

A REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATOR'S LICENSURE  
REQUIREMENTS OF STATES INCLUDED IN THE  
SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE AND SCHOOLS

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The principal's role is growing increasingly unclear as the sophistication of the position and the demands of society continue to increase; principals are being asked to assume new professional roles for which there are no clear definitions. Principals are accountable for collaborative decision-making, accommodating students' changing demographics, increased management roles, and serving as a community leader (Whitaker, 1998). Children are now in need of more advanced skills, the states have responded to this need by raising standards for school promotion and graduation, mandating student testing, and demanding more school accountability (Levine, 2005). The intense pressure for principals to be instructional leaders who can more effectively implement standards-based reform has brought political and educational prominence to the problems of preparing school principals. School leaders must be strong educators, focusing their work on central issues of learning, teaching, and school improvement. They must be moral agents and social advocates for the children and the communities they serve. Administrators need to portray a strong connection with other people, valuing and caring for others as individuals, and as members of the educational community (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Each state establishes licensing and certification requirements for school administrators and, in many cases, approve university programs through certification that prepare school leaders. While the jobs of school leaders, superintendents, and principals

have changed dramatically, it appears that organized professional development programs and formal preparation programs in higher education institutions have not adequately prepared current administrators to meet the demands of the educational system. In fact, according to Arthur Levine's 2005 report on Educating School Leaders, the overall quality of educational administration programs range from inadequate to appalling. All aspects of school leadership, the art and science of leadership, the policy and regulatory framework, and the preparation and retention of the educational leadership workforce are being scrutinized (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

### *The Current Conditions of Leadership Preparation*

#### *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium*

The education administration profession in 1987 identified key trouble spots in Leaders For America's Schools, prepared by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA). The report identified several problem areas such as (a) the lack of definition of good educational leadership, (b) an absence of collaboration between school districts and universities, (c) a low number of minorities and females in the field, (d) a lack of systematic professional development, (e) a poor quality of candidates for preparation programs, (f) the irrelevance of preparation programs, (g) a need for licensure systems that promote excellence, and (h) an absence of a national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders. The report recommended that public schools should share the responsibility with the universities in preparing school leaders, and state policymakers should base licensure procedures on what equips an individual to lead a school effectively. The Commission's report spawned the development of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1996 (Hale & Moorman, 2003). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a program of the Council of Chief State School Officers, developed a model of standards for school leaders and has undertaken the challenge of raising the bar for the practice of school leadership. The ISLLC Standards and the indicators that define

them describe the dispositions a school leader should have and what a principal should know and be able to do to be an effective leader. These standards were designed to help guide the selection of activities that should be used for quality professional development and preparation of principals (Shipman, Murphy, & Topps, 1998).

Movement to link the ISLLC Standards to professional development has occurred in three areas. First, the national Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the American Association for School Administrators (AASA) are exploring the possibility of developing an advanced certification program for administrators. Second, five states and the District of Columbia are collaborating in a partnership with the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to develop assessments and policy tools from the ISLLC Standards to serve the process of relicensure. Third, policy makers in 35 states and 12 national associations are working to link the Standards to state policies for quality professional development for school leaders. ETS, in collaboration with ISLLC, created *The School Leadership Series*, a set of performance-based assessments based on the ISLLC standards and used for the licensure and professional development of school superintendents and principals. The assessments translate the ISLLC standards into performance measure through which candidates can demonstrate their qualifications, reflect on their professional responsibility and actions, and identify information and strategies that will enable them to continue growing in knowledge and skills. (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Shipman, Murphy, & Topps, 1998).

### *Principal Preparation Programs*

Due to new roles and heightened expectations, principals require new forms of training, and university programs are coming under increased scrutiny. Over 20 years of efforts to reform administrator preparation programs have produced little progress. The U.S. Department of Education's Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) Program (1987-1993) and the Danforth Foundation's Principals Preparation Program achieved

limited success (Hale & Moorman, 2003). A 2001 Public Agenda survey found that 69 % of principals and 80 % of superintendents believed that typical leadership programs were out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's schools and school districts. Over 85 % of both groups believed that overhauling preparation programs would help improve leadership (Farkas et al., 2001 as cited in Lashway, 2003). Change at the university level has been slow, and the faculty is not always well connected with the field. No matter how effectively professors package and present the academic knowledge base, they are ultimately faced with the problem of creating a bridge between theory and practice (Lashway, 2003).

So overwhelming is the consensus for change, that 40 individuals, including major scholars and leaders in the field of educational leadership and national organizations, established the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) in 2001. NCAELP'S goal is to examine and improve the quality of educational leadership in the United States (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Leadership preparation has been traditionally frontloaded, with an intensive period of formal preparation and certification followed by informal, self-guided, and sporadic professional development. Practitioners and policymakers are now currently recognizing the need to provide professional training throughout the leader's career. Professional developers are focusing in on the critical induction period in which the principal's career choice is validated. The sink or swim theory has now been replaced by structured experiences and mentoring as a major role (Chirichello, 2004; Lashway 2003).

The lack of partnerships between universities and school districts affects the selection and admission of candidates to the preparation programs. Admission standards for most accredited programs are too low and very few efforts are made to identify high potential applicants or to target women and minorities for inclusion. A school district's pay scale may also be part of the problem. Typically, a school district pay scale rewards those who receive credits beyond the undergraduate level. Because credits can be easily obtained by taking courses through an administrator preparation program, many applicants may be of dubious quality

and have little intention of ever seeking and administrative post (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

### *Work Environment*

The principalship has become one of the most stressful jobs in education. The workload for the position of a school administrator is quite heavy. The number of interactions during the average workday, coupled with the different topics with which a principal is supposed to work, creates an overwhelming workload. The majority of principals work 60 to 70 hours per week and have difficulty keeping up with the demands of the job. Principals are accountable for everything that goes on inside a school and often have diminishing resources to deal with increasing problems. In today's schools, principals are supposed to serve as information resources for their staff, providing expertise in restructuring efforts, technical knowledge, budget, personnel, insights from the larger world of education, and knowledge about how the pieces of reform fit together (Whitaker, 1998).

From June 2001 to 2003, graduate students enrolled in Educational Leadership at William Paterson University of New Jersey surveyed principals and teachers on the roles and responsibilities of school administrators. They were asked to identify three areas in which school administrators spent the majority of the time and three areas in which they spend the least. The results of the study showed that the majority of time is spent on school management (61%), supervision of staff (34%), and discipline/management of students (34%). The least amount of time was spent on interacting with social agencies outside school (52%), legal issues (38%), and curriculum development and instructional issues (36%). The principals were also asked to identify three job related activities in which they would choose to spend most of their time. The principals' responses were curriculum development and instructional issues (77%), interaction with students other than discipline (56%), and school-wide planning and school reform (40%). If the vision of the principalship is one of leadership more than management, how can that role be restructured to provide more time for principals to lead rather than to manage (Chrichello, 2004).

### *Instructional Leadership vs. Management*

Many principals have not been adequately trained for the new realities of the school administrator. They have found that the typical course of university study had little to do with the job of being a principal (Levine, 2005). With emphasis on collaborative decision-making, some principals are discovering that they are less skilled in facilitating groups, reaching consensus, resolving conflicts between special interest groups, and team building. Balancing between the management of all the parts of school administration while providing instructional leadership is an old dilemma. Today's principals are under tremendous pressure to enhance student achievement and raise standards. Principals are often torn between trying to simply address students' basic survival needs and making the time and resources available to meet students' personal, social, and emotional needs. Professional development opportunities are often inadequate to prepare principals to take on these roles. In addition to professional development opportunities, leadership preparation programs must recognize the changing role of the principal (Whitaker, 1998).

### *Certification of Principals and Superintendents in the U.S.*

Certification or licensure of public school personnel is the reserved power of each state according to the 10th amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Due to this reserved power, there is a wide variety in requirements and prerequisites for school principals and school district superintendents. Regular certification routes for principals and superintendents are, for the most part, through university education administration master level programs. The administrative programs vary considerably from state to state in requirements for entry, program requirements, and program length (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

### *Methodology*

The National Center for Education Information (NCEI) with the Broad Foundation and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2002) undertook the task of finding out what the states are doing regarding their certification of principals and superintendents. The report

titled Certification of Principals and Superintendents in the U.S. 2003 can be found at [http://www.ncei.com/2003\\_Principals\\_Superintendents/index.htm](http://www.ncei.com/2003_Principals_Superintendents/index.htm). The data for this research paper was collected by using the information from this report, with additional information collected from state department web sites, personal phone calls made to the certification offices, and mail correspondence.

### *Results*

Table 1 gives a summary of the certification requirements for administrators in states within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

#### *State Certification Requirement for Principals*

All eleven states have certification requirements for their school principals.

#### *Alternative Route for State Certification for Principals*

Four states, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas, have alternative routes for principal certification. Florida leaves it at the discretion of the local district.

#### *State Certification Requirement for Superintendents*

Three states, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee do not issue certificates to superintendents. In all of these states, the local school districts set the requirements for the position.

#### *Alternative Route for State Certification for Superintendents*

Four states, Georgia, Kentucky, Texas, and Virginia have alternative routes for superintendents.

#### *State Certification Waivers Available*

Four states, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas have certification waivers for administrators. Louisiana has certification waivers for superintendents.

Table 1.

#### *Summary of Information about Certification Requirements for States within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools*

States. Does the state require certification for principals? Does the state require certification for superintendents? Does the state have certification waivers? Does the state have alternative routes to

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certification for principals? Does the state have alternative routes to certification for superintendents?

States	Does the state require certification for principals	Does the state require certification for superintendents	Does the state have certification waivers	Does the state have alternative routes to certification for principals	Does the state have alternative routes to certification for superintendents
Alabama	Yes	Yes	No	Considering	Considering
Florida	Yes	No	No	Up to local district	No
Georgia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	Yes (Superintendent)	No	No
Mississippi	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
North Carolina	Yes	No (Provisional)	No	No	No
South Carolina	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Tennessee	Yes	No	Yes (Permit)	Yes	No
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Virginia	Yes	Yes	No (Provisional)	No	No

Table 2 gives a summary of prior teaching experience and degree requirements for certification of administrators in states within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

### *Master's Degree Requirement for Administrators*

All states in the Southern Association of College and Schools require a minimum of a Master's degree for school administrators except the state of South Carolina. The two states of

Florida and Tennessee did not specify a Master's degree as a certification requirement.

### *Prior Teaching Experience Requirement*

All states require that administrators have prior teaching or at least related experience in K-12 education. The range was from two to five years, with the average requirement of three years. States see principals as instructional leaders more than as managers, thus the emphasis on prior teaching experience is widely seen as a prerequisite for the job. The states of Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina did not specify teaching experience as a requirement.

### Table 2

*Summary of Information about Prerequisites for Administrators in States within the Southern Association of College and Schools States.* Does the state require teaching experience prior to becoming an administrator? How many years of experience is required prior to becoming an administrator? Does the state require a Master's degree for an administrator?

States	Does the state require teaching experience prior to becoming an administrator	How many years of experience is required prior to becoming an administrator	Does the state require a Master's degree for an administrator
Alabama	Yes	2	Yes
Florida	Not Specified	Not Specified	Not Specified
Georgia	Yes	3	Yes
Kentucky	Yes	2	Yes
Louisiana	Yes	5	Yes
Mississippi	Not Specified	Not Specified	Yes
North Carolina	Not Specified	Not Specified	Yes
South Carolina	Yes	3	No
Tennessee	Yes	Not Specified	Not Specified
Texas	Yes	2	Yes
Virginia	Yes	3	Yes

### *Change Needed for the Future*

The vision of education and the types of leadership required for tomorrow's schools are influenced by the knowledge that the social fabric of society is changing, often in dramatic ways. Society is becoming more diverse, racially, linguistically, and culturally. The basic family unit is unraveling, poverty is increasing, and the economic foundations of society are being recast as well. The shift to a post-industrial society, the advance of the global marketplace, and the increasing reliance on technology poses significant new challenges for education and new types of leadership in schools (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

The principalship, as it is currently structured, makes many of the best teacher educators avoid formal leadership roles (Donaldson, 2001). Fewer and fewer leaders aspire to a position of leadership, causing a shortage of qualified principal applicants. The expectations for principals are overwhelming, as school districts look to fill vacancies, they may be searching for individuals who

simply do not exist. The role of the principal needs to shift its emphasis from managerial duties to leadership. The Institute for Educational Leadership advocates that a principal's focus should be leadership for learning (Chirichello, 2004).

Many strategies must be used to upgrade the quality of leadership in the educational arena. Institutions of higher education need extensive work on revising preparation programs for prospective school administrators. States need to continue to strengthen licensing requirements and revise procedures for approval of university-based preparation programs (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Policy and institutional leaders must encourage all parts of the educational leadership development system to work together to make the system more coherent and to ensure that the system produces exemplary instructional leaders. The business of schools is teaching and learning; all educational policies must support student achievement and all preparation programs must develop school leaders who can provide the instructional leadership needed (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

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