

# Public School Principals' Three Most Important Education Goals, by Community Type and School Level

**DATA POINT**

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The data used in this report come from the Principal Questionnaire of the 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), a nationally representative sample survey of public K-12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

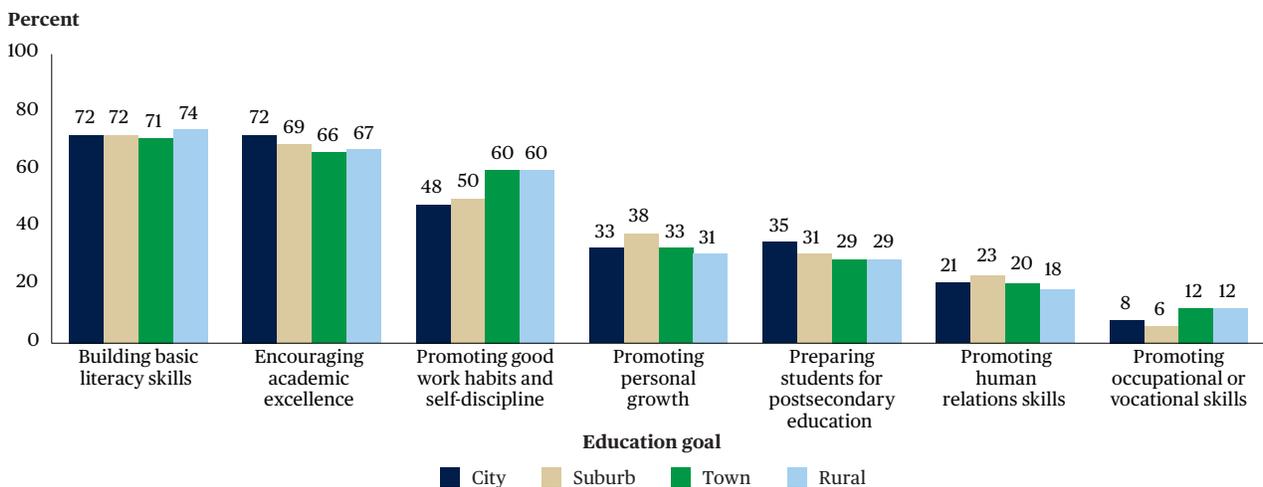
In the 2015-16 NTPS, public school principals were asked to identify their top three most important education goals from a list of academic and social-emotional priorities. Overall, 72 percent selected “Building basic literacy skills,” 69 percent chose “Encouraging academic excellence,” and 54 percent placed “Promoting good work habits and self-discipline” as one of their top three goals (data not shown; see supplemental table at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020202>). In this report, principals’ priorities are compared between the type of

community in which schools are located (city, suburb, town, rural), both overall (**FIGURE 1**) and by school level (**FIGURE 2**).<sup>1</sup> The most frequently selected goals are shown in figure 1. Data on all 10 goals are available in the supplemental tables.

**The majority of principals, regardless of school locale, reported similar goals among their top three education goals. Additionally, differences were found within both academic and social-emotional goals by community type.<sup>2</sup>**

For academic goals, principals in all community types consistently chose “Building basic literacy skills” and “Encouraging academic excellence” most frequently as one of their most important goals. However, the difference between the frequencies of these two goals is not consistent across all locales. Principals in town and rural schools chose “Building basic literacy skills” (71 percent and 74 percent) more frequently than “Encouraging academic excellence” (66 percent and 67 percent), but there were no significant differences

**FIGURE 1. Percentage of public school principals who rated specific education goals as first, second, or third most important, by community type: School year 2015-16**



NOTE: Public school principals were given 10 different goals and asked to rate 3 of them as first, second, and third most important. The goals displayed highlight the differences between school levels. “Promoting specific moral values,” “Promoting multicultural awareness or understanding,” and “Fostering religious or spiritual development” are not shown here but can be seen in the associated tables at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020202>. Basic literacy skills include reading, math, writing, and speaking. Examples of personal growth include self-esteem and self-knowledge.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Principal Data File,” 2015-16.

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between these two goals among city and suburb principals.

For social-emotional goals, town and rural school principals focused more on “Promoting good work habits and self-discipline” (60 percent) than suburban and city principals (50 percent and 48 percent, respectively).

**Among primary school principals, building basic literacy skills was most frequently selected across all community types, while academic goals pertaining to postsecondary education were more frequently selected by high school principals than by principals at other school levels, but varied by community type.<sup>3</sup>**

Figure 2 displays differences across community type and school level. Focusing just on high schools, a higher percentage of principals from suburban schools chose “Preparing students for postsecondary education” (66 percent) as one of their three most important education goals than the percentage of principals from rural schools (55 percent).

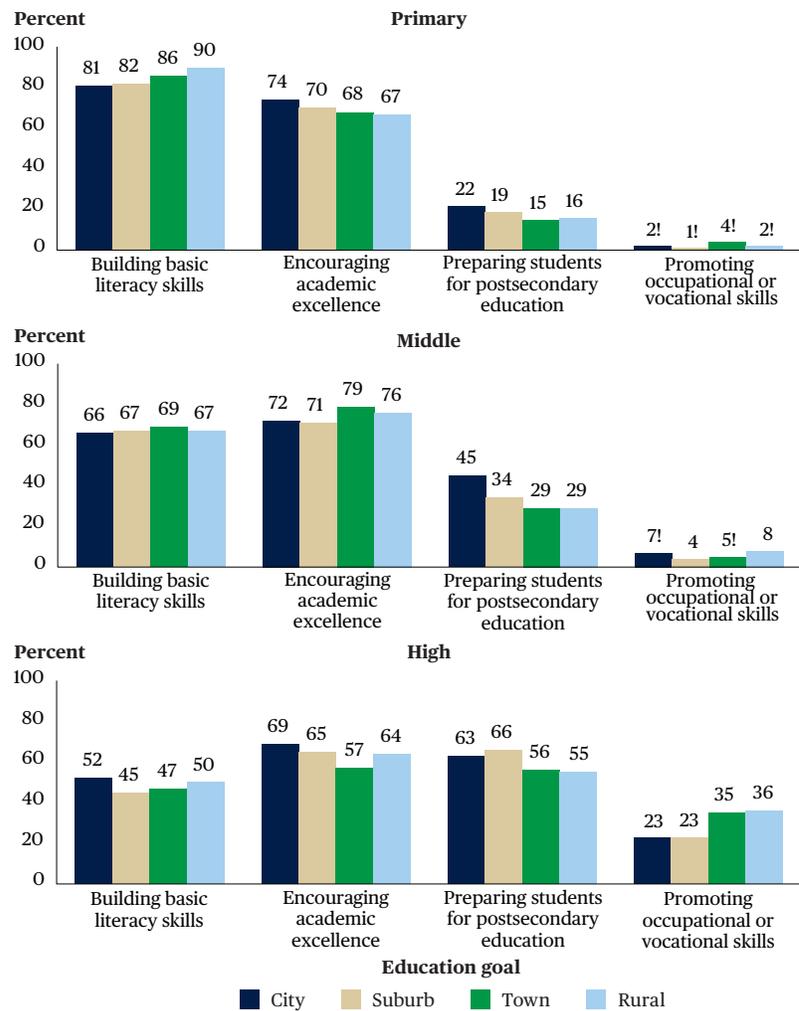
In contrast, higher percentages of principals from rural and town high schools chose “Promoting occupational or vocational skills” (36 percent and 35 percent, respectively) as one of their three most important education goals than the percentages of principals from city and suburban high schools (both 23 percent).

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Primary schools are those with at least one grade lower than 5 and no grade higher than 8. Middle schools have no grade lower than 5 and no grade higher than 9. High schools have no grade lower than 7 and at least one grade higher than 8. Combined schools are those with at least one grade lower than 7 and at least one grade higher than 8, or with all students in ungraded classrooms.

<sup>2</sup> See the supplementary tables for a full list of goals considered academic and goals considered social-emotional.

**FIGURE 2. Percentage of public school principals who rated specific education goals as first, second, or third most important, by community type and school level: School year 2015-16**



! Interpret data with caution. The standard error for this estimate is 30 to 50 percent of the estimate's value.

NOTE: Public school principals were given 10 different goals and asked to rate 3 of them as first, second, and third most important. The goals displayed highlight the differences between school levels. Six goals are not shown here, and data for combined schools are not shown here, but both can be seen in the associated tables at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020202>. Basic literacy skills include reading, math, writing, and speaking. Examples of personal growth include self-esteem and self-knowledge. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public School Principal Data File,” 2015-16.

<sup>3</sup> Examination by school level shows that primary school principals chose “Building basic literacy skills” (84 percent) more frequently than high school principals (48 percent) or middle school principals (67 percent). Whereas, high school principals chose “Preparing students for

postsecondary education” (60 percent) more frequently than primary or middle school principals (19 percent and 35 percent) (data not shown; see supplemental table at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020202>).