

# Principals' Perceptions of Influence Over Decisions at Their Schools in 2017-18

**DATA POINT**  
July 2021

NCES 2021-091  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

*A Publication of the National Center for Education Statistics at IES*

This Data Point examines the relationship between public and private school principals' perceived influence over various decisions made at their schools before the coronavirus pandemic. This information was reported by U.S. public and private school principals on the principal survey of the 2017-18 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). The NTPS is a national survey of public and private K-12 schools, principals, and teachers.

On the 2017-18 NTPS, public and private school principals were asked whether they perceived having influence over decisions concerning seven different activities at their schools.<sup>1</sup> Principals could select having “no influence,” “minor influence,” “moderate influence,” or “major influence” for each activity.

## How do principals perceive their influence over decisions made about a variety of activities at their schools?

Overall, 99 percent of principals felt they had a major influence over decisions made about at least one of the seven activities they were presented (**FIGURE 1**).

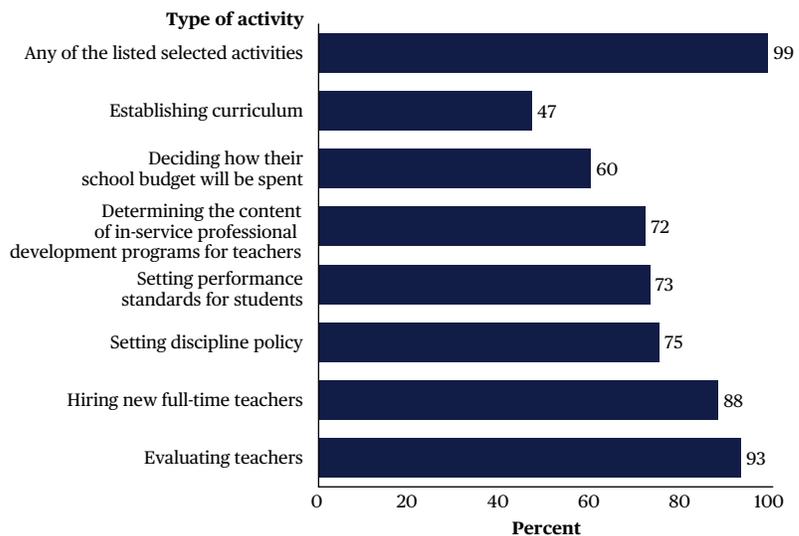
Nearly all (93 percent) felt they had major influence over evaluating teachers, and 88 percent felt the same about hiring new full-time teachers. The lowest percentage of principals felt they had a major influence over establishing curriculum (47 percent).

## How does principals' perceived influence vary by school type?

The percentage of private, traditional public, and public charter school principals who felt they had a major influence over decisions at their schools varied by school type (**FIGURE 2**).

A higher percentage of private school principals expressed having major influence over decisions made about four out of the seven activities,

**FIGURE 1. Percentage of all principals who felt they had a major influence on decisions at their school, by activity type: 2017-18**



NOTE: Response options included “no influence,” “minor influence,” “moderate influence,” “major influence,” and “not applicable.” Principals who reported “not applicable” are excluded.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public and Private School Principal Data Files,” 2017-18.

as compared to traditional public school principals.

More private than traditional public school principals had major influence over activities concerning students, such as setting discipline policy (83 versus 73 percent) and setting performance standards for students (79 versus 70 percent). A higher percentage of private

school principals also felt they had major influence over academic activities, such as determining the content of in-service professional development programs for teachers (80 versus 68 percent) and establishing curriculum (69 versus 39 percent). But when evaluating teachers, a higher percentage of traditional public school principals (96 percent) felt they had a major

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influence than did private school principals (86 percent).

There were fewer differences between private and public charter school principals than between private and traditional public school principals.

For two activities, a higher percentage of private school principals perceived having major influence than did public charter school principals. These activities were setting discipline policy (83 versus 76 percent) and establishing curriculum (69 versus 59 percent).

Like traditional public school principals, a higher percentage of public charter school principals

(93 percent) reported having a major influence over evaluating teachers, compared to private school principals (86 percent).

Within the public school system, higher percentages of charter school principals perceived having a major influence over decisions at their schools for four of the seven activities, when compared to traditional public school principals.

This included determining the content of in-service professional development programs for teachers (80 versus 68 percent), setting performance standards for students (78 versus 70 percent), setting

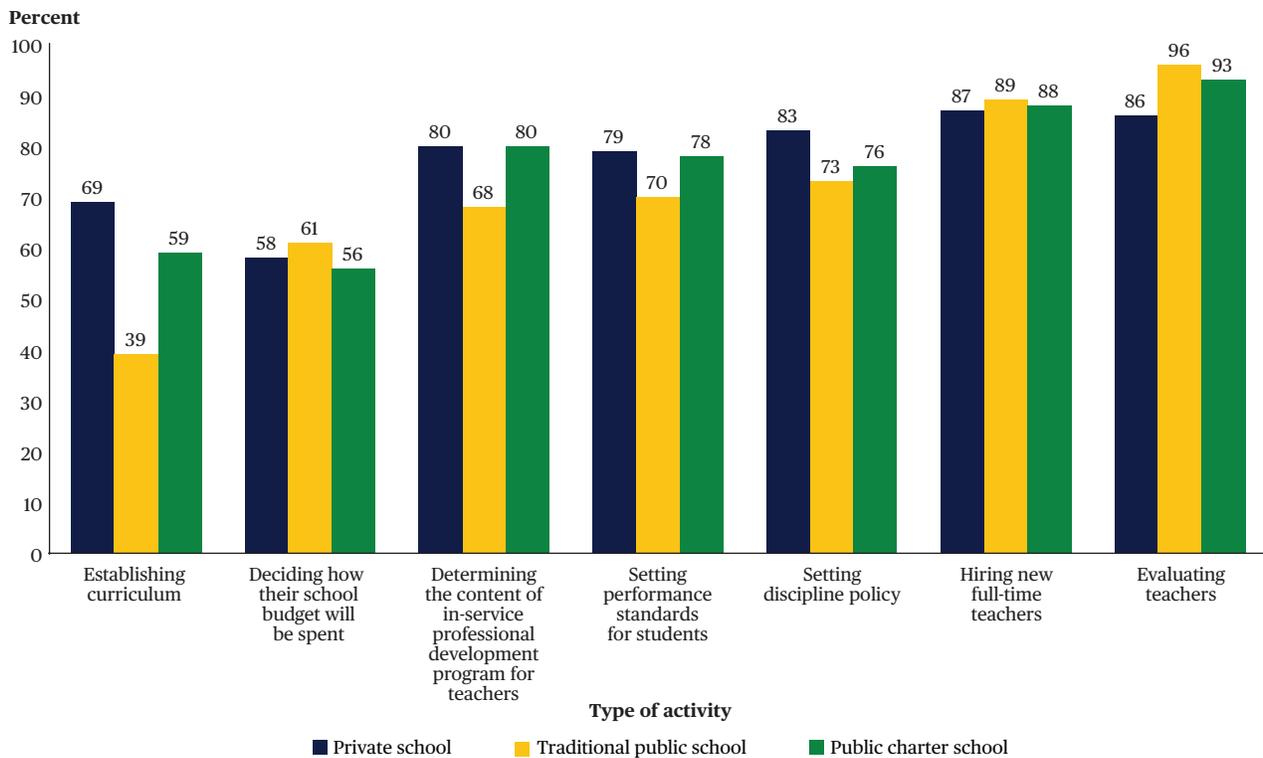
discipline policy (76 versus 73 percent), and establishing curriculum (59 versus 39 percent).

However, a higher percentage of traditional than public charter school principals perceived having major influence over two activities: deciding how their school budget would be spent (61 versus 56 percent) and evaluating teachers (96 versus 93 percent).

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Principals who indicated that any of the seven activities were “not applicable” at their schools were excluded from analyses for the item(s) for which they responded “not applicable.”

**FIGURE 2. Percentage of private and public school principals who believe they have major influence on decisions concerning various activities at their school, by school type: 2017-2018**



NOTE: Response options included “no influence,” “minor influence,” “moderate influence,” “major influence,” and “not applicable.” Principals who reported “not applicable” are excluded. Detail may not sum to 100 because principals could select “major influence” for more than one activity.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), “Public and Private School Principal Data Files,” 2017-18.