

Waddington Endowment Funds Leadership Development and Drastically Increases Principal Retention



CLIENT Vermont Principals' Association (VPA)
LOCATION Montpelier, Vermont
SIZE 300+ schools
INDUSTRY K-12 Education

CLIENT PROFILE AND CHALLENGE

Effective principals are a key element for successful schools. Their influence motivates teachers and staff, strengthens school cultures, and improves student outcomes. Creating a successful school takes time and requires continuity of strong leadership. However, principal turnover is a chronic issue across the country.

Even before the global pandemic, studies show nearly 20% of U.S. principals left their positions each year. And principal churn not only impacts student achievement, but is also financially costly for schools. According to the nonprofit School Leaders Network, the costs to develop, hire, and onboard a new principal range between \$36,850 and \$303,000; with conservative estimates placing the average cost at about \$75,000.

A brief from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) suggests that district and school leaders and federal and state policymakers should implement a number of strategies to increase principal retention — one of which is offering high-quality, ongoing professional leadership development for educators.

“The Margaret Waddington Institute for School Leaders is a wonderful experience. The time spent reflecting on oneself and the time taken to develop areas of focus is an experience in which all school leaders should participate.”

— Elizabeth Coltey, Principal, Wells Village School

DONOR PROFILE



The late Dr. Margaret Waddington was one of the many individuals whose life was transformed by our flagship Leadership Development Program (LDP)[®]. In fact, the pioneering neurologist and resident of Rutland, Vermont, became a strong financial supporter of CCL and, upon her passing in 2015, entrusted the organization with a multimillion-dollar estate gift to ensure ongoing access to leadership development for the people of Vermont.

SOLUTION AND RESULTS

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)[®] is committed to supporting our mission to transform the world — creating leaders who can embrace change, build strong teams, and successfully overcome challenges they face, particularly in educational communities.

A sizable endowment from alumna Dr. Margaret Waddington has enabled CCL, in partnership with the Vermont Principals' Association, to provide a leadership development program for K-12 leaders across the state. The Dr. Margaret Waddington Institute for School Leadership flagship program launched in 2017, and it has served almost half of Vermont's principals to date.

"The Vermont Principals' Association is committed to developing and growing leadership skills in Vermont School Leaders. Our partnership with CCL through the Dr. Margaret Waddington Institute for School Leadership has been an immense blessing. Evaluations at the end of the program clearly demonstrate the strong positive effect on school leaders. The networking, skill training, and understanding of self as a leader are instrumental in successful outcomes for participants. It is our hope that every single educational leader in Vermont will have the opportunity to participate in the program; it is simply outstanding," said Jay Nichols, Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association and Vermont 2018 Superintendent of the Year.

The goals of this cohort-based multi-session program are to:

- Develop principal capacity to create a positive school culture;
- Increase psychological capital of principal participants;
- Improve principal ability to build trust with their teachers and staff; and
- Help principals feel supported through a collaboration network of school leaders across the state.

This year-long, innovative leadership development program for K-12 principals features a mix of learning applications, including:

- Face-to-face and virtual classroom sessions
- Curated leadership tools, books, and video content
- Personalized executive coaching (both in-person and virtual follow-up calls)

Program evaluation findings from the first 4 years of the program clearly demonstrate that the Waddington principals had significantly less turnover than non-participant principals in Vermont. Participating principals noted significant increases in their psychological wellbeing (feelings of efficacy, hope, and resiliency) and their support network of other teachers, both important indicators linked to reducing principal turnover.

In 81% of schools, teachers reported noticing positive change in their principal. With more than 750 teachers reporting pre- and post-program, the teachers cited these specific positive changes in their principals:

- **Ability to empower teachers:** The principals are more supportive, get more input, and distribute work and leadership equitably
- **Increased confidence:** The principals are more willing to make decisions and act
- **Better communication skills:** The principals are more transparent and respond more regularly
- **Enhanced focus on positive school climate:** The principals focus more on social-emotional outcomes and equity

Approximately 40% of public-school principals in Vermont chose to participate at the beginning of the Waddington program, and it's clear that program participation has significantly **reduced principal turnover, which translates to a cost savings of \$1.4M for the state of Vermont.**

BY THE NUMBERS

Principal Retention

4 Years After Waddington Leadership Program: Participants vs. Non-Participants

Still Principals in Vermont



Still Principals in the Same School

