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# EDUCATION



# 2025

**SURVEY OF NOVICE ADMINISTRATORS  
AND THEIR SUPERVISORS**

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# Executive Summary

This project was administered by Jeremy Penn, Ph.D., M.P.H., University of Iowa College of Education, and supported with funding from the Iowa Department of Education. The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author or of the anonymous survey respondents and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the University of Iowa College of Education or the Iowa Department of Education. Questions about this survey or the results should be directed to [jeremy-penn@uiowa.edu](mailto:jeremy-penn@uiowa.edu).

## Overall Results

- Most novice administrators (including those who were and were not employed as administrators) reported being well or very well prepared except in effectively managing the growth of English Language Learners (Table 7).
- Three new items (support educators in classroom management, support literacy initiatives, and support evidence-based math instruction) also had most novice administrators indicate they were well or very well prepared, although they had lower levels of preparation than many of the other preparation areas (70%, 57%, and 52% respectively).
- Supervisors of novice administrators agreed, with a majority (61% - 97%) perceiving the novice administrator they supervised as well or very well prepared across the overall areas of preparation (Table 8).

## MTSS Results

- Most novice administrators (62% - 88%) – including those employed as administrators and not employed as administrators – reported being well prepared to support MTSS (Table 9).
- A majority (74% - 94%) of supervisors of novice administrators perceived the novice administrator they supervised as well or very well prepared for various aspects of MTSS (Table 9).

## Mental Health and Wellness Results

- Novice administrators' perceptions of their ability to support mental health and wellness in 2025 was somewhat lower than respondents' perceptions in 2024 (Figure 6).
- Similarly, supervisors of novice administrators perceived their preparation to support mental health and wellness in 2025 was somewhat lower than in 2024 or 2023 (Figure 7).

## Open-Ended Comments

- Open-ended comments are offered verbatim to provide additional insight into the preparation of novice administrators.
- Highlights included interest in special education laws, interpersonal dynamics, communication, and a need for training in specific areas (such as budgeting).

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# Methods

## Questionnaire Design and Administration

- The questionnaires were designed through a collaboration between the Iowa Department of Education and the School Administrators of Iowa. The questionnaires were updated in 2022 to reflect the updated standards for school administrators, which prevents direct comparison of results to surveys prior to 2022.
- The full text of responses to the open-ended survey items is presented. Individual and institutional names have been removed from the open-ended comments.
- The survey was administered using the University of Iowa's Qualtrics license.
- The surveys were administered from April 3 to May 25, 2025.

## Survey Population

- Administrator preparation programs were asked to send the names and contact information for their recent graduates.
- The Iowa Department of Education provided a list of new administrators serving schools in Iowa.
- Matching was used to generate the contact list for supervisors of novice administrators. However, not all novice administrators who responded to the survey had their supervisors respond to the survey and vice versa.

## Response Rate

- 206 novice administrators were contacted, and responses were received from 64, for a response rate of 31.1%. Not all respondents were currently serving as administrators (this is noted throughout the results where relevant). Not all respondents answered every question so the number of responses per item varies.
- 140 supervisors of novice administrators were contacted, and responses were received from 33, for a response rate of 23.6%.

# Results

## Demographics of Respondents

### Novice Administrators

Table 1. Where did you complete your administrator preparation program?

Institution	Contacted	Responded	Response Rate	% of total
None of these / unknown	16	2	12.5%	3.1%
Dordt University	11	4	36.4%	6.3%
Drake University	39	11	28.2%	17.2%
Iowa State University	6	0	0.0%	0.0%
Northwestern College	48	16	33.3%	25.0%
University of Iowa	18	8	44.4%	12.5%
University of Northern Iowa	39	15	38.5%	23.4%
Viterbo University	29	8	27.6%	12.5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>31.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Novice Administrators

Table 2. Are you currently employed in a school or district administration role?

	n	Percent
Yes, I am currently employed as a school or district administrator	32	50%
No, I am not currently employed as a school or district administrator, but I was employed as a school or district administrator in the past	1	2%
No, I am not currently employed as a school or district administrator, and I have NEVER been employed as a school or district administrator	31	48%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Novice Administrators

Table 3. (If respondent is currently serving as school or district administrator) Which statement best describes your current role?

	n	Percent
I am currently employed as a school administrator	26	81%
I am currently employed as a district administrator	4	13%
I am currently employed with an Area Education Agency (AEA)	1	3%
Other	1	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

Other text: Accepted position for 2025-2026.

### Novice Administrators

Table 4. (If respondent is not currently serving as a school or district administrator) Which statement describes your current employment status?

	n	Percent
I am employed in K-12 education, but not as a school or district administrator	30	94%
I am employed outside of K-12 education	1	3%
I am not employed, but I am seeking employment	0	0%
I am not employed and I am not seeking employment	0	0%
Other	1	3%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

Other: I am a PreK Director in a SWVPP community partner preschool

### Novice Administrators

Table 5. (If respondent is not currently serving as a school or district administrator) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following are reasons why you are not employed as a school, school district, or AEA administrator?

	n	M	% Agree / Strongly Agree
I am waiting for the right job to become available.	31	3.23	84%
I am happy with my current job and am not interested in taking an administrative job right now.	31	2.94	77%
I am not interested in school / district / AEA administration.	31	1.74	13%
I have pursued administrative openings but have not received an acceptable offer.	31	2.16	42%
Personal / family / life circumstances make it difficult to pursue an administrative position at this time.	31	2.29	48%

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree.

### Supervisors of Novice Administrators

Supervisors of novice administrators were asked to report the preparation institution attended by the person they were evaluating. If the supervisors did not know the institution the novice administrator had attended, this information was entered by the survey administrator by examining the contact lists sent by institutions.

### Supervisors of Novice Administrators

Table 6. What preparation institution did the novice administrator you are reviewing attend?

Institution	Contacted	Responded	Response Rate	% of Total
Unknown / None of these	1	0	0.0%	0.0%
Dordt University	2	1	50.0%	3.0%
Drake University	26	8	30.8%	24.2%
Iowa State University	5	3	60.0%	9.1%
Northwestern College	37	10	27.0%	30.3%
University of Northern Iowa	25	4	16.0%	12.1%
University of Iowa	17	3	17.6%	9.1%
Viterbo University	27	4	14.8%	12.1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>23.6%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Overall Level of Preparation

### All Novice Administrators

As shown in Table 7, novice administrators – including those who were not employed as school or district administrators – generally felt well prepared to serve as school or district administrators.

Table 7. Overall level of preparation: All novice administrators.

"How well were you prepared to:"	Novice Administrators (Including those not employed as administrators)		
	n	M	% Well / Very Well
Advocate for ethical decisions and cultivate and enact professional norms.	63	3.49	92%
Develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive school culture.	63	3.39	89%
Build the school's professional capacity, engage staff in the development of a collaborative professional culture, and improve systems of staff supervision, evaluation, support, and professional learning.	63	3.32	87%
Strengthen student learning, support school improvement, and advocate for the needs of the school and community.	63	3.35	87%
Collaboratively lead, design, and implement a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values and priorities that include data use, technology, equity, diversity, digital citizenship, and community.	63	3.46	89%
Improve management, communication, technology, school-level governance, and operation systems to develop and improve data-informed and equitable school resource plans and to apply laws, policies, and regulations.	63	3.27	81%
Evaluate, develop, and implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, data systems, supports, and assessment.	63	3.22	79%
Support educators in classroom management.	63	3.00	70%
Effectively manage special education.	63	2.76	60%
Support literacy initiatives.	63	2.65	57%
Support evidence-based math instruction.	63	2.59	52%
Effectively manage the growth of English Language Learners.	63	2.29	37%

Scale: 1 = Not well, 2 = Somewhat well, 3 = Well, 4 = Very well.

Table 8. Overall level of preparation and performance: those with school or district administrator employment experience.

	Novice Administrators (only those serving / served) (n = 33)			Supervisors of Novice Administrators (n = 33 prepared; 30 perform)	
		M	% Well / Very Well	M	% Well / Very Well
Advocate for ethical decisions and cultivate and enact professional norms.	Prepared	3.30	87.9%	3.61	97.0%
	Perform	3.41	93.8%	3.50	86.7%
Develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive school culture.	Prepared	3.30	84.9%	3.48	94.0%
	Perform	3.16	81.3%	3.50	86.7%
Build the school's professional capacity, engage staff in the development of a collaborative professional culture, and improve systems of staff supervision, evaluation, support, and professional learning.	Prepared	3.21	84.9%	3.30	81.8%
	Perform	3.06	78.1%	3.27	83.4%
Strengthen student learning, support school improvement, and advocate for the needs of the school and community.	Prepared	3.18	84.8%	3.48	97.0%
	Perform	3.31	90.6%	3.47	93.3%
Collaboratively lead, design, and implement a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values and priorities that include data use, technology, equity, diversity, digital citizenship, and community.	Prepared	3.39	87.9%	3.48	90.9%
	Perform	3.22	93.7%	3.40	86.6%
Improve management, communication, technology, school-level governance, and operation systems to develop and improve data-informed and equitable school resource plans and to apply laws, policies, and regulations.	Prepared	3.21	81.8%	3.30	87.9%
	Perform	3.19	81.3%	3.37	90.0%
Evaluate, develop, and implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, data systems, supports, and assessment.	Prepared	3.12	78.8%	3.21	78.8%
	Perform	3.03	81.3%	3.37	83.3%
Support educators in classroom management.	Prepared	2.85	63.7%	NA	NA
	Perform	3.16	78.1%	NA	NA
Effectively manage special education.	Prepared	2.64	57.6%	3.06	69.7%
	Perform	2.97	75.0%	3.17	76.7%
Support literacy initiatives.	Prepared	2.58	51.5%	NA	NA
	Perform	2.97	68.8%	NA	NA
Support evidence-based math instruction.	Prepared	2.52	45.5%	NA	NA
	Perform	2.75	56.3%	NA	NA
Effectively manage the growth of English Language Learners.	Prepared	2.09	27.3%	2.87	61.3%
	Perform	2.47	43.8%	2.96	64.3%

\*Scale: 1 = Not well; 2 = Somewhat well; 3 = Well; 4 = Very well

Figure 1. Novice Administrator Results. Overall % well / very well prepared. (Includes only those who were serving in an administrative role; part 1).

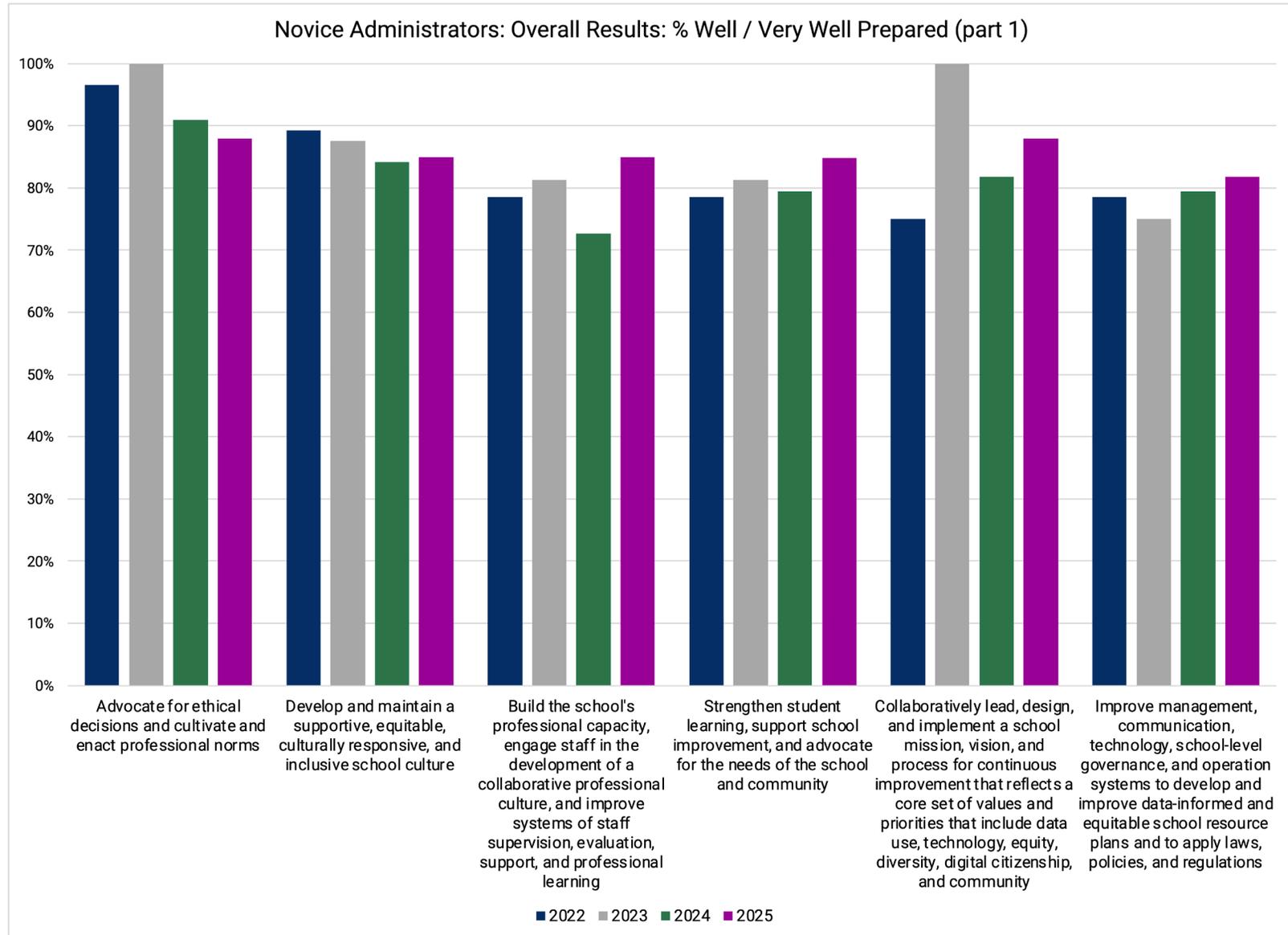


Figure 2. Novice Administrator Results: Overall % well / very well prepared (includes only those who were serving in an administrative role; part 2)

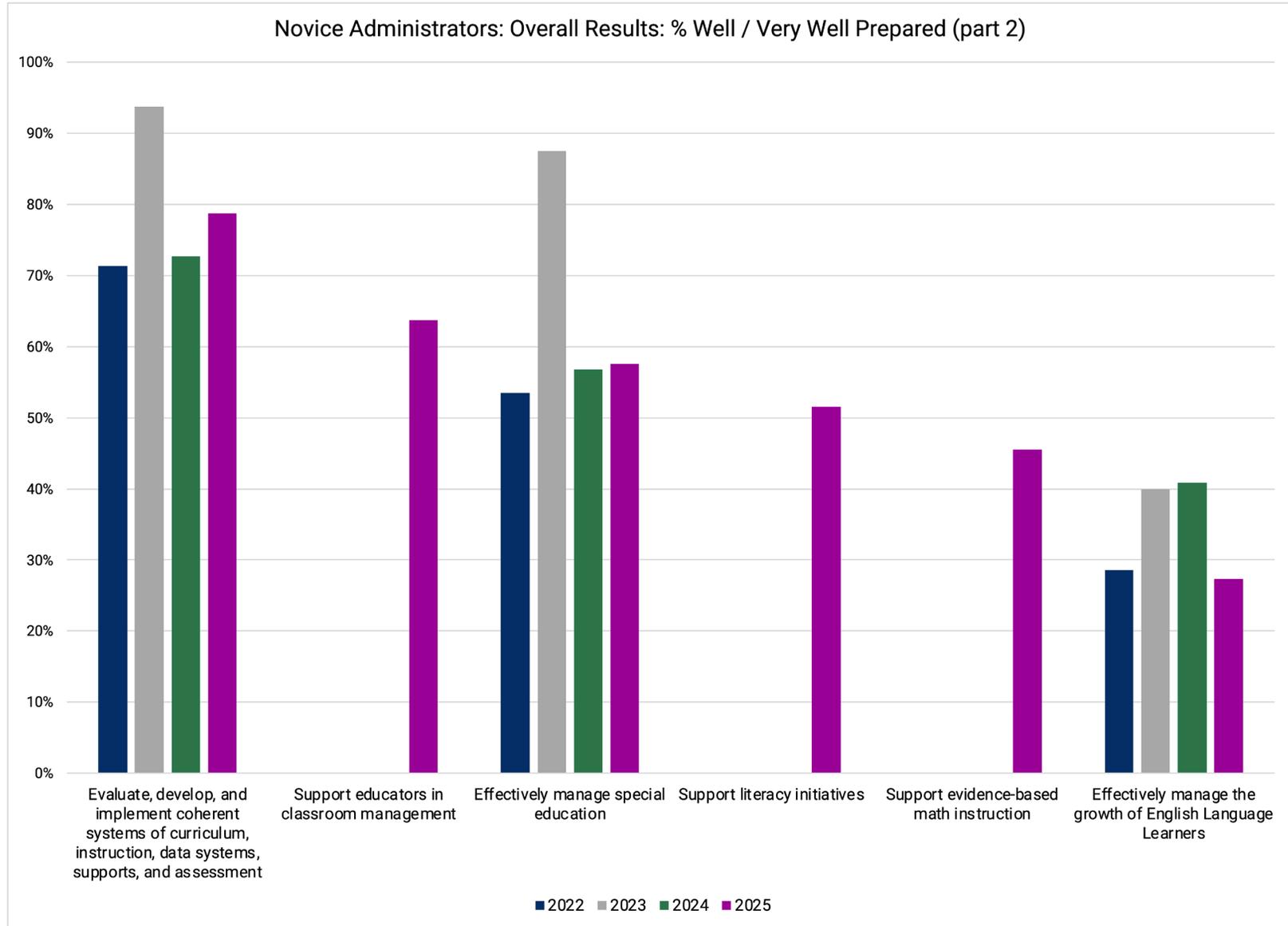
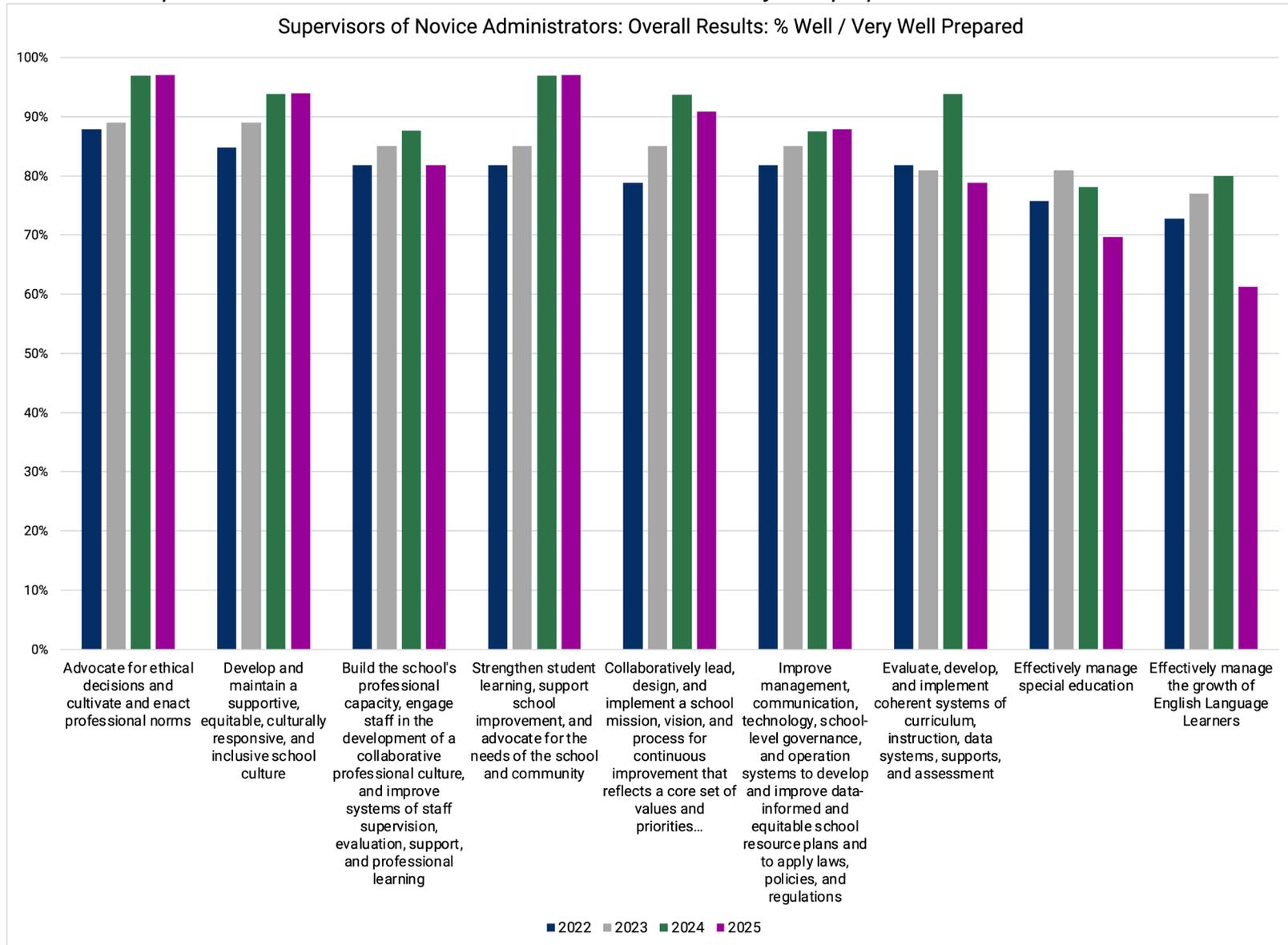


Figure 3. Results from Supervisors of Novice Administrators. Overall % well / very well prepared.



## **Preparation to Engage in Aspects of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)**

- Most novice administrators reported being well prepared and performing well on all aspects of MTSS (Table 9).
- The area where novice administrators felt least well prepared was “Support the performance of universal screening” (62%).
- Nearly all supervisors of novice administrators reported the novice administrators they supervised were well or very well prepared to implement various aspects of MTSS (Table 9).

Table 9. Overall preparation in the aspects of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS).

“How well did your administrator preparation program prepare you for each of the following aspects of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)?”		Novice Administrators					Supervisors of Novice Administrators (n = 32)			
		n	M	% Well / Very Well 2025	% Well / Very Well 2024	% Well / Very Well 2023	M	% Well / Very Well 2025	% Well / Very Well 2024	% Well / Very Well 2023
Engage in data-based decision-making / interventions.	All	61	3.44	89%	86%	88%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	32	3.50	88%	84%	81%	3.32	83.9%	90%	89%
Participate in collaborative inquiry.	All	61	3.25	84%	82%	84%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	32	3.25	88%	77%	81%	3.37	86.7%	90%	85%
Support equity for all students.	All	61	3.21	82%	85%	88%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	32	3.22	88%	82%	81%	3.45	93.5%	94%	78%
Collaborate with teachers, school staff, and administrators on Rtl or MTSS.	All	60	3.07	72%	69%	64%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	31	3.03	74%	66%	69%	3.23	83.3%	94%	85%
Support implementation of evidence-based instruction.	All	61	2.95	69%	68%	64%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	32	2.91	72%	61%	63%	3.22	81.2%	97%	74%
Develop evidence-based interventions.	All	61	2.84	67%	66%	72%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	32	2.72	66%	66%	69%	3.13	74.2%	90%	77%
Participate in school-based initiatives that support Iowa’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan.	All	59	2.88	64%	59%	60%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	30	2.73	60%	59%	63%	3.24	79.3%	93%	85%
Support the completion of progress monitoring.	All	60	2.78	65%	58%	68%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	31	2.77	71%	52%	75%	3.35	87.1%	90%	81%
Support the performance of universal screening.	All	60	2.78	62%	64%	56%	-	-	-	-
	Employed	31	2.81	65%	59%	56%	3.32	83.9%	97%	85%

Scale: 1 = Not very well prepared, 2 = Somewhat well prepared, 3 = Well prepared, 4 = Very well prepared.

Figure 4. Novice Administrators. MTSS % Well / Very Well Prepared. (Includes only those who were serving in an administrative role).

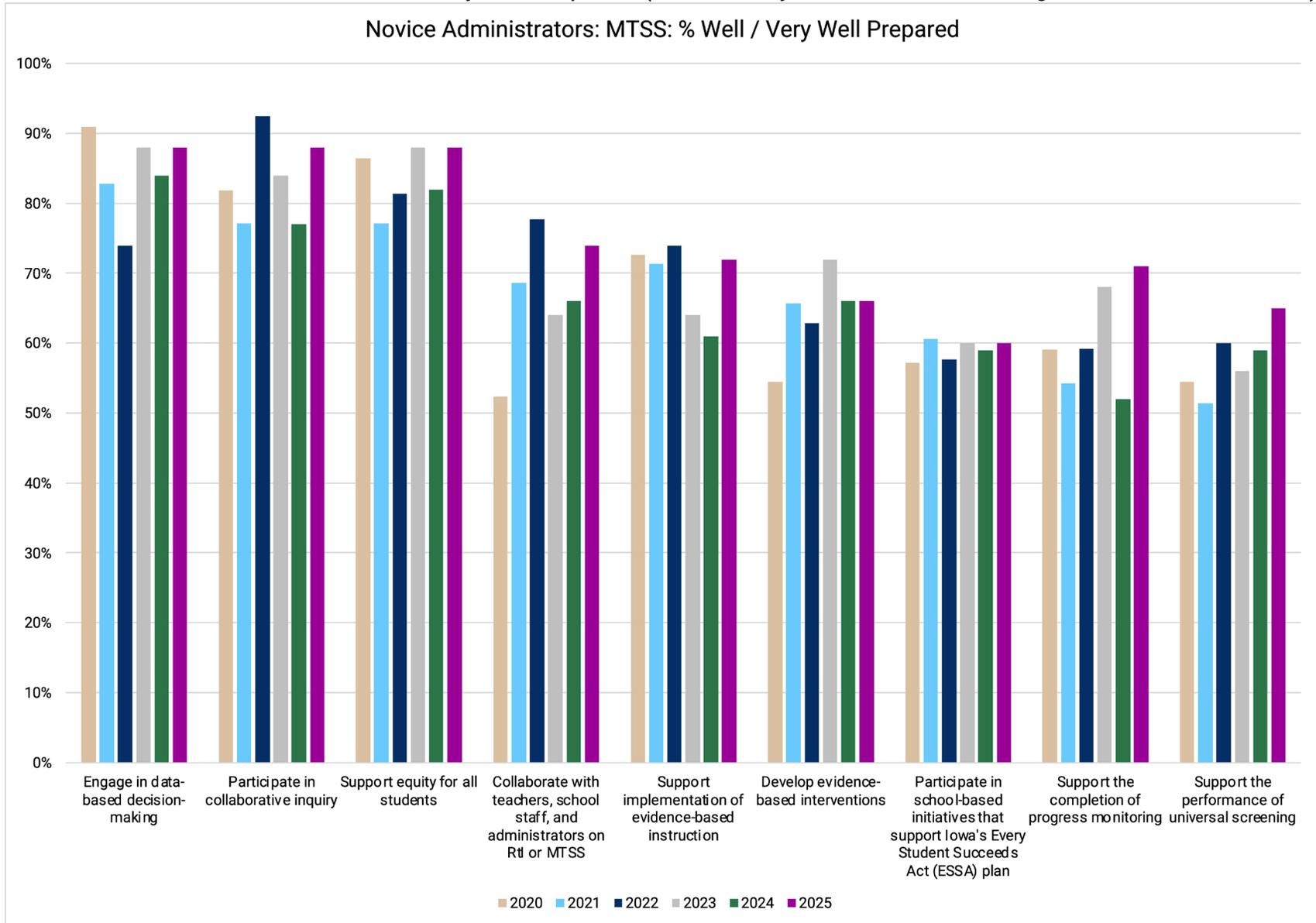
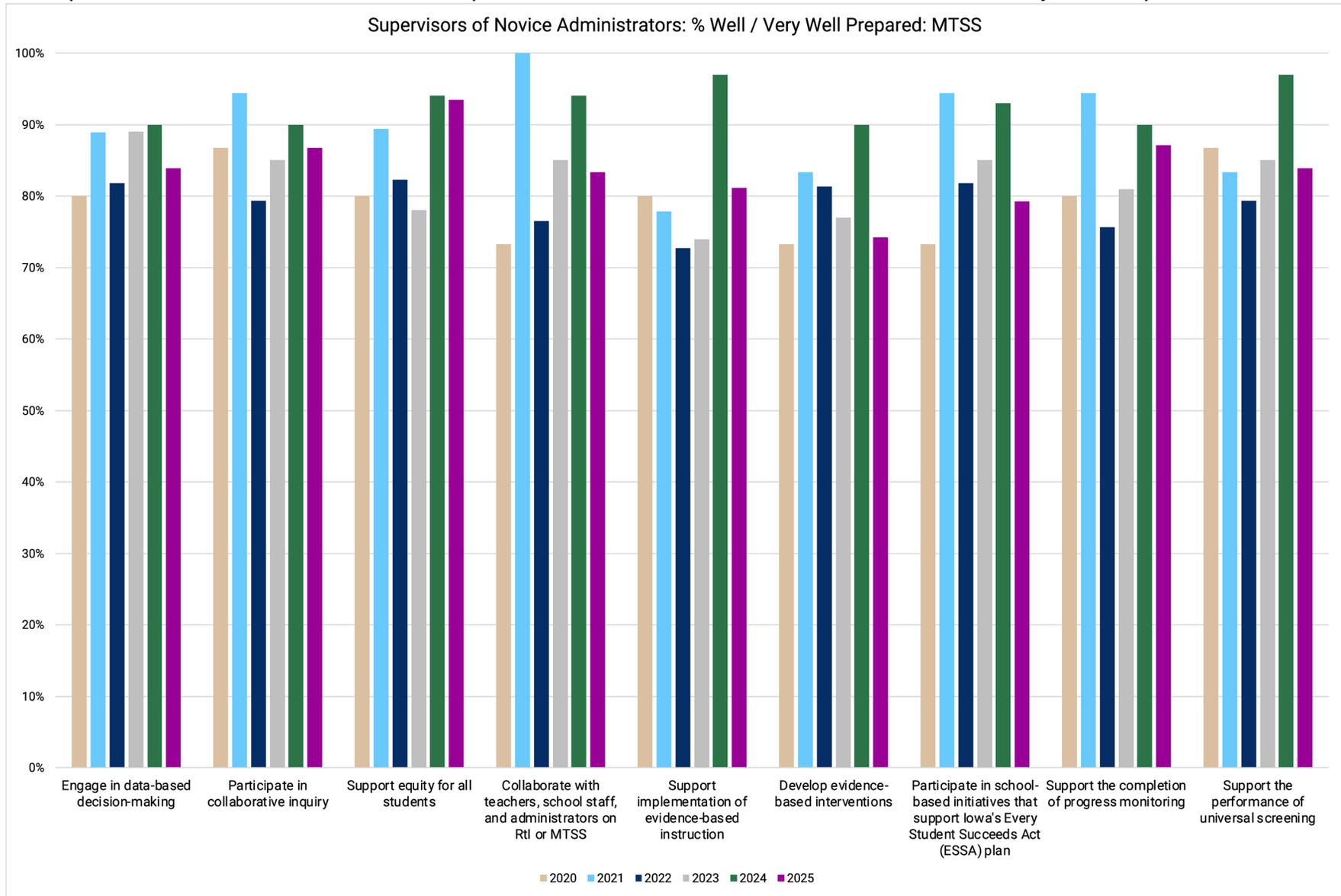


Figure 5. Supervisors of Novice Administrators. Supervisors of Novice Administrators: MTSS % Well / Very Well Prepared.



## Level of Preparation for Supporting Mental Health

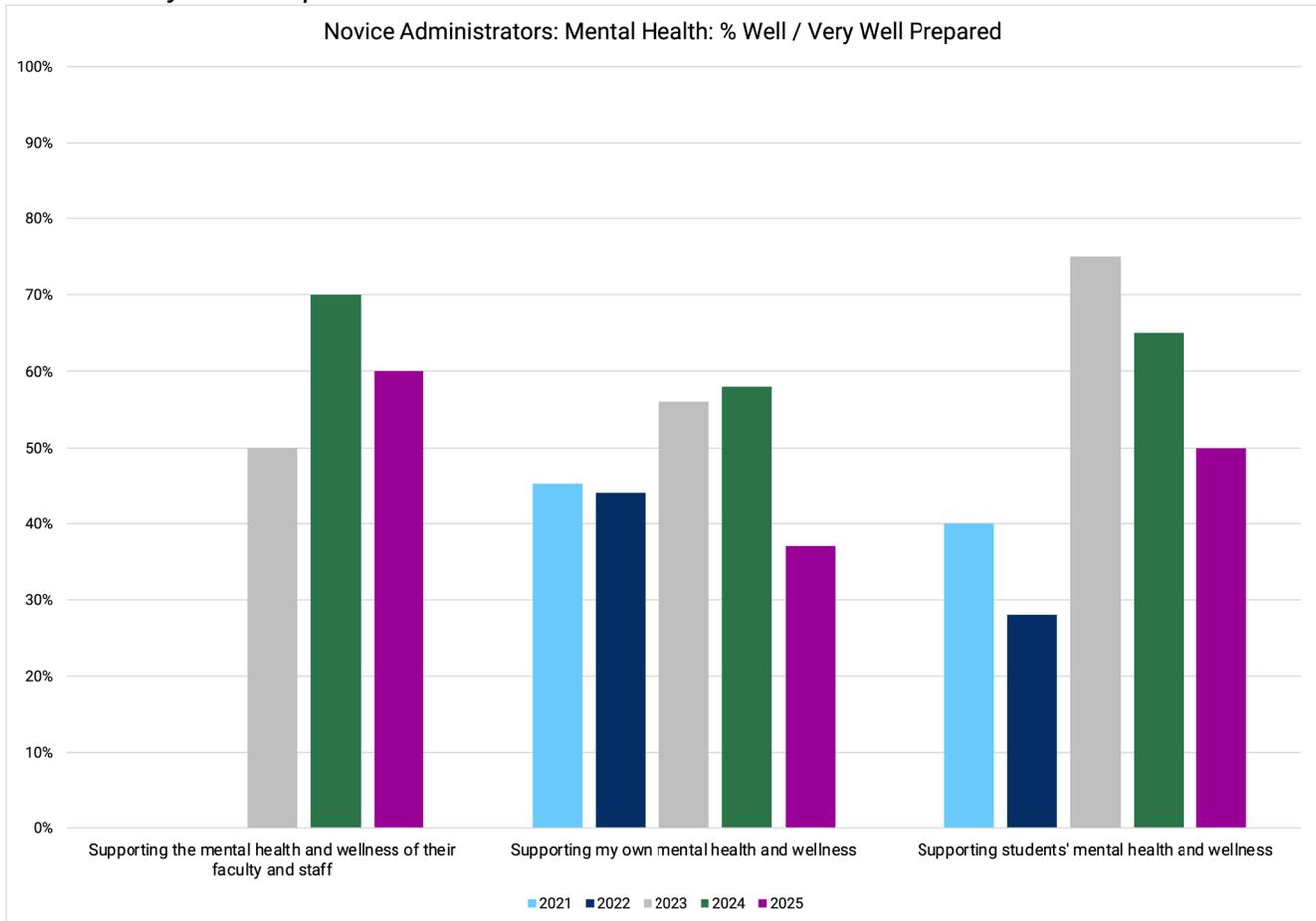
- Many novice administrators felt well / very well prepared to support students' mental health and wellness and the health and wellness of their faculty / staff (Table 10).
- Most novice administrators employed in an administrative role did NOT feel well / very well prepared to support their own mental health (Table 10).
- Novice administrators' perceptions of their level of preparation for mental health decreased in comparison to 2024 (Figure 6).
- Supervisors of novice administrators generally felt novice administrators were prepared to support mental health (Table 10).
- Supervisors' perceptions of the level of preparation of novice administrators in mental health decreased in comparison to 2024 (Figure 7).

Table 10. Overall level of preparation to support mental health.

		Novice Administrators (n = 59 all; 30 employed)		Supervisors of Novice Administrators (n = 32)	
		M	% Well / Very Well	M	% Well / Very Well
Supporting students' mental health and wellness	All	2.85	61%	-	-
	Employed	2.67	50%	3.34	81.2%
Supporting the mental health and wellness of their faculty and staff	All	2.95	64%	-	-
	Employed	2.80	60%	3.19	71.9%
Supporting their own [my own] mental health and wellness	All	2.73	54%	-	-
	Employed	2.40	37%	3.34	81.2%

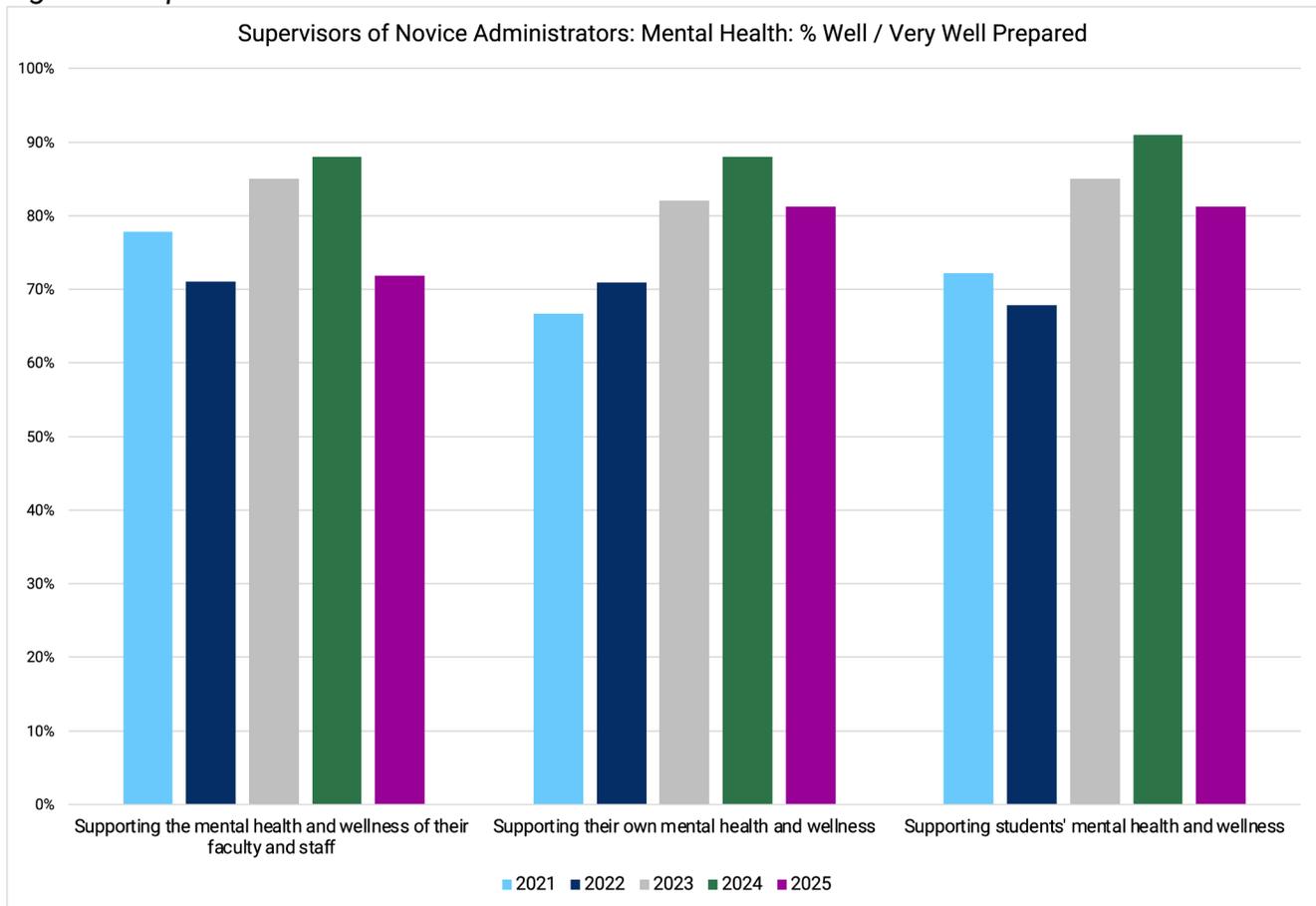
Scale: 1 = Not very well prepared; 2 = Somewhat well prepared; 3 = Well prepared; 4 = Very well prepared.

Figure 6. Novice Administrators and Mental Health (employed as administrators). Mental Health % Well / Very Well Prepared.



Note: The item "supporting the mental health and wellness of their faculty and staff" was different in 2022 and 2021, so no comparative results are available.

Figure 7. Supervisors of Novice Administrators and Mental Health.



## Open-ended Responses

Responses are provided verbatim unless a specific Administration Program or Novice Administrator was named. Responses of "NA / Not sure / don't know" were removed.

*Novice Administrators: What, if anything, could your preparation program have done to better prepare you to support the mental health of your faculty, staff, and students?*

Attend professional development or training about resources and practices for school staff and students.

Give strategies to us as school leaders on what we can do, specifically for staff, to communicate and provide resources in regards to mental health. What things can we do/implement to help support self care?

Have some of the U of I Pediatric's psychologists and psychiatrists come in to talk to us about how to best support students in SEL. In addition, require an SEL class that teaches methods and curriculums that teachers and schools can use. Brain based learning classes would have been helpful as well.

Having professors that can support the programs goals.

I have conducted frequent check ins with staff and am available for them to schedule meetings. Listen first. Provide some information on actual ways to address staff issues. Role play possible scenarios.

I needed to go to "police school." So much of my work is founded in investigations. Because of all of the bullying/harassment law and then the student behaviors/ handbook work. Our students have really responded positively to seeing that rules are consistently applied fairly and our data reflects that this work has resulted in suspension counts/percentages that continue to move closer and closer to reflecting the percentage of students in the population. It also has led to an increase in student attendance and a decrease in handbook violations. The rules are the rules and the consequences are the consequences. A sense of safety goes a long way to making a space where learning can happen. However, this method takes SO MUCH TIME. So many interviews, reviewing cameras, family meetings, etc. Our families trust our process- but I wish I had learned faster method or had pre-built resources/handbooks that aid in this work/ learning about the state guidance.

Include information on reports that are filled out and spent greater detail on the unique aspects of being an administrator to a preschool.

It's hard to prepare for the intangible circumstances of being an administrator, but more of a focus behavioral management and building a schema for resources a principal might have.

More focus on these topics and tangible applications. More brain science and understanding of why people have the mental health needs to build understanding and offer practical/ appropriate solutions.

More in person learning opportunities and collaboration.

More time focusing on being an instructional leader and giving good feedback to grow teachers

My preparation program did not have a strong focus on mental health for faculty, staff, students, or myself. However, ACSD has held professional development in those areas and I feel prepared to provide a culture of support and empathy. This is something that is better addressed at the school level so everyone is on the same page with support.

Not all professors were invested and it seemed like an obligation rather than an opportunity for them to educate and inspire us. But overall, I had a pleasurable experience.

possible having other administrators share how they balance mental health of faculty, staff and students.

Provide opportunities to learn more strategies or situations where administrators have been involved in.

Provide resources specific to certain areas of the state and the process for obtaining those resources

Provided more strategies to use when meeting with faculty, staff, and students.

There can always be more practical ideas presented and then how to make them work

Understanding boundaries and realistic expectations for levels of support. What responsibilities are in the school. How to avoid recommendations to avoid liability.

*Supervisors of Novice Administrators: What, if anything, could [Name]'s preparation program have done to better prepare them to support mental health and wellness of their faculty, staff, and students?*

A greater accountability on administration hours he put in and meeting with his site supervisor for feedback.

Difficult to gauge as her supervisor, having gone through the same preparation program, I would say there wasn't much specific to this topic.

[Name] is years ahead his age when it comes to supporting mental health and wellness with staff. It is something that comes naturally to him.

I'm not sure that Mental Health and Wellness is an area that any institution does extremely well in preparing students for what they'll experience as a professional educator leader.

Its more about the individual than a particular program

More focused courses and training on mental health

More information on boundaries with students and how to build relationships rather friendships.

Nothing. He will just need experience in the job.

Nothing. She is a strong leader.

She has been prepared well. She has been actively involved in her growth. She will be an incredibly effect administrator.

This is such a large field, anything that can be shared with administration candidates is helpful.

Unsure

*Novice Administrators: What, if anything, could your preparation program have done to better prepare you to support your own mental health and wellness?*

?

Engage with current administrators on the topic.

Fantastic. I wouldn't change anything.

Have a better understanding of the sheer number of emails and what a true day-to-day/month-to-month looks like. It is way busier than anticipated even with my internship hours.

Have a class on how to manage work and family life. I feel this would be a great class for anyone.

I appreciated the support throughout the program as work and family life balance was recognized with zooms, assignments and real life balance.

I'm not sure if it's appropriate to take a class on it but it's definitely a need in our field to prioritize mental health.

It is always a work in progress!

Offer more insight in brain science and practical solution to assist with coping with stress.

Provide opportunities to learn more strategies.

Provide resources for mental health support systems that are geared specifically for educators and staff in educational settings.

Same as above.

See answer above

Shown real life examples of administrators setting aside time to focus on themselves. The days get very busy, and it is easy to get consumed in the work.

Unsure what else could have been done... the 1st year has been tough and it's hard to come home and separate from it.

What to do when the job you are asked to do is an unfair load- by a lot. How to advocate beyond the building for support. What is fair to expect, and what is unfair. What should the caseload of an admin look like and feel like?

*Supervisors of Novice Administrators: What, if anything, could [Name]'s preparation program have done to better prepare them to support their own mental health and wellness?*

Discussions around work/life balance. Dealing with challenging scenarios.

It is challenging to sufficiently prepare for the stressors of high school administration. The volume of work is difficult to simulate so it is challenging to replicate that in a prep program.

[Name] wants a leadership position but needs a lot of areas of growth. He had too much independence.

Nothing comes to mind. Her prep paired with her work in our district has been powerful.

Nothing to my knowledge

Nothing. She has a nice balance of her home and work life.

same as above, [Name] exhibits a healthy work/life balance in her position.

Unsure

*Novice Administrators (employed as administrators): What are examples of the knowledge, skills, or dispositions you learned in your preparation program that helped you succeed this year as a school or district administrator?*

--PDSA cycle, Baldrige, systems thinking, all the books we read. How to manage hard conversations. All the relationships I build in the Cohort as well as in my area with other administrators.

Acknowledge my role as the administrator and what that meant in terms of interacting with staff. Being confident even if I don't know or have an answer.

All the application-based practices that put aspiring administration on the spot in tough situations helped. Bringing in past and current leaders of same positions really helped give insight into the position. Coursework was hand and hand helpful to navigate the topics of what was needed.

Ask questions before you assume, gather all sides of the info., stick to the facts.

Bring a quick learner, asking questions, knowing my resources.

Cultural Competencies

Curriculum and being an instructional leader. I also feel that the program helped shape my understanding of the importance of a vision and mission and how to implement those into my decision-making within my building.

I learned a lot about instructional leadership and special education which have supported me in my role.

I learned to be light on my feet and ready to attack all sorts of different situations.

I was already working at a lead teacher, so I was learning while doing.

Knowing what type of leader I am and how to achieve it. Bottom line...what is important to me and how I want students and staff to feel.

School culture is very important, so the first step to being a great administrator is to build positive relationships with staff and students. From there, discipline becomes easier because you have a relationship with whomever you are disciplining.

Special Education Law has had the most impact on my position. There is a lot of knowledge needed in order to support students who receive support from special education.

Special education law, data based decision making, facility management, staff evaluations and leadership

Systems thinking, evaluation procedures, sped and gen ed law

The systems thinking perspective is imperative and very helpful.

Understanding policies and school law, teacher evaluation processes, managing difficult conversations

*Supervisor of Novice Administrator: What has been [administrator]'s biggest success so far this year?*

Building a shared leadership with teachers and taking a look at their MTSS systems and interventions.

Building connections and relationships with students and staff and also learning how things have been handled in the years prior to his tenure.

Building professional relationships with her staff. We set this as a goal going into the school year and I feel that she has worked to build collaborative teams.

Building relationships with staff, students and families.

Flexibility and continuous learning

HE has gotten through his first year and matured very much as a principal.

He has started to see the "big picture" instead of just from an individual teacher perspective.

[Name] takes the time to seek first to understand before rushing to decisions. He is great at asking questions and communicating with staff. [Name] takes time to meet with staff and create appropriate plans that support kids and staff.

[Name] has been very helpful in her student management, completing academic walkthroughs and evaluations and helping me adjust as a new building leader.

Learning to push through tough things with adults.

[Name] had two difficult staff situations to manage, one of which led to separation with a long-time, well-respected teacher.

Opening a new school building

She has demonstrated tremendous growth in her first year as an administrator

She is a great leader and has directed a lot of change in the educational programs at [School].

She is a strong advocate for students and has increased her ability to work with and have hard conversations around special education with teachers and parents.

standards based grading implementation

Supporting student behavior

Too many to mention. She's crushing in all areas!!

Willing to put in the time.

*Novice Administrators (employed as administrators): What are the knowledge, skills, or dispositions that have been the greatest challenge for you as a school or district administrator?*

504's

Adult mindsets

All of the nuances of the job. I have a great lead principal and the daily learning has been very beneficial.

Creating trust with staff.

I would have liked more information about different student management strategies, and a lot more about Special Education Law. I have learned about MTSS and Research based practices in my own work experience but it would have been nice to dig more into that too.

It has taken me time to grow in my comfort and ability in having uncomfortable or challenging conversations

Multitasking and having to quickly shift from one situation (parent meeting) to another (PLC meeting) without processing time inbetween.

Nothing that has been a great challenge, but there is a lot of fluctuation in mood and patience level throughout the day.

Overcoming the overwhelming need to make sure everyone is happy.

Special Education has also been the greatest challenge but in regards to student behaviors. Additional learning around just the behavior side of special education would have been helpful.

Special education was a large learning curve that I am still progressing much with the support from AEA staff, 504 plans and EL learners is a learning curve that there is little prep Managing budgets and state reporting were also responsibilities that there was little to no preparation for

SPED Law, how to handle poor attendance and disengaged parents; demonstrating confidence in so many new scenarios that I haven't experienced before.

Staff issues and behaviors mixed with student issues and behaviors. Navigating people and the difficulties they bring. Also, the difficult reality that things above me are going to impact my people and their desire to be at work.

State to state differences in special education, forming staff relationships and walking into a school/district without all the knowledge. First year is hard, especially when staff are used to doing things a certain way and I do not know the way things were done. Culture is rough because the previous AP was an intense micromanager and the staff expects that. Learning how to build capacity within teams without it appearing as though the typical support they are used to has been pulled.

The greatest challenge is always navigating all of the decisions that you make in a day. I don't think anyone is ever prepared for how many questions you answers and decisions, both small and large, you have to make on a daily basis.

This is something that hasn't been a problem for me.

Understanding all of the education and special education laws that impact decision making during meetings.

*Supervisor of Novice Administrator: What has been [name]'s biggest challenge so far this year?*

A lot comes at an administrator at one time. It can be overwhelming. I worry that [Name] will overwork himself at times. I want to help him find balance.

Balancing the work load with personal life

Being able to see an issue from multiple view points and then grounding his decision in his own core values and beliefs.

Communication with staff.

Cultivating a positive culture and climate while also holding staff accountable, especially with a staff that is "inherited" and not used to having accountability.

Dealing with adults.

dealing with and problem solving for difficult and persistent student behaviors, district lacks answers or structures for what if when a problem persists and current consequences no longer are effective.

Empathy and patience

Getting to know all the businesses in the area. This is a challenge for a rural district with 5 towns within it's border.

Having the hard conversations in a timely manner.

It almost always is related to communication with people when she is firm on something in her beliefs. She sometimes has a hard time communicating that in a way that helps the other person learn more and just tells them how it is. To be an effective leader you have to be able to see multiple angles, but I would also say she has improved with this as well.

Keeping the first thing first. Not allowing herself to overly consumed by small things.

Many skill gaps.

None. She does a great administrator.

Prioritization of the work and tasks; time management; work life fit

Simply being in the 'trenches' daily from the administrator side.

time management and follow through

Understanding the role of a leader being different than the role of a peer teacher. She struggles with separating her role as an administrator with seeking to be friends with teachers.

*Novice Administrators (all respondents): Is there anything else you would like to share about your level of preparation?*

Although I am not an administrator, I have valued the education that UNI provided me, as it has allowed me to have meaningful conversations with my students and fellow staff members regarding the "why" in initiatives the school has taken on. I have enjoyed having this new perspective on work that we do, as teachers, and work that we ask our students to do. I feel that I have become a better teacher and have helped others, too.

I feel like it was a good program for leadership with a systems lens.

I feel Northwestern provides a top-notch program. I was very well prepared and would recommend their program to any aspiring administrator.

I feel that there could be more direct instruction related to common initiatives like MTSS, budget management, evaluation and design of programs. It relies too much on practicum experiences to assume we have developed those skills.

I felt the University of Iowa provided an excellent program in preparation for an admin position. I appreciated the staff open communication, listening to questions, and zooms where we interacted with our classmates and staff. I also appreciated the mix of professionals in our classes and different entrance points to the program. This allowed for others to lead those of us entering the program, advising us and inspiring us as some were graduating with taking their last class when I was on beginning my first class. It gave hope to the work and family life balance of graduate school! I learned and grew so much throughout the whole program!

I felt very prepared. I appreciated that the coursework was relevant, current, and taught by people active in educational leadership roles still. I felt that I got a sense of what the "real world" of a school administrator looked like.

I have worked in special education for the majority of my career in education, but I do believe that more could be done to support future administrators in the area of special education. In my current roles, I have observed other administrators from a variety of educational backgrounds have a big learning curve in supporting special education. This includes a strong understanding of FAPE, procedural safeguards, and what is effective SDI (just to name a few). With the decrease in supports from the AEAs, it is now more important than ever for LEAs to understand special education at a deeper level.

I was fortunate to have robust teacher leadership roles that helped prepare me for systems-level leadership and instructional leadership; however, the program I attended failed to address MTSS and RTI as well as being an instructional leader. Nevertheless, I feel prepared to be a school administrator, but I have found it challenging to secure this opportunity having not been in Iowa for more than 3 years. It's been challenging being an outsider competing with internal candidates who have built rapport, relationships and have proven their loyalty to a district despite being more qualified than many. As a female in a male dominant role, I feel that this has made breaking into administration even more of a challenge.

It would be helpful to be able to make more connections with other administrators through the preparation programs.

My experience in the preparation program at the University of Northern Iowa was one of the best experiences I've ever had in my education career. Highly recommend their programming because of their use of current research practices and required internships hours.

My program focused a lot on the ideological and curricular side of administration, but little attention was spent on the management and behavioral side of administration. I feel very confident with curriculum but not confident with special education, hiring and supervising paraeducators, or managing student behavior referrals.

Northwestern College has a preparation program that provided the necessary learning to be successful as an administrator.

Northwestern College was great for me and worked with my needs and schedule. The program is easy to navigate through the classes, and the staff always did a great job of answering questions and helping navigate going back to college after 20 years.

Not really, I feel like I have the beginnings of what it I need to take on administrative roles. Now I need to see where that leads me to know how I would handle it on a day to day basis

Out of state new administrators need to have a lot more learning around the differences in the special education model in Iowa.

UNI prep programs are second to none and I am outperforming my peers (based on survey data from staff) from other colleges.

We need to actually “do” to learn and unfortunately not all cooperating administrators are quality. Actually having the students participate in mock data meetings and come up with interventions, have them complete mock curriculum meetings where they need to vertically align a curriculum or evaluate a curriculum for potential piloting or effectiveness. Lecture based schooling is ineffective at all levels of schooling. Time to start doing and less talking.

*Supervisor of Novice Administrator: What, if anything, could [Name]'s administrator preparation program have done to better prepare this principal?*

Accountability on administrative hours put in and meeting with site supervisor to discuss areas of improvement.

Hard to say. Being a first year principal is so overwhelming.

I think having student work through, talk through real life scenarios is a positive. I respect theory and philosophy, but a certain survivability factor is how well you can work through different situations.

I would say all the little systematic things that a lot of prep programs forget about. The multitasking of the day, the decisions you have to make on the fly, the parent issues that come up, teacher or personnel issues that arise, instructional performance issues, and balancing that with ALL of the systems while still being responsible for the academic outcomes on top of that. I am not sure if a prep program can prepare you or if this is the part you just figure out through experience! :)

More learning in the role of special education

Nothing I can think of. The SAI Mentoring program has been great in supporting new administrators.

This I think is true for any administrative prep program, more specific guidelines on program evaluation, special education/special populations, more so than just the legal implications but how to effectively design or evaluate programming in schools.

To my knowledge, not much, just takes time to get around to all business owners.

When difficult situations arise, communication and resolution, [Name] needed to be prepared to: stay clam, cool, collected; angry parents/staff don't need to be visited with immediately; create a plan, investigate, write a script, and follow-up in a timely fashion.