school prospects
 - 7) Curriculum development
 - 8) Supervision of instruction
 - 9) Strengthen school culture/climate
 - 10) Staff development

Key Positive Points

1. There has been some improvement in the state of ART.
2. Many principal comments demonstrate strong faith of these men
 - a. Pointing to Scripture
 - b. Trust in God and leaders
 - c. Dedicated servants
3. Of those principals without an advanced degree, more principals are now in post-graduate programs related to school administration and leadership (23.7% up from 7%)
4. Schools that meet the ART standards have satisfied or very satisfied principals.
5. Many principals do desire to teach--62% desire to be a teacher in addition to principal duties. This is good in a system where we will continue to have teaching principals.
6. Percentage of principals with secretarial help is up 4 percentage points.
7. 214 principals serve church/school in other ways – what talented people!
8. Percentage who turned in surveys (71%). Concern exists.

Disappointments

1. While we research and plan, WELS schools continue to reach less and less children and families (sphere of influence is shrinking), to cut back, and to close. Simply giving more time to the principal may be too little too late. Mentoring programs, Leadership Institutes, etc. must be part of solution.

2. There is very little research on teaching principals that is available and applicable. (As a result, some simply conclude that “no one else in the WELS has a full-time principal, so we don’t need one either.”)
3. Principal comments also demonstrate
 - a. Sadness, frustration, exhaustion
 - b. Endless loop of frustration: “pray for our schools!”
 - c. Sense of being overwhelmed
4. Obstacles of lack of funding and personnel are difficult to overcome (vs. a more simply corrected “lack of awareness”).
5. Only 24% of principals have a post-secondary degree relating to school administration and leadership.
6. Financial assistance from congregations for principal continuing education tuition dropped from 92% to 86% and only 55% of the principals felt funding was sufficient.
7. Principals may not receive administrative leadership training due to lack of interest, lack of funds, other responsibilities, etc
8. Perfect Storm #1: Only 50% of those without a degree and not taking courses desire to take courses; 38 % prefer not to be principals and 76% have no training and ½ of those desire no training, Perfect storm of no time, no training, no desire, no money for training, etc.

Most Significant Findings

1. 38% of WELS principals would prefer not to be principals; among those *Dissatisfied* or *Very Dissatisfied*, 48.2% prefer to be a teacher only.
2. While the percentage of ART has gone up, so has what is expected of principals (outreach, technology, athletic directorship, parent issues, marketing, fund-raising, desire for excellence, generational differences, etc.). The amount of ART standard is also increased in WELSSA.
3. Ideal amount of ART is significantly above what is provided, principals sense they need more time to do a complete job as principal
4. Obstacles – 84% lack of funds (up considerably from 64% Granberg lack of funds) - - and that’s before current financial crunch
5. Obstacles – 53% lack of personnel (Granberg 42%)
6. FINANCES are the key! (lack of funds = 84%) Having principals with time and training to be leaders of schools is being undone by financial concerns (funding for subs and funding for schools)
7. Lack of excellent principals is a concern in the majority of school systems studied and school systems are looking for ways to provide quality leadership.
8. The 39% of WELS schools that are under 50 students may need to exceed current standards.

Aha's

1. Is WELS heading toward a crisis of leadership? Key question: Can 395,000 WELS members, 197,000 male WELS members produce 350+ WELS school principals?
2. If time is provided, it must be utilized well – otherwise – say goodbye to ART.
3. Providing time will not be enough. There is a need for principal mentoring, Leadership Institutes, etc., to help principals get time and use time.
4. Number of principals receiving financial support for continuing education dropped from 92% to 86%.
5. Our 150 year old model of Lutheran schools and school administration/leadership is in need of change.
6. Expectations of schools and hence, principals, has skyrocketed.
7. A perfect storm #2:
 - a. WELS has the highest percent of principals who are currently teaching in addition to serving as principals
 - b. and is tied for having the least number of years spent teaching before becoming a principal,
 - c. and is third lowest on average annual salary paid to the school principal.
 - d. and has the most average hours per week spent by the principals on all school related activities at 61 hours per week
8. Public school teaching principals in US and Canada have the same challenges of
 - a. “role conflict stress” & “role ambiguity” & “lack of someone to delegate to”
 - b. “trying to run the school from the classroom”
 - c. “lack of release time for teacher supervision”
 - d. “identity crisis” “schizo problem”
 - e. “Inability to set a VISION”
9. Larger schools provide more sufficient ART and have more satisfied principals.
10. Small schools are having an especially difficult time providing sufficient ART.
11. Small school principals feel they need quite a bit more ART than the standard. Small school principals need more than the 1 hour for every 8.6 students
12. Satisfied with ART principals → Effective principals → Effective schools
13. Dissatisfied with ART principals → Ineffective principals → Ineffective schools
14. Satisfied with ART principals → Positive Attitude principals → positive schools
15. Dissatisfied with ART principals → negative attitude principal → negative schools
16. Positive attitude also depends on spiritual level of the principal.

Key recommendations

1. Give thanks and pray.
2. Recognize need for change.
3. Set and unite behind congregation/school mission and vision
4. Determine school's mission, vision, and purpose; and then determine the role of principal within that mission, vision, and purpose
5. Increase awareness of need for ART with board, Church Council, CCCW, pastors, etc.
6. Complete WELSSA accreditation
7. Annual ART review process within each school (since each school is unique ...)
8. Evaluate and revise ART recommendations
9. Overcome Obstacle #1 – Funding
10. Overcome obstacle #2 – Personnel
11. Provide preservice and inservice training for principals (Leadership Institutes)
12. Continue the principal apprenticeship and administrator candidate training programs
13. Implement a new principal mentoring program
14. Provide relief from additional duties
15. Provide or increase secretarial support

Questions still needing to be asked

1. What are the teachers and pastors view of principalship?
2. What additional compensation is provided to the principal?
3. In last 5 years has the principal's ART been reduced due to _____?
4. In the last 5 years, what has most greatly increased the time the principals need for administration?
5. What is the principal's role in each school? Is there unity in the congregation and leaders on this role?

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