

Good afternoon:

For the record, I am Ken Page, Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association. As some of you know, my entire career has been focused on teaching and on school leadership. I was a teacher for 15 years, a principal for 21 years, and I am now completing my eighth and final year at VPA. It has been an honor and privilege to advocate for school leaders here in the legislature and in my entire 44-year career. So, I hope the take-away, that you get from my introduction, is that I speak from experience.

The other take-away that I hope you get is that principals have a very unique and, I would argue, pivotal job in education, and in fostering school improvement initiatives. Because of the nature of being right in the middle, we know a great deal about all things education from learning styles, to special education eligibility rules, to new curriculum approaches, to school policy, to working with our school boards, to backgrounds of families, and of course to what issues are taking center stage in our communities right now. i.e., "What's hot right now? Many, if not most of us, have come from teaching, and are kid advocates, teacher supporters, school board liaisons and community go-to people. Some of you will remember your principals fondly, others not so fondly and still others will not even be able to remember your principal's name. Yet, from the literature, we know that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. And, as researchers from the Wallace Foundation clearly point out in the publication Leadership Matters: Effective leadership means more than knowing what to do—it's knowing when, how and why to do it. "

When Dr. Paul Manna, a Johns Hopkins professor visited the Vermont legislature last year he summed up the big ideas of his study: Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and Learning: Considerations for State Policy with these five points:

1. Excellent principals are powerful multipliers of effective teaching and learning in schools;
2. Successful implementation of ambitious state initiatives depend heavily on talented principals;
3. Unfortunately, an imbalance presently exists, which means that principals' voices are understated in state policy discussions relative to other groups;
4. Fourth, general policy discussions about the importance of school leadership risk losing sight of the unique roles that principals play in schools;
5. The inattention to principals' voices means that the public and state policy makers operate with a limited view of what principals do.

You may be interested in knowing that Vermont has 474 school principals and assistant principals (336 principals and 138 assistant principals). Our organization also includes school athletic directors, and some retired and aspiring principals. So, in all, our organization has over 500 members. You may be familiar with the Vermont Principals' Association mostly because we run all of Vermont's sports championships, and also clubs and activities like Spelling Bee, Geo-Bee, Debate and Forensics, Lego Robotics Competitions and One Act Play competitions. . But, in addition to this, we also offer workshops, leadership academies and other leadership training initiatives for our school leaders.

Here's a great example of work we have begun to engage in: If you haven't heard about the Margaret Waddington Leadership Initiative, let me give you a brief synopsis. When noted Rutland neurologist Dr. Margaret Waddington passed away in 2015, she left her entire estate to the Center for Creative Leadership in North Carolina for the benefit of the "citizens of Vermont." Dr. Waddington had been a participant in the Center's groundbreaking leadership training, and it profoundly changed her life. As a result of this over the next six months over 100 school leaders will benefit from a three-day training in North Carolina and four additional days of training back here in Vermont and some phone coaching sessions during their nine-month leadership cohort group. In addition to this CCL has indicated that they will be sharing Dr. Waddington's gift via leadership training for the Vermont medical community as well. One of the handouts describes the Waddington leadership Initiative as one that will be on-going for many years to come.

I am also passing out to you a copy of our most recent leadership survey summary, which has been compiled by Linda Wheatley, our Development Coordinator. This is an annual survey of school leaders and others in education to gauge opinions about the state of the leadership in Vermont. We use this information to develop programs for our members and to adjust our work to meet stated needs. The last three pages are filled with words of principals of why they love their jobs. This quote seems to sum it all up:

"It's completely an act of service. The job is very hard; sometimes extremely hard. There is very little downtime, if any (I am working through the Thanksgiving Break). But, together, staff and students are building something very unique in our community. Our students and teachers have done some amazing things. The school community really wants to make a difference, to 'take action' and to improve the world-local and globally 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 ever could imagine before. There is no doubt that we are changing lives for the better. Who could ask for more? It is all very rewarding."

This past August in Killington, at the Vermont Principals' Association annual Leadership Academy, we celebrated our 100th year anniversary. Our summer event brings together over 300 school leaders to talk about issues new practices and initiatives for school leaders. We also had some time to reflect on the history of our organization with several of our past executive directors and key staff who have been with us for years. They shared memories about how VPA has changed over the many years and identified the highlights of our association such as the first sports for girls, when our elementary and secondary associations merged, and how VPA has evolved over the years into a professional association supporting both "learners and leaders."

As a long-time Vermont educator, and also as someone with deep connections in education, I believe that I can be a good resource to your committee both. Please let me know how I can assist you. Thank you for allowing me to come before you to make my introduction.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have, and to clarify or elaborate on anything I have shared with you today. Thank you.