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# The Principal Is Moving—Again!

## Brief Tenure, Lack of Experience a Concern in SDA Academies

By H. D. Lawson

Several studies of the secondary school principalship indicate a high turnover rate for these administrators. Some of the research suggests that many principals experience dissatisfaction in their jobs. How does this compare with attitudes and length of service of principals in SDA academies?

During the 1983-1984 school year, in working on my doctorate, I prepared a dissertation that studied the length of service in the principalship in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in the United States from 1948-1983.\* The study compared length of service (1) in boarding and day academies, (2) in the various U.S. union conferences, (3) by enrollment of the schools, and (4) by enrollment during the decades of the 1950s and 1970s. The paper also

\*Information on the secondary principalship since 1983 has also been gathered, and is included later in this article.

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investigated the type of employment principals moved into after they left the secondary principalship.

The research population included only U.S. academies operated as official church entities. Self-supporting academies were not surveyed. The principal at the beginning of the school year was considered to

be the leading officer of the academy for the entire year. A change in the principalship was not entered when a principal was granted a one-year study leave.

All of the academies connected with SDA colleges were considered to be day academies for the purpose of the study. The status of an acad-

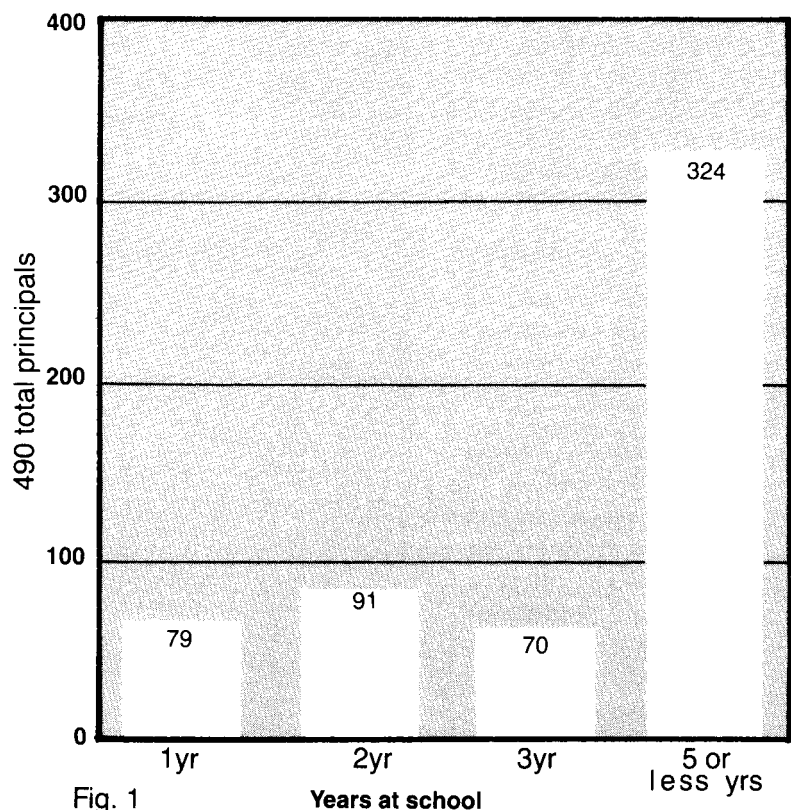


Fig. 1

Years at school

5 or less yrs

emy during the 1982-1983 school year determined its inclusion as a boarding or day academy. To categorize the size of the academies, the opening enrollment of the 1982-1983 school year was used.

### Data Collection

Ninety-two academies were in operation during this period. We prepared a list of the principals for each of the schools over the 35-year period, and had the information verified by the individual schools. From the records for each school, an individual record was made for each principal who served during the 35-year period. A total of 490 individuals served as principals during this time.

### Number of Academies

In the first year of the study, 1948-1949, the church operated 30 boarding and 35 day academies, making a total of 65 secondary schools. This number remained stable through the

1950s. During the first half of the 1960s, the number of academies increased rapidly, but stabilized over the last 17 years of the study. In the 1982-1983 school year, 80 academies were operated by the church in the United States.

Ten new boarding academies opened during the 35-year period. Five academies changed from day to boarding schools, and the same number changed from boarding to day academies. Two boarding academies closed during the period, and one additional boarding school closed at the end of the last year of the study.

Sixteen day academies opened during the 35-year period, and 10 closed. Ten academies made major changes in their names; seven of these alterations were related to relocation.

### Length of Service

Of the 490 principals included in the study, 91 (18.6 percent) served

two years in this position. This was followed by a duration of one year (79 principals, or 16.1 percent). The third largest frequency of years as a principal was three. Seventy persons fell in this category (14.3 percent). A total of 324 principals (66.1 percent) served a total of five years or less.

Almost 90 percent of the principals served in fewer than three schools. Of these, 69 percent served in only one school. Another 20 percent served in two schools.

Another factor in the length of service was the term of service in a given school. The study revealed that 166 principals served a two-year term in a school, 137 principals served a one-year term, and 136 principals served a three-year term. The mean term of service in a given school for a principal was 3.6 years.

The frequency of change in the principalship was also included in the study. The mean number of changes per year in the principalship was 18.1. In the average school year, *one-fourth* (25.4 percent) of the academies had a change in the principalship. This varied from a low of 13.9 percent to a high of 37.2 percent.

The mean length of service in a given school for boarding academy principals was 3.6 years. Two boarding academies had only seven principals during the entire 35-year period. Two boarding academies each had 16 principals; seven had between 12 and 15 principals. These nine schools went through a total of 152 principals! (One of the schools was open only 23 of the 35 years covered by the study).

The mean length of service in a given school for day academy principals was 4.0 years. One day academy had only two principals during the study. Two day academies each had 13 principals; four had 12 each, making a total of 74 for the six schools.

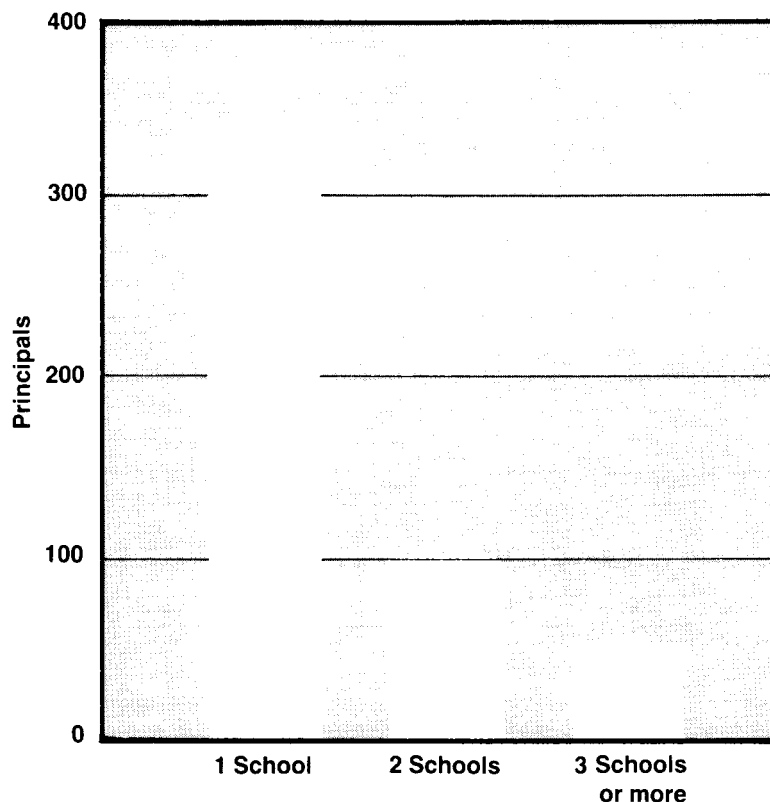
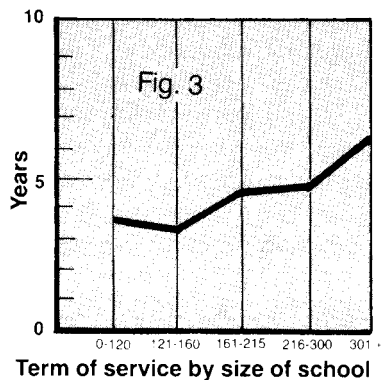


Fig. 2 How many schools did principal serve?



Academies were grouped according to the eight union conference territories, and the mean term of service in a school was determined for each union conference. The highest mean term of service was 5.7 years; the lowest was 2.6 years.

Academies were also grouped arbitrarily according to enrollment. The mean term of service in a school for the principals in each group was as follows:

Group I	1-120 students	3.68 years
Group II	121-160 students	3.65 years
Group III	161-215 students	4.1 years
Group IV	216-300 students	4.2 years
Group V	301+ students	6.4 years

As the size of a school increased, the length of term of service of a principal also increased, except for the slight difference in Groups I and II.

During the decade of the 1950s the mean term of service for a principal in a school was 3.3 years, in the 1960s, 3.4 years; and in the 1970s, 3.8 years. Only eight principals who assumed this position prior to the 1970s were still in the principalship by the 1982-1983 school year. Of those who started as principals in the 1970s, 27 were still serving in the principalship. Of 38 individuals who started work as principals from 1980 to 1982, eight had already left the principalship by the end of the 1983-1984 school year.

#### Additional Information

Although not included in the research study, the data for the 1983-1984 through 1985-1986 school

years has been collected.\* See Figure 4. Only nine boarding academies and 18 day academies kept the same principal during the three-year period.

Forty-two principals abandoned this type of work during this period. During the previous five-year period, 70 had left the secondary principalship. Between 1983 and 1986, nine principals started and ended their service in this position. Six former secondary principals re-entered the principalship during the three-year period, and 40 new ones began work during this time.

#### What Do Former Principals Do?

Between 1978 and 1983, 70 administrators left the academy principalship. Nine (12.9 percent) of these retired, and 60 (85.7 percent) remained in denominational service. Only one principal left church employment. Eighty-two percent of the employed principals continued to work in the field of education.

Figure 5 summarizes the new

\*No attempt was made to include new academies opened during the 1983-1986 period. Laurelwood Adventist Academy (boarding) closed at the end of the 1984-1985 school year, and Grand Ledge Adventist Academy (day) began operation as a junior academy for the 1985-1986 school year.

positions of the principals who remained in educational endeavors. "Other" includes employment in college teaching, mission service, hospital work, union departmental work, or conference administration.

#### Conclusions

In addition to an analysis of the statistical information, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Seventh-day Adventist academy principals are not making the principalship a lifelong career.

2. The average stay of a principal in an academy is too brief to provide continuous effective administrative leadership for the school.

3. Many principals are not acquiring the breadth of experience in school administration that comes from serving as administrator in two or more schools.

4. Seventh-day Adventist secondary school principals are committed to service within the church organization.

5. The academy principalship appears to be a steppingstone to other positions in the Adventist educational system.

#### Recommendations

Based on the results of the investigation, the following recommenda-

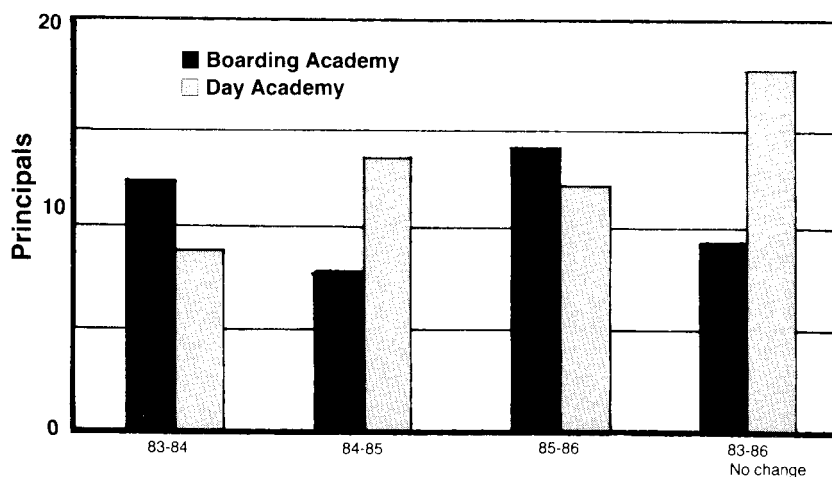


Fig. 4

tions were among those included in the study:

1. That local conferences and academy boards give study to the need for developing a set of written guidelines for use in the process of selecting a principal.

2. That local conferences and academy boards recognize the importance of matching the abilities and qualities of the principal with the needs of the school.

3. That local conferences and academy boards consider carefully the need to select a principal who holds a Seventh-day Adventist Administrator's Certificate.

4. That all appropriate educational organizations and levels

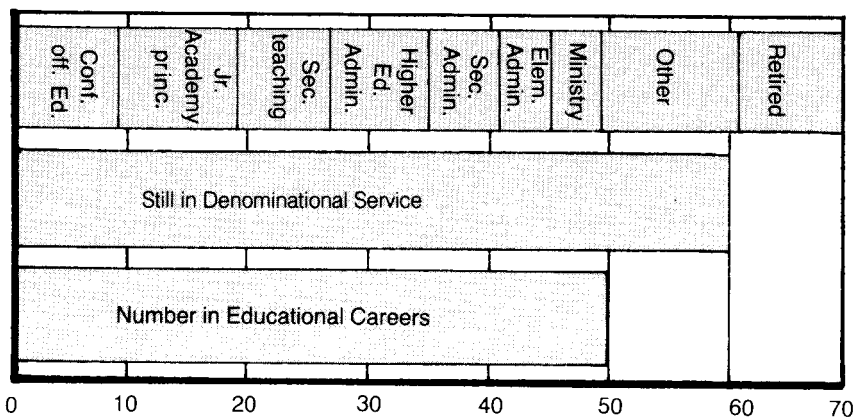


Fig. 5 New careers for principals 1978 – 1983

within the church address the need for continuing in-service training for academy principals.

5. That further study be done to

discover ways that board members and constituents can be encouraged to give stronger support to the principal in his or her work. □

## OF INTEREST TO TEACHERS

### Statistics on Private Schools

ONE OF every three schools in the United States is a private school. Of these, 80 percent are religiously affiliated. Some 5.7 million children attend these schools, 70 percent of which operate on the elementary level. Minorities make up about 18 percent of the enrollment of U.S. private schools, with blacks representing about 8 percent, and Hispanics 7 percent of this total.

Dr. John C. Holmes, Assistant for Government Information with the Association of Christian Schools International, estimates the savings to the U.S. taxpayer from the 25,000 evangelical Protestant schools alone at \$12 billion, with another \$6 billion being brought into the U.S. economy by these schools.—Information drawn from reports at an education conference sponsored by the U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee, February 28, 1986.

### Hands-on Computer Workshop

A HANDS-ON computer workshop, the Second Faculty Institute on "Student-centered Computer Education," will be held June 16-20, 1986, at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska. Although primarily beamed at academy and college computer science and business teachers, the workshop is open to any teacher with a background in computers. For information about the workshop, lodging, and transportation from the airport, contact Mindy Brooks at (402) 488-2331 as soon as possible.

### Who Should Evaluate Teachers?

THE 1985 Educator Opinion Poll asked 498 elementary school teachers what role other teachers play in their performance reviews. Most (85.1 percent) said none at all; administrators do evaluations.

When the teachers were asked how much peer involvement they

would like in their evaluations, 48.8 percent preferred none at all. Another 31.1 percent said that peers should occasionally be consulted on an informal basis. Less than 18 percent of the teachers wanted peers to play a formal role; about half of these would like fellow teachers to have a significant impact on their evaluations. Only 1.6 percent of the teachers preferred an evaluation consisting solely of review by their peers.—Reported by *Learning*, March, 1986.

### Typical College Trustee Is Middle-Aged, White Businessman

"MIDDLE-AGED, WHITE businessmen continue to predominate on college governing boards, but the representation of women and ethnic minorities has shown modest gains in the last decade, according to a nationwide survey.

"Of approximately 48,000 people