Selected Characteristics of Principals and Assistant Principals in Wisconsin Public Schools, 1999-00 to 2019-20

Region 10 Comprehensive Center

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Executive Summary

This policy brief, produced by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as part of the Region 10 Comprehensive Center, is one in a series which examines selected topics related to Wisconsin's educator workforce. This brief presents a descriptive profile of Wisconsin's principal and assistant principal labor force over the past 20 years in terms of key attributes such as counts of both types of administrators, selected demographic characteristics (including gender, race/ethnicity, age, and years of experience), and distribution across locale type (urban, suburban, town, rural) and region of the state. Other briefs in this same series track these same trends for teachers in Wisconsin public schools, along with trends in mobility/stability and compensation among both teachers and principals.

Specific questions this brief addresses are as follows:

- How has the number of principals and assistant principals working in Wisconsin public schools changed over the past two decades, and how does this compare to trends in student enrollment?
- How has the distribution of Wisconsin principals and assistant principals by locale type and region of the state (including the state's largest districts) changed over the past two decades?
- How have selected characteristics of Wisconsin's principals and assistant principals changed over time?

Key findings include the following:

- Wisconsin public schools collectively employed a total of 1741 principals and 829 assistant principals (APs) in 2019-20, an increase of 69 principals (4.1%) and 138 APs (20.0%) from 1999-00 staffing levels. Year-to-year fluctuation in the number of principals statewide has been minimal, while the number of APs has seen somewhat greater year-to-year fluctuation.
- The increase in principals and APs is somewhat divergent from overall trends in student enrollment, in the sense that student enrollment in grades PK-12 over the same 20-year timeframe decreased by 22,389 (-2.6%), with most of the decrease occurring over the past seven years (2013-14 to 2019-20). Among other possible explanations, these trends imply that districts may be adding building-level leadership roles (particularly AP positions) to focus on specific issues such as school culture and climate, teacher development, and family engagement, even in schools which face declining enrollment.
- Looking at the distribution of principals by *district locale type* (Urban, Suburban, Town, Rural) over the past eight years, the number of principals working in Wisconsin districts with City, Suburb, and Town designations has remained mostly stable over the past eight years, while the number of principals working in Rural districts has increased by more than 50 positions (11.5%).
- The largest number of APs statewide are working in City districts, and City districts were also responsible for the largest numerical increase in APs between 2012-13 and 2019-20.
- Looking at the distribution of Wisconsin principals and APs by *region*, CESA 1 (in southeastern Wisconsin) continues to have the largest number of both principals and APs, although growth in

both position types within CESA 1 over the past 20 years has been very modest compared to increases in other CESAs (such as 2, 6, and 7).

- Several CESAs comprised largely of smaller rural districts (such as CESAs 3, 8, and 10) lost both principals and students between 1999-00 and 2019-20, but saw their member districts add small numbers of AP positions. This suggests that APs may represent an emerging strategy for fulfilling principal-type roles in districts that face stagnant or declining enrollment.
- Wisconsin's principal workforce has steadily become more female over the past 20 years, to the point that gender discrepancies among principals have nearly disappeared. This same trend is evident with assistant principals, although males still outnumber females by a 54:46 ratio. However, gender discrepancies exist across grade levels, with higher proportions of female principal and assistant principals at the elementary level than at the middle school and high school levels.
- In terms of the race/ethnicity of Wisconsin public school principals and APs, Hispanic/Latinx principals and APs (who comprise less than 2% of the state's principals) remain particularly under-represented in relation to the share of Hispanic/Latinx students in public schools statewide (12.6% of statewide public school enrollment).
- Black principals and APs are under-represented as well (less than 6% of principals and APs vs. 9% of students), and the percentage of APs statewide who are Black decreased by two percentage points over the last 20 years (from 7.4% of all APs in 1999-00 to 5.3% in 2019-20). Asian and Native American principals and APs represent less than 1% of all principals and APs statewide, compared to 4.2% and 1.1% of students in 2019-20, respectively.
- Exacerbating the statewide mismatch between students of color and school leaders, most of the state's principals and APs of color work in a relatively small number of districts. In 1999-00, approximately 85% of the principals of color, and 92% of the APs of color, worked in the state's five largest school districts (Milwaukee, Madison, Kenosha, Green Bay, and Racine). While this concentration has decreased somewhat over time, in 2019-20, about 75% of both principals and APs of color in the state still work in the five largest districts, even though those districts include less than half (approximately 48%) of Wisconsin's students of color.
- In terms of the age of Wisconsin principals and APs, a gradual but unmistakable trend is that both roles have gotten younger over the past two decades. The average age of Wisconsin principals and APs has decreased modestly over the past two decades (by 1.3 and 1.8 years, respectively), with most of the decrease among principals' average age occurring in just four years (2011-14) – a potential by-product of principal retirements associated with Act 10.
- Over half of Wisconsin's principals have been working in the state in any capacity (as defined by DPI) for more than 20 years, and another third have been working between 11-19 years. This implies that a substantial portion of principals will be approaching retirement age over the next decade, making it imperative to have a "pipeline" of candidates ready and able to replace them.
- In terms of educational attainment, by far the largest share of both principals and APs continues to hold a Master's degree, with little change over the past 20 years. An interesting trend, however, is an increase in the number of principals holding a Bachelor's as their highest degree; while this group is still a small share of principals overall, it has more than doubled over time. Decreases in principals holding degrees above a Master's accelerated in the years immediately

following Act 10, when retirements might have forced less-credentialed administrators into the principal and AP ranks.

Introduction and Guiding Questions

This policy brief, produced by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as part of the Region 10 Comprehensive Center, is one in a series which examines selected topics related to Wisconsin's educator workforce. This brief presents a descriptive profile of Wisconsin's principal and assistant principal labor force over the past 20 years in terms of key attributes such as counts of both types of administrators, selected demographic characteristics (including gender, race/ethnicity, age, and years of experience), and distribution across locale type (urban, suburban, town, rural) and region of the state. Other briefs in this same series track these same trends for teachers in Wisconsin public schools, along with trends in mobility/stability and compensation among both teachers and principals.

Specific questions this brief addresses are as follows:

- How has the number of principals and assistant principals working in Wisconsin public schools changed over the past two decades, and how does this compare to trends in student enrollment?
- How has the distribution of Wisconsin principals and assistant principals by locale type and region of the state (including the state's largest districts) changed over the past two decades?
- How have selected characteristics of Wisconsin's principals and assistant principals changed over time?

About the Data

The data used to produce this brief come from publicly-available staff files maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Specifically, DPI produces data files each year for all licensed staff working within Wisconsin public schools which include selected demographic characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, age via year of birth), highest degree attained, compensation (salary and fringe), years of experience, work location (by school and district), type of license held, and FTE level. Cross-year matching at the individual level was done for 2016-17 and later using unique staff IDs assigned by DPI. Prior to 2016-17, matches were done by last name, first name, gender, race/ethnicity, and birth year, with approximately 1% of individuals who cannot reliably be matched over time dropped from the matching process each year.[1]

For this and other briefs within the series, we define principals as staff whose primary role is as a principal (measured by having a ratio of FTE in principal assignments to total FTE of 0.5 or higher, and a total FTE of at least 0.5). This same definition is applied to assistant principals. Thus, a relatively small number of staff who have principal/assistant principal *and* other assignments (such as principals who

[1] We also excluded the less than 1% of individuals working in more than four schools in any one year to reduce complexity in reporting school-based characteristics and mobility.

also teach) are excluded from the descriptive statistics below, as are staff who work less than half-time. In the case of principals and assistant principals who work in multiple schools during the same school year, we weighted their participation in some instances (such as the distribution by geographic locale and region) by their FTE level, in order to keep this group in the analysis set.

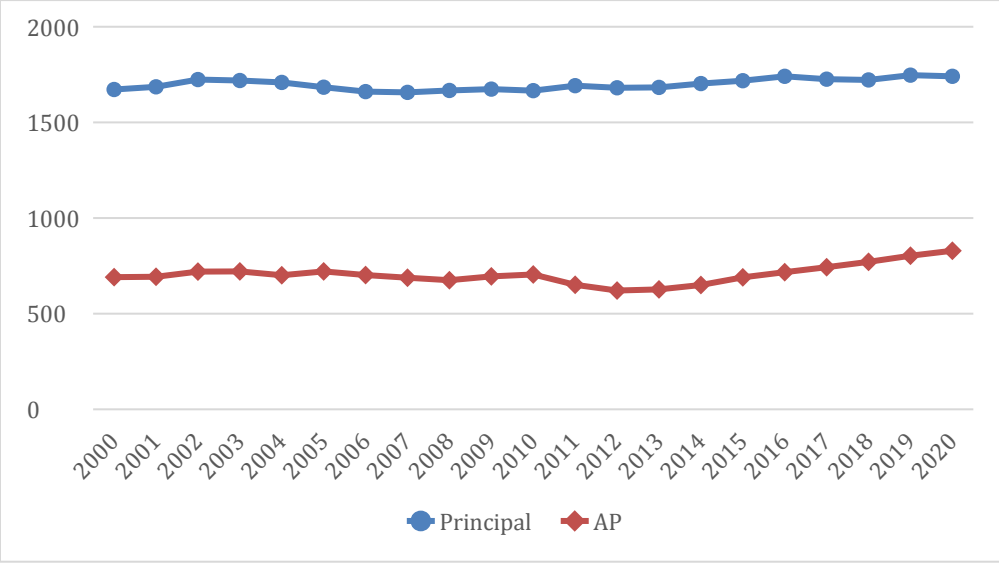
Key Findings

How has the number of principals and assistant principals working in Wisconsin public schools changed over the past two decades, and how does this compare to trends in student enrollment?

Wisconsin public schools collectively employed a total of 1741 principals and 829 assistant principals (APs) in 2019-20, an increase of 69 principals (4.1%) and 138 APs (20.0%) from 1999-00. Of the 2269 schools operating in Wisconsin, 2000 employed principals at least on a part-time basis in 2019-20 (as principals can work across multiple schools), meaning that 269 schools did not have a principal.

From year to year, the number of principals in Wisconsin has remained relatively stable, as shown in Figure A below, ranging from a high of 1747 in 2018-19 to a low of 1657 in 2006-07. The number of APs has seen somewhat more year-over-year fluctuation over the past two decades, from a high of 829 (across 605 schools) in 2019-20 to a low of 621 (across 434 schools) in 2011-12 (which was the first year following the passage of Wisconsin's controversial Act 10, which curtailed the influence of public sector unions such as those representing school staff). Reasons for the decline in APs (but not principals) are not entirely clear, although one obvious explanation is that schools in most cases continue to need a principal even if declining enrollment and/or budget cuts forced them to cut assistant principal (and teacher positions).

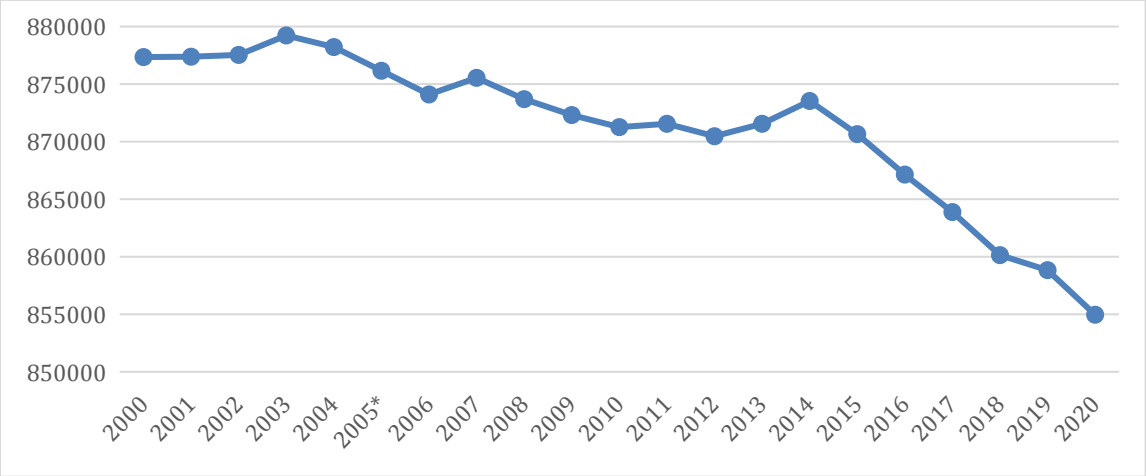
Figure A: Number of Principals and Assistant Principals in Wisconsin Public Schools



The increase in principals and APs is somewhat divergent from overall trends in student enrollment, in the sense that the number of *students* enrolled in Wisconsin public schools in grades PK-12 over this same 20-year timeframe (Figure B) decreased by 22,389 (-2.6%) - most of which has occurred in the

past seven years (between 2013-14 and 2019-20). Growth in the number of principals and APs in Wisconsin public schools during a time of decreasing student enrollment may indicate that schools are adding more specialized roles for some building-level administrators, such as focusing on family engagement, teacher development, or student behavior.

Figure B: Wisconsin Public School Enrollment, 1999-00 to 2019-20 (Grades PK-12)



*2005-06 state enrollment data were impacted by a new state data system, so for this year (with DPI's agreement) we report 2005-06 data in Figure B (876,158) as the midpoint between the 2004-05 (878,217) and 2006-07 (874,098) counts. DPI's official 2005-06 enrollment count remains 863,495.

How has the distribution of Wisconsin principals by locale type and region of the state (including the state's largest districts) changed over the past two decades?

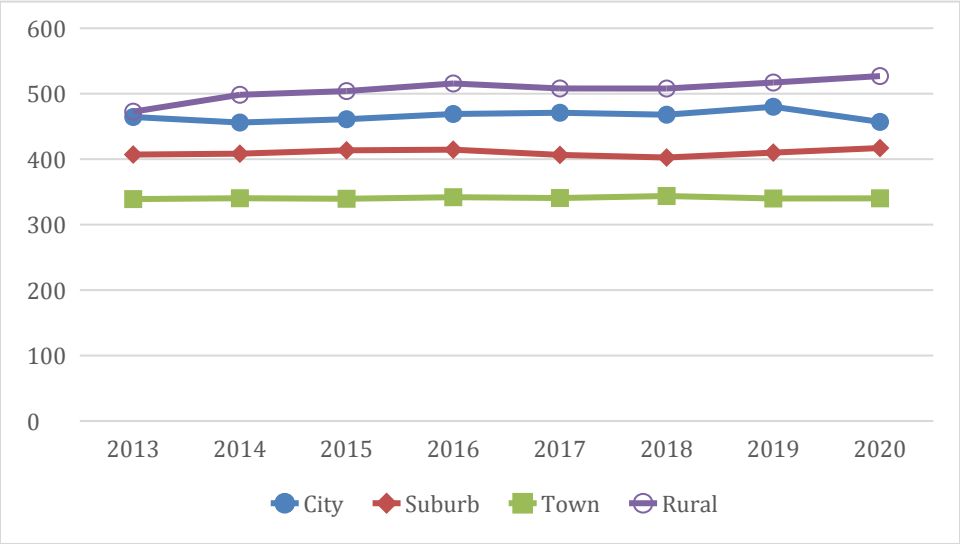
In terms of where Wisconsin public school principals and APs are employed, and where the most growth/loss in principal and AP positions has occurred, one useful comparison over time is across the four primary locale codes (City, Suburban, Town, Rural) developed by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (Geverdt, 2015) for school districts nationwide. Descriptions of the four locale types, along with their respective sub-types, appear in Appendix A. Figures C and D below show counts of Wisconsin public school principals and APs by locale type over the past eight years (which represents the years for which comparable locale code data are available); Tables 1 and 2 provide a summary of changes (in both principal/AP counts and percentage change), as well as "market share" for each of the four locale types (the percentage of all principals and APs statewide working in City, Suburb, Town, and Rural schools, respectively).

As shown in Figure C and Table 1, the number of principals working in Wisconsin districts with City, Suburb, or Town designations has remained mostly stable over the past eight years (with the exception of a relatively large decrease in principals working in City districts from 2018-19 to 2019-20), while the number of principals working in Rural districts has increased by more than 50 positions (11.5%). These same trends are reflected in the "market share" of principals for each locale type (Table 1), which declined for every locale type except Rural districts.

Meanwhile, Figure D and Table 2 show that the largest number of APs statewide are working in City districts, and City districts were responsible for the largest numerical increase in APs between 2012-13

and 2019-20. At the same time, the number of APs in *each* of the four locale types has grown since 2012-13, and has grown the most (percentage-wise) in Rural districts (40.4%).

Figure C: Counts of Wisconsin Public School Principals by Locale Type, 2012-13 through 2019-20*



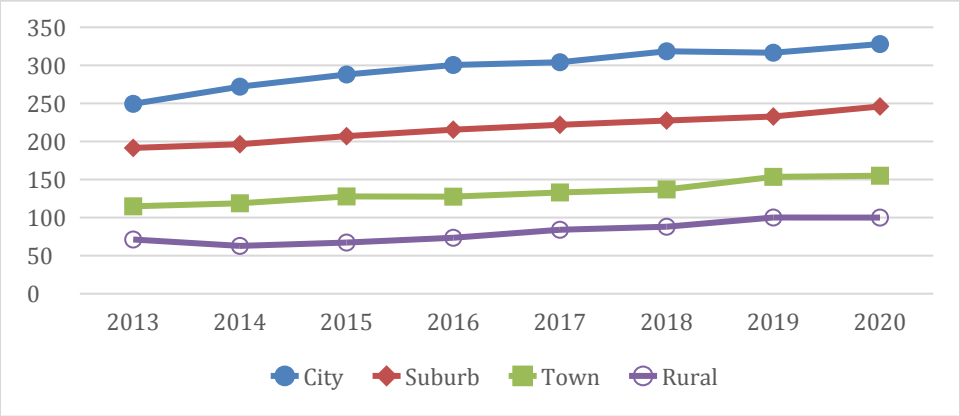
*Note: Principals may work in multiple schools (and thus, multiple locale types), so counts are weighted in these instances by their FTE at each school.

Table 1: Principal Count, Percent Change, and "Market Share," 2012-13 and 2019-20, by Locale Type*

Locale Type	# Principals		Change in Principals		Statewide Market Share	
	2012-13	2019-20	#	%	2012-13	2019-20
City	464.4	456.9	-7.5	-1.6%	27.6%	26.2%
Suburb	407.0	417.0	10.0	2.4%	24.2%	24.0%
Town	339.0	340.2	1.1	0.3%	20.1%	19.5%
Rural	472.6	526.9	54.4	11.5%	28.1%	30.3%
Total	1683	1741	58	3.4%	100.0%	100.0%

*Note: Principals may work in multiple schools (and thus, multiple locale types), so counts are weighted in these instances by their FTE at each school.

Figure D: Wisconsin Public School Assistant Principals by Locale Type, 2012-13 through 2019-20*



*Note: APs may work in multiple schools (and thus, multiple locale types), so counts are weighted in these instances by their FTE at each school.

Table 2: AP Count, Percent Change, and "Market Share," 2012-13 and 2019-20, by Locale Type*

Locale Type	# APs		Change in APs		Statewide Market Share	
	2012-13	2019-20	#	%	2012-13	2019-20
City	249.5	328.0	78.6	31.5%	39.8%	39.6%
Suburb	191.6	246.0	54.5	28.4%	30.6%	29.7%
Town	114.8	155.0	40.2	35.0%	18.3%	18.7%
Rural	71.2	100.0	28.8	40.4%	11.4%	12.1%
Total	627.1	829	201.9	32.2%	100.0%	100.0%

*Note: APs may work in multiple schools (and thus, multiple locale types), so counts are weighted in these instances by their FTE at each school.

Tables 3 and 4 provide a summary of changes between 1999-00 and 2019-20 for the state's five largest districts. **The number of both principals and APs in Milwaukee, the state's largest district by far, have declined over time, particularly in the case of APs (with 73 fewer AP positions in MPS in 2019-20 compared to 1999-00), whereas the number of principals and APs in each of the other four urban districts have increased in most cases. These trends largely align with changes in student enrollment - except for Racine, where student enrollment has declined but the number of administrators has increased. Similarly, the statewide "market share" of urban districts shows that in 1999-00, the five urban districts collectively employed 17.2% of all principals and 37.6% of all APs statewide; in 2019-20 these figures had declined to 16.9% and 29.4%, respectively - largely as a result of decreases in both position types in Milwaukee.**

Table 3: Principal Count, Percent Change, and Market Share, 1999-00 and 2019-20, Five Largest Districts

District	# Principals		Change		% Change in Student Enrollment	Statewide Market Share of Principals	
	1999-00	2019-20	#	%		1999-00	2019-20
Milwaukee	147	135	-12	-8.2%	-25.1%	8.8%	7.8%
Madison	43	50	7	16.3%	7.6%	2.6%	2.9%
Kenosha	35	39	4	11.4%	5.6%	2.1%	2.2%

Green Bay	34	42	8	23.5%	3.6%	2.0%	2.4%
Racine	28	28	0	0.0%	-17.5%	1.7%	1.6%
Total	287	294	7	2.4%	-13.5%	17.2%	16.9%

Table 4: AP Count, Percent Change, and Market Share, 1999-00 and 2019-20, Five Largest Districts

District	# APs		Change		% Change in Student Enrollment	Statewide Market Share of APs	
	1999-00	2019-20	#	%		1999-00	2019-20
Milwaukee	196	123	-73	-37.2%	-25.1%	28.4%	14.8%
Madison	21	33	12	57.1%	7.6%	3.0%	4.0%
Kenosha	9	17	9	88.9%	5.6%	1.3%	2.1%
Green Bay	15	30	15	100.0%	3.6%	2.2%	3.6%
Racine	19	41	22	115.8%	-17.5%	2.7%	4.9%
Total	260	244	-16	-6.2%	-13.5%	37.6%	29.4%

Looking at the distribution of Wisconsin principals and APs by *region*, Tables 5 and 6 show the number of principals and APs (and percentage of the statewide total), respectively, for each of Wisconsin's 12 Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) in selected years (1999-00, 2009-10, and 2019-10). **CESA 1 (in southeastern Wisconsin) continues to have the largest number of both principals and APs, although growth in both positions over the past 20 years has been very modest compared to increases in CESAs 2, 6, and 7. One potentially interesting finding is that while several CESAs comprised largely of smaller rural districts (such as CESAs 3, 8, and 10) lost both principals and students between 1999-00 and 2019-20, their member districts added small numbers of APs. This suggests that APs may represent an emerging strategy for fulfilling principal-type roles in districts that face stagnant or declining enrollment.**

Table 5: Principal Count and Percent Change in Selected Years, by CESA

CESA	1999-00		2009-10		2019-20		Principal Change 1999-00 to 2019-20		% Change in Student Enrollment 1999-00 to 2019-20
	# Principals	% of State Total	# Principals	% of State Total	# Principals	% of State Total	#	%	
1	438	26.2%	450	27.0%	445	25.6%	7	1.6%	-6.2%
2	261	15.6%	284	17.0%	291	16.7%	30	11.5%	12.3%
3	61	3.6%	47	2.8%	56	3.2%	-5	-8.2%	-18.2%
4	85	5.1%	78	4.7%	85	4.9%	0	0.0%	-2.1%
5	122	7.3%	113	6.8%	121	7.0%	-1	-0.8%	-11.0%
6	179	10.7%	183	11.0%	199	11.4%	20	11.2%	1.4%
7	160	9.6%	172	10.3%	186	10.7%	26	16.3%	2.5%
8	61	3.6%	52	3.1%	51	2.9%	-10	-16.4%	-23.8%
9	73	4.4%	69	4.1%	74	4.3%	1	1.4%	-12.1%
10	86	5.1%	72	4.3%	81	4.7%	-5	-5.8%	-5.1%
11	109	6.5%	111	6.7%	115	6.6%	6	5.5%	3.5%
12	37	2.2%	35	2.1%	37	2.1%	0	0.0%	-19.2%
Total	1672	100.0%	1666	100.0%	1741	100.0%	69	4.1%	-2.5%

Table 6: AP Count and Percent Change in Selected Years, by CESA*

CESA	1999-00		2009-10		2019-20		AP Change 1999-00 to 2019-20		% Change in Student Enrollment 1999-00 to 2019-20
	# APs	% of State Total	# APs	% of State Total	# APs	% of State Total	#	%	
1	327	47.3%	310	44.0%	329	39.7%	2	0.5%	-6.2%
2	102	14.8%	120	17.0%	165	19.9%	63	62.0%	12.3%
3	7	1.0%	5	0.7%	6	0.7%	-1	-14.3%	-18.2%
4	19	2.7%	23	3.3%	24	2.9%	5	26.3%	-2.1%
5	33	4.8%	30	4.3%	44	5.3%	11	33.3%	-11.0%
6	65	9.4%	74	10.5%	77	9.3%	12	18.5%	1.4%
7	53	7.7%	59	8.4%	74	8.9%	21	39.6%	2.5%
8	8	1.2%	11	1.6%	16	1.9%	8	100.0%	-23.8%
9	29	4.2%	25	3.5%	32	3.9%	3	10.3%	-12.1%
10	17	2.5%	18	2.6%	21	2.5%	4	23.5%	-5.1%
11	20	2.9%	20	2.8%	30	3.6%	10	50.0%	3.5%
12	11	1.6%	10	1.4%	11	1.3%	0	0.0%	-19.2%
Total	691	100.0%	705	100.0%	829	100.0%	138	100.0%	-2.5%

How have selected characteristics of Wisconsin's principals and assistant principals changed over time?

The next section examines changes in Wisconsin's principal and assistant principal force over the past two decades in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, age, years of teaching experience (both total and local), and highest degree held.

Wisconsin's principal workforce has steadily become more female over the past 20 years, to the point that the gender discrepancy among principals has nearly disappeared (Figure E). This same trend is evident with assistant principals (Figure F), though males still outnumber females by a 54:46 ratio.

Figure E: Wisconsin Principals by Gender

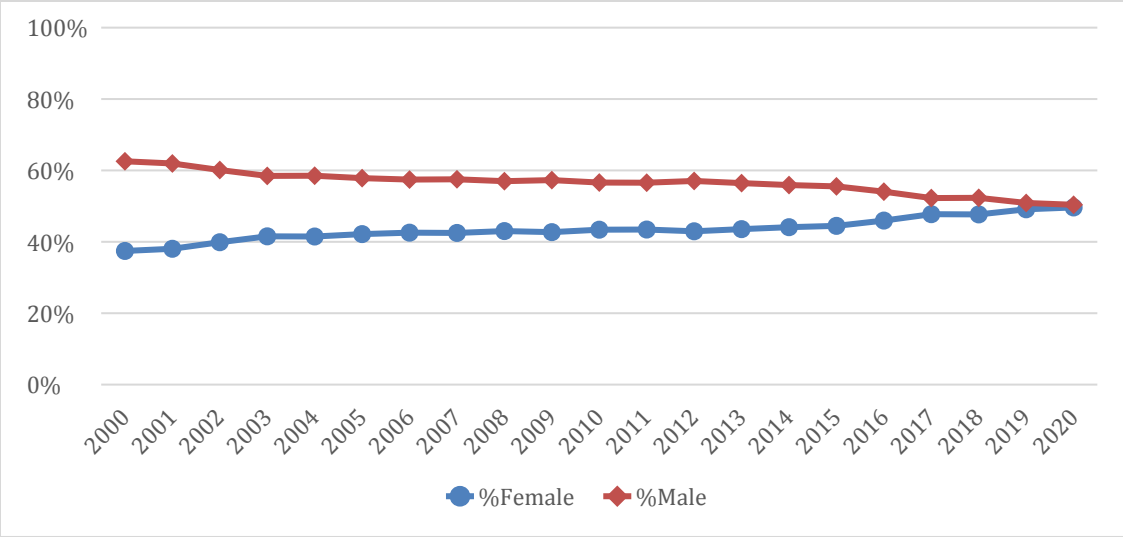
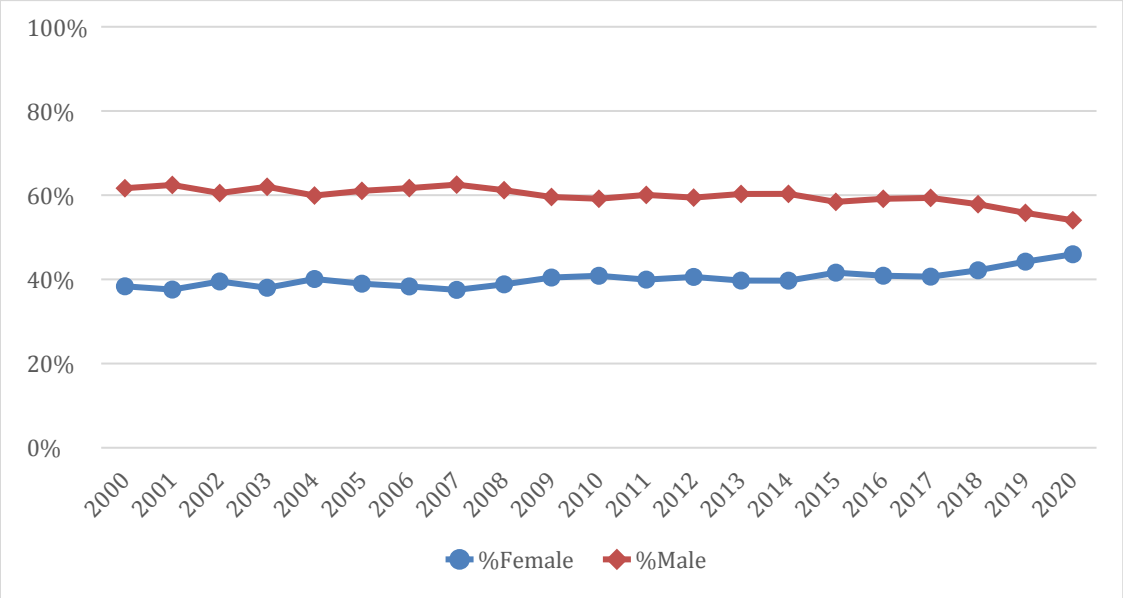


Figure F: Wisconsin Assistant Principals by Gender



However, **gender discrepancies exist across grade levels, with higher proportions of female principal and assistant principals at the elementary level than at the middle school and high school levels.** In 2019-20, 62.2% of elementary principals were female, compared to 37.0% of middle school principals and 26.1% of high school principals (Figure G). The proportion of female principals grew by roughly the same amount (12-13 percentage points) from 1999-00 to 2019-20 across elementary and high schools, with a smaller increase at the middle school level (7 percentage points). Meanwhile, the proportion of female assistant principals at the elementary level was nearly the same in 2019-20 as it was in 1999-00 (around 65%), *lower* at the middle school level (dropping from 46.5% to 41.3%), and higher at the high school level (increasing from 26.6% to 38.4%) (Figure H).

Figure G: Wisconsin Principals % Female by School Level

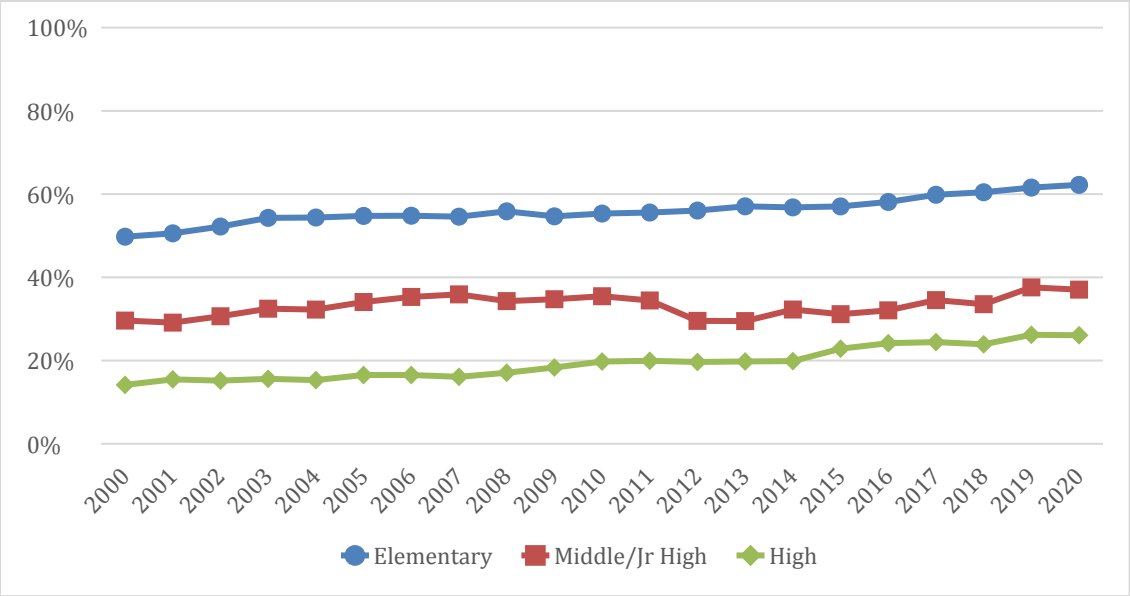
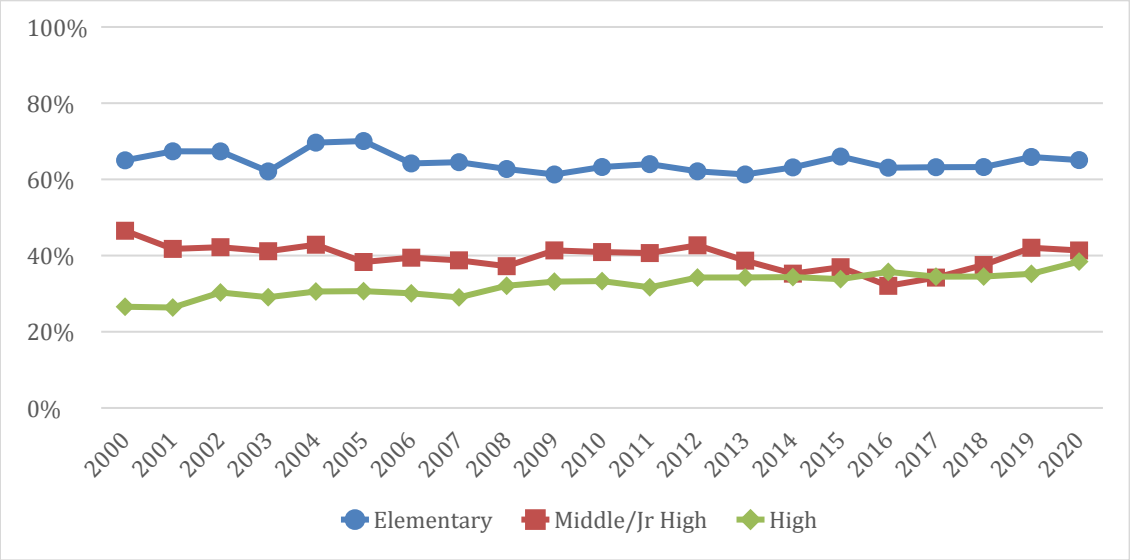


Figure H: Wisconsin Assistant Principals % Female by School Level



In terms of race/ethnicity, recent reports (see Chapman & Brown, 2020; Jones, 2019) have noted that Wisconsin public school teachers have remained overwhelmingly white in recent years, despite increasing levels of diversity among public school students statewide. Similar conclusions were reached with less current data about principals in Wisconsin (Clifford et al, 2012). We update this information with Figures I and J, which show the percentages of principals and APs of color in Wisconsin from 1999-00 to 2019-20, respectively, and with Figure K, which shows the percentages of students of color in Wisconsin public schools as a comparison point. **Hispanic/Latinx principals and APs are particularly under-represented in relation to the share of Hispanic/Latinx students in public schools statewide, comprising less than 2% of the state's principals and APs in 2019-20 (compared to 12.6% of students),**

with very modest increases in the number of Hispanic principals and APs over the past two decades. Black principals and APs are under-represented as well (less than 6% of principals and APs versus 9% of students), and the percentage of Black APs has *decreased* by two percentage points over the last 20 years (from 7.4% of all APs in 1999-00 to 5.3% in 2019-20). Asian and Native American principals and APs represent less than 1% of all principals and APs statewide, compared to 4.2% and 1.1% of students in 2019-20, respectively.

Exacerbating the statewide mismatch between students of color and school leaders, most of the state's principals and APs of color work in a relatively small number of districts. In 1999-00, approximately 85% of the principals of color, and 92% of the APs of color, worked in the state's five largest school districts (Milwaukee, Madison, Kenosha, Green Bay, and Racine). While this concentration has decreased somewhat over time, in 2019-20, about 75% of both principals and APs of color in the state still work in the five largest districts, even though those districts include less than half (approximately 48%) of Wisconsin's students of color.

Figure I: Principals of Color as % of All Wisconsin Public School Principals

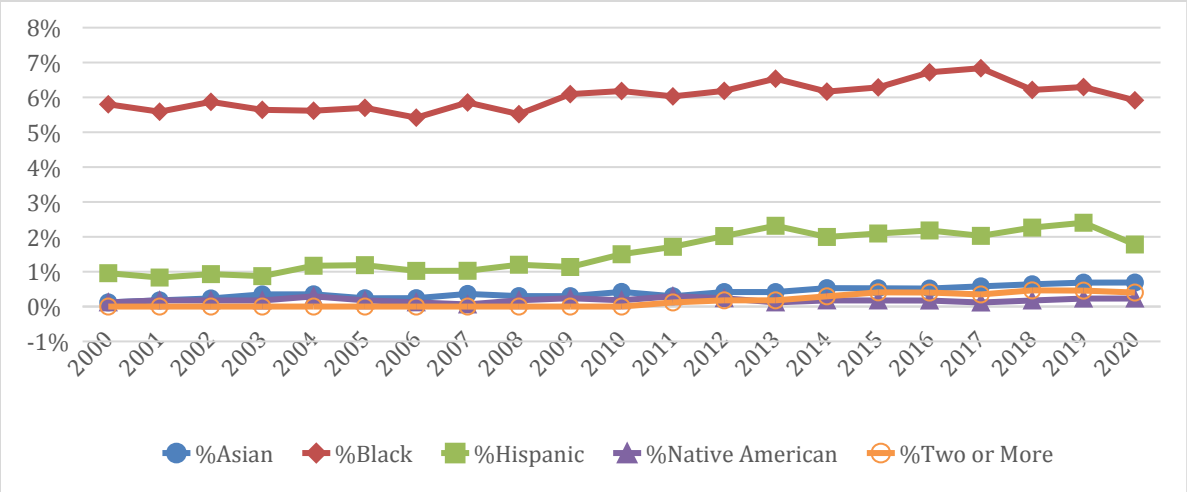


Figure J: Assistant Principals of Color as % of All Wisconsin Public School APs

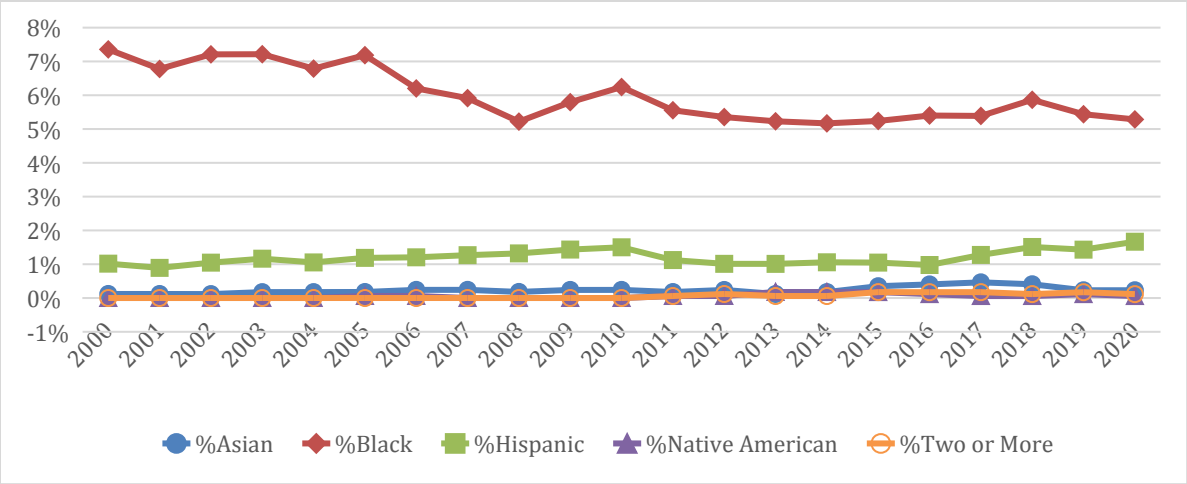
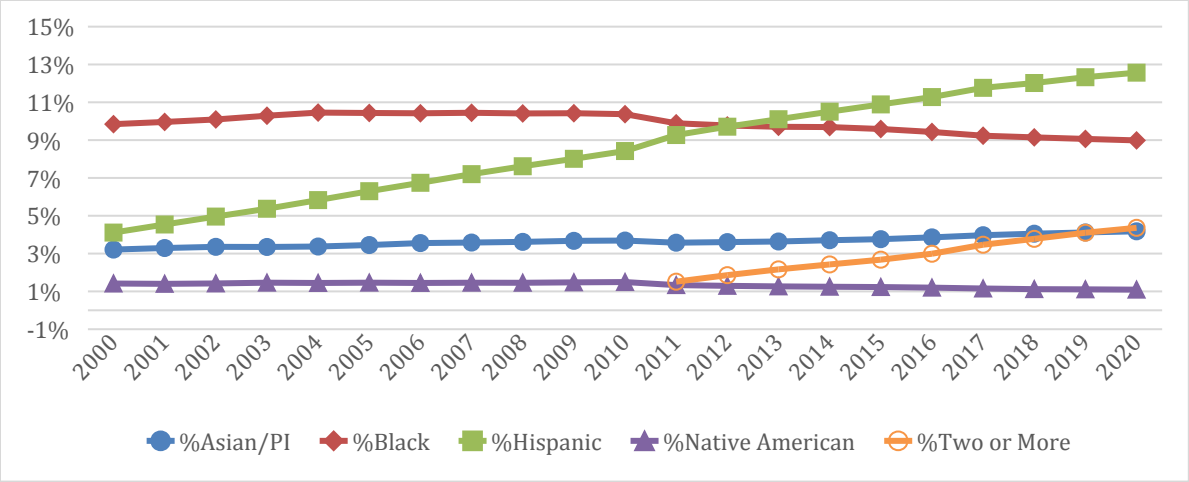


Figure K: Students of Color as a Percentage of Statewide Public School Enrollment



The average age of Wisconsin principals and APs has decreased over the past two decades, although the changes are modest. Statewide, the average age of principals has been in the 46.8-48.8 range, while the average age of assistant principals is slightly lower (43.8-45.7). Table 7 presents the average age (along with the ages representing the 25th and 75th percentiles of the age distribution) for both principals and APs every five years from 2000-2020. We have also added and highlighted the years from 2011-2014 to show the potential impact of Act 10 on educator retirements, which has been documented in the case of teachers in a separate paper (see Goff, Carl, and Yang, 2018). From Table 7 below, we see that the average age of Wisconsin public school principals has decreased by 1.3 years since 2000, with most of the decrease (1.1 years) occurring in just four years (from 2011-2014), which may be a by-product of principal retirements associated with Act 10. The average age of assistant principals also declined from 2000-2010 (by 1.8 years), although most of this occurred during the early 2000s, prior to Act 10. **Overall, the trend is gradual but unmistakable: principals and assistant principals have gotten younger over the past two decades.**

Table 7: Average and Percentiles of Principal and Assistant Principal Ages in selected years

Year	Principals			Assistant Principals		
	Average Age	25th Percentile	75th Percentile	Average Age	25th Percentile	75th Percentile
2000	48.6	44	53	45.7	38	53
2005	48.8	43	55	44.4	36	53
2010	48.0	41	55	44.0	37	51
2011	47.9	41	54.5	44.0	37	50
2012	47.0	41	54	44.0	37	50
2013	46.9	41	53	43.9	37	50
2014	46.8	41	53	43.9	37	50
2015	46.8	41	52	43.8	38	49
2020	47.3	42	52	43.9	38	49

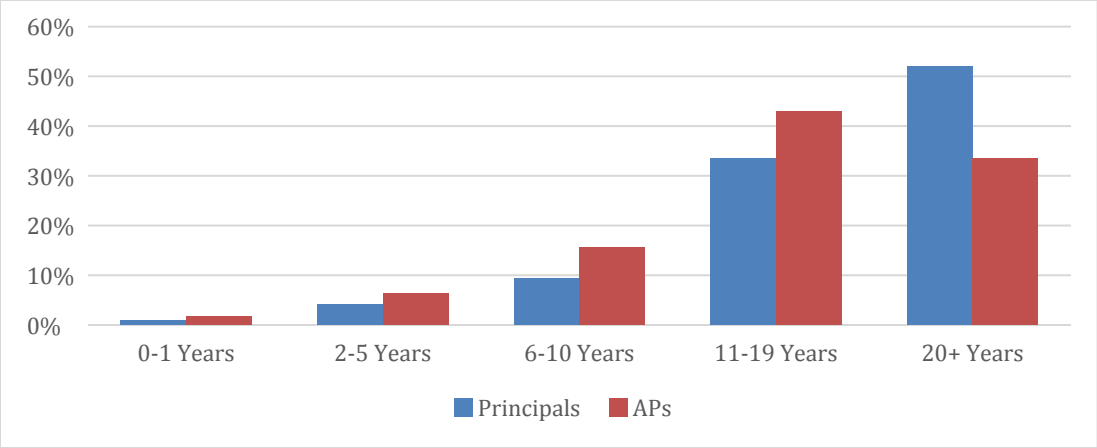
Table 8 shows the average years of both total experience and local (same district) experience as principal and as AP for selected years, again with the years immediately following Act 10 highlighted. **We see that principal and AP experience has generally declined over the past 20 years, though the trends within the years of the sample have been somewhat different for principals and APs. For instance, Act 10 appears to have had more of an influence on principal experience than on AP experience, which was already declining before that point (and may suggest that APs were promoted to principals with less experience than in the past). Principal experience has rebounded in recent years, as has AP total experience.**

Table 8: Principal and Assistant Principal Local and Total Experience (in years) for selected years

Year	Principals		Assistant Principals	
	Local Experience	Total Experience	Local Experience	Total Experience
2000	12.9	21.5	12.5	18.1
2005	12.8	21.1	11.0	15.7
2010	12.6	19.9	10.6	15.2
2011	12.6	19.4	10.5	15.0
2012	11.9	18.3	10.5	14.8
2013	11.9	18.4	10.9	15.2
2014	11.9	18.4	10.8	15.1
2015	11.8	18.3	10.8	15.2
2020	12.6	19.6	10.9	16.3

Figure L presents the distribution of total experience for both principals and APs in 2019-20. **Over half of Wisconsin's principals have been working in the state in any capacity (as defined by DPI) for more than 20 years, and another third have been working between 11-19 years. Among other possible implications, these data suggest that a substantial portion of both principals and APs in Wisconsin public schools will be approaching retirement age over the next decade, making it imperative to have a "pipeline" of candidates ready and able to replace them.**

Figure L: Distribution of Total Experience, Principals and APs, 2019-20



Finally, we reviewed principal and AP experience by locale type (again starting in 2012-13). Here, we see some nuance that broader pictures of experience may miss. **Principals in City districts have, on average, more *local* (same-school) experience than do their counterparts in other locale type (Figure M). However, the *total* experience across locale types is nearly identical (Figure N). This implies that principals in City districts tend to stay in the same school, while their colleagues in Suburban, Town, and Rural districts may be more mobile**; future briefs in this series may investigate that potential mobility trend. Similar trends are evident for APs (Figures O and P), although APs in Suburban districts have less experience than in other locale types. For each of these experience figures, we have removed 2016 due to an error in data in city districts.

Figure M: Average Years of Principal Local Experience, by Locale, 2012-13 to 2019-20

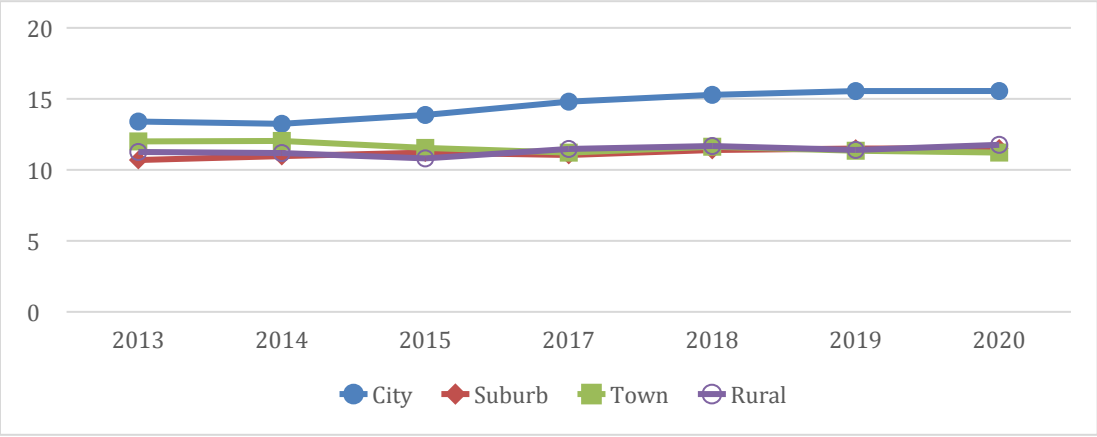


Figure N: Average Years of Principal Total Experience, by Locale, 2012-13 to 2019-20

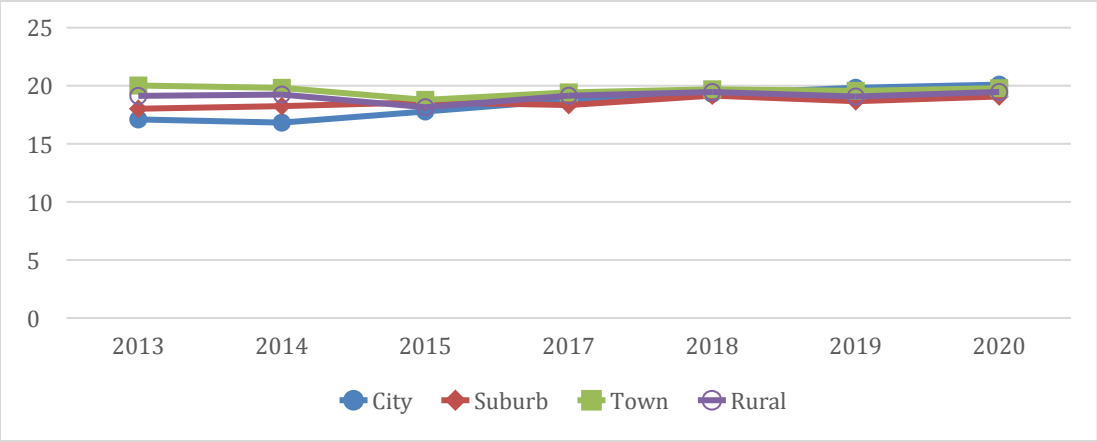


Figure O: Average Years of AP Local Experience, by Locale, 2012-13 to 2019-20

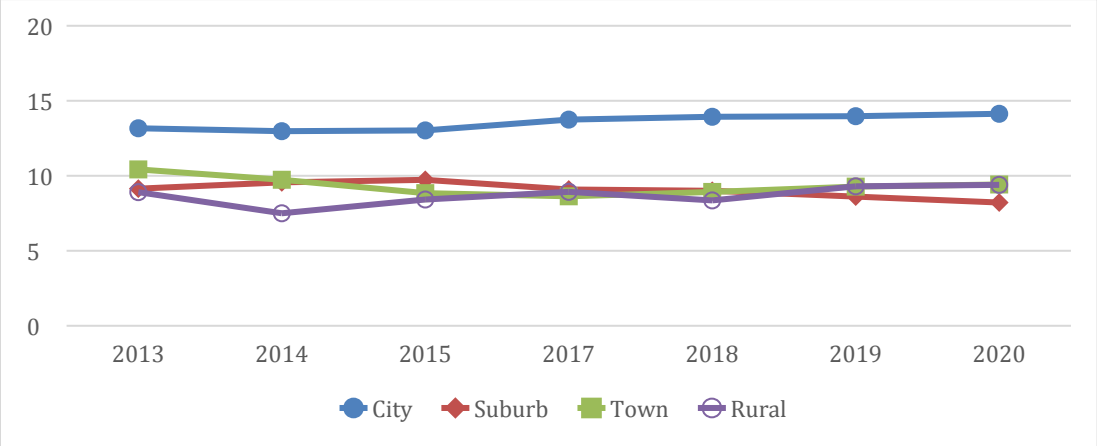


Figure P: Average Years of AP Total Experience, by Locale, 2012-13 to 2019-20

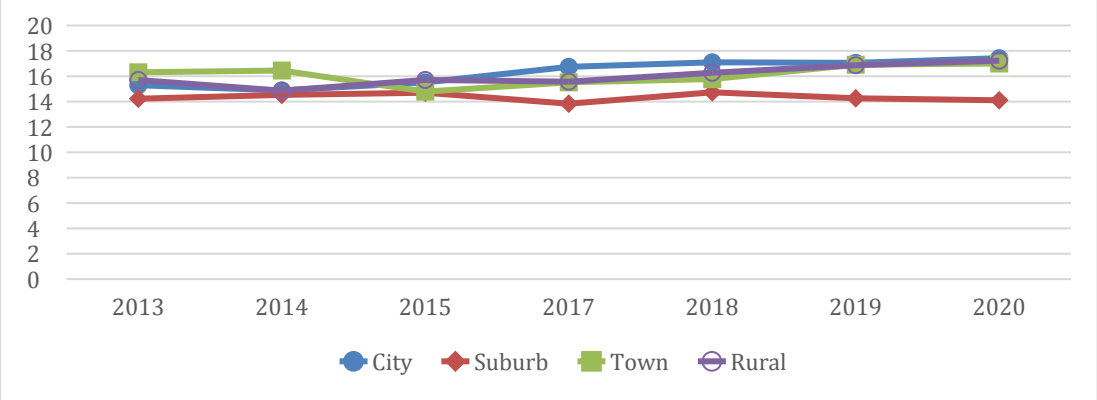


Table 9 shows the highest degree attained for principals and APs, for selected years (at five-year intervals, with Act 10 years again highlighted). **By far the largest share of both principals and APs continues to hold a Master's degree, with little change over the past 20 years. An interesting trend is**

the increase in the number of principals holding a Bachelor's as their highest degree; while still a small share of principals overall, it has more than doubled, with a (roughly) corresponding decrease in the share of principals holding a degree above a Master's. We see the decrease in degrees above a Master's accelerate in the years immediately following Act 10, when retirements might have forced less-credentialed administrators into the principal and AP ranks.

Table 9: Percentages of Principals and APs by Highest Degree, in selected years

Year	Principals			Assistant Principals		
	Bachelor's	Master's	Above Master's	Bachelor's	Master's	Above Master's
2000	2.0%	87.8%	10.0%	10.0%	84.9%	5.1%
2005	2.5%	87.6%	9.9%	8.0%	87.8%	3.9%
2010	2.8%	86.5%	9.2%	7.7%	88.2%	2.3%
2011	3.6%	87.6%	8.5%	6.1%	89.6%	3.4%
2012	4.5%	86.6%	8.0%	5.6%	90.3%	3.1%
2013	4.0%	88.1%	7.5%	7.5%	89.5%	2.9%
2014	3.8%	89.0%	6.9%	9.4%	87.7%	2.3%
2015	3.5%	87.4%	8.1%	10.8%	85.2%	3.2%
2020	5.2%	86.6%	7.1%	10.9%	84.6%	2.1%

Conclusion

Over the last 20 years, the Wisconsin principal workforce has stayed relatively stable, and the assistant principal workforce has generally increased, even as student enrollment has fallen across the state. The number of principals has remained stable across locales while the number of assistant principals has grown in each; it also appears possible that schools in CESAs comprised largely of small, rural districts are using APs to fill principal roles. The principal and assistant principal workforce has become more female and younger since 2000, though gaps exist in terms of race/ethnicity relative to student populations, with most principals and APs of color only working in a small number of districts. A review of principal experience suggests that many principals may be approaching retirement age, and that an increasing share of principals hold a Bachelor's as their highest degree.

It is our hope that the findings in this brief are useful to stakeholders throughout Wisconsin as they examine the relevance of these trends in their own contexts and seek to address any needs or gaps in the principal and assistant principal workforce.

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Appendix A

The NCES classifications and corresponding two-digit locale codes are as follows:

- City:
  - City – Large (code 11): Territory inside an Urbanized Area and inside a Principal City with population of 250,000 or more.
  - City – Midsize (code 12): Territory inside an Urbanized Area and inside a Principal City with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000.
  - City – Small (code 13): Territory inside an Urbanized Area and inside a Principal City with population less than 100,000.
- Suburban:
  - Suburban – Large (code 21): Territory outside a Principal City and inside an Urbanized Area with population of 250,000 or more.
  - Suburban – Midsize (code 22): Territory outside a Principal City and inside an Urbanized Area with population less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000.
  - Suburban – Small (code 23): Territory outside a Principal City and inside an Urbanized Area with population less than 100,000.
- Town:
  - Town – Fringe (code 31): Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urbanized Area.
  - Town – Distant (code 32): Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an Urbanized Area.
  - Town – Remote (code 33): Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is more than 35 miles from an Urbanized Area.
- Rural:
  - Rural – Fringe (code 41): Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster.
  - Rural – Distant (code 42): Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urban Cluster.
  - Rural – Remote (code 43): Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an Urbanized Area and also more than 10 miles from an Urban Cluster.