Exploring Administrator Mobility
in Colorado, Missouri, and South Dakota
An Infographic From the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Central at Marzano Research

Education leaders in Colorado, Missouri, and South Dakota partnered with the Regional Educational Laboratory Central to examine turnover among principals and superintendents after 3 years.¹

Definitions of administrator mobility

- **Stayers** remained in an administrative position in the same school or district.
- **Movers** transferred to an administrative position in a different school or district.
- **Leavers** took a nonadministrative position or left the state public school system.

**Snapshot**

Principal and superintendent mobility

- After 3 years, nearly half of principals and superintendents were either movers or leavers.

**Principals**

- Stayers 54%
- Movers 13%
- Leavers 33%

**Superintendents**

- Stayers 56%
- Movers 10%
- Leavers 34%

¹ Period from the 2015/16 to 2018/19 school year.

Deeper Focus

**Characteristics associated with principal mobility**

All characteristics below were associated with principal mobility. **Age, school improvement status, and average teacher salary** were most strongly associated with principals being movers or leavers rather than stayers after 3 years.

### Principal Characteristics

**Movers**
- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Salary

**Leavers**
- Age
- Salary
- Race/ethnicity

**Principals younger than 40 were 144% more likely to be movers than stayers.**

**Principals who identified as a racial/ethnic minority were 53% more likely to be movers and 28% more likely to be leavers than stayers.**

### School/District Characteristics

**Movers**
- School in improvement
- District performance
- District enrollment

**Leavers**
- Teacher salary
- District enrollment
- School in improvement

**Principals in schools identified for improvement were 200% more likely to be movers than stayers.**

**Principals in schools with an average teacher salary of less than $39,139 were 138% more likely to be leavers than stayers.**

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**Bigger Picture**

**What strategies might reduce administrator mobility?**

Principal turnover has been associated with lower student achievement, higher teacher turnover, and a less positive school culture and climate. The high rates of turnover suggest that education leaders might want to enhance supports for younger principals and principals in schools identified for improvement, focus more on recruiting and retaining racial/ethnic minority principals, and further examine how salary affects decisions to move or leave.

**Key retention strategies include:**

- Offering professional learning opportunities
- Improving working conditions
- Ensuring adequate and stable compensation
- Supporting decisionmaking authority
- Ensuring accountability systems are fair and useful

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2 Taken from *Understanding and Addressing Principal Turnover: A Review of the Research* by S. Levin and K. Bradley, 2019, Learning Policy Institute.