

School Principal

Run a whole school. Ten years of teaching first, then a leadership qualification and a job with no union to hide behind.

TYPICAL PAY

\$115,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$76k to \$149k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

10 to 15 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

**Elementary and high schools,
private schools, school board offi...**

How you get there

- Become a certified teacher** 5 to 6 years
Bachelor's degree plus a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed), then registration with your provincial regulator.
- Teach, and build breadth** 5 or more years
Ontario asks for at least five years of successful classroom teaching and qualifications across three divisions, so you need experience with more than one age group.
- Build the academic piece** 2 to 4 years, part time
Ontario requires either a master's degree, or two specialist qualifications, or one specialist plus graduate credits.
- Principal's Qualification Program** 1 to 2 years, part time
Two parts plus a leadership practicum, run through the Ontario College of Teachers framework. Other provinces have their own leadership certificate.
- Vice-principal, then principal** 2 to 5 years as a vice-principal
You apply to a board pool, get interviewed, and get placed where they need you. Expect to move schools.

Pros and cons

- + You set the direction for a whole school
- + Highest pay in a school without leaving education
- + Twelve-month salary and the teachers' pension
- You lose the union protection you had as a teacher
- Long evenings and a phone that rings on weekends
- You are the one who fires people and expels students

Good to know

Ontario principals left the teachers' unions

Ontario legislation in the late 1990s removed principals and vice-principals from teachers' federations. They now belong to separate principals' associations and bargain terms with their boards...

You need to have taught more than one age group

Ontario's leadership prerequisites ask for qualifications spanning three divisions, so a teacher who only ever taught Grade 3 has to add qualifications before they can even apply.

Optional boosts

Department head or curriculum lead. Special education or safe schools experience. French-language qualification. Willingness to move north or rural.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: School Principal, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Ontario College of Teachers: Prerequisites for Additional Qualifications

Ontario College of Teachers: Additional Qualifications

Ontario College of Teachers: Requirements to teach

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/school-principal>



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