

# Analysis of Site-level Administrator and Superintendent Certification Requirements in the USA (2010)

Stephen H. Davis, Ed.D.  
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
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## Introduction

The following analysis was prepared to assist the work of the Administrative Services Credential Advisory Panel. The ASCAP was established in the summer of 2010 by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to assess and make recommendations regarding the structure and system of administrator licensure in California. The analysis was conducted in the spring and summer of 2010 and consists of administrator licensure data from all 50 states.

Data were acquired and triangulated through a review of individual state department of education websites, state education codes, and online program descriptions from one or more credential issuing institutions of higher education from each state. The licensure policies of each state were organized around 12 categories that emerged from the content analysis of each state's licensure policies. A frequency table was created that compares states with each category (see Table 1).

State licensure systems and procedures generally include criteria for a wide range of administrative, supervisory, and management positions at school sites and district offices. Given the complexity of conducting a comprehensive analysis of the full range of administrative licensure regulations for each of the 50 states, the following analysis focused specifically on licensure policy requirements for administrative service at school-sites and for the superintendency. It did not directly address program accreditation criteria or IHE program characteristics.

### Licensure Categories Examined

1. States requiring one license for all pre-K-12 administrative jobs and levels.
2. States requiring one license for all school-site administrative positions.

3. States requiring initial (basic) and continuing (advanced) licenses.
4. States requiring an elementary endorsement.
5. States requiring a secondary endorsement.
6. States requiring a vice principal endorsement.
7. States requiring a principal endorsement.
8. States requiring both position and school level endorsements.
9. States requiring superintendent licensure or endorsement.
10. States requiring a masters degree.
11. States requiring a competency exam.
12. States requiring prior years of teaching or other credentialed professional experience

## Findings

### License Type

**1. States requiring one license for all pre-K-12 administrative jobs and levels.**

Only 8 (16%) states (including California) require a single license to certify employment for all pre-K-12 administrative positions (CA, DE, FL, NE, NV, NM, OR, UT).

**2. States requiring one license for all school-site administrative positions.**

Eighteen (36%) states require a single license for school-site administrative positions (e.g., in various combinations), including principal, vice principal (or variations thereof), deans, and for elementary, middle, and high school settings (CA, AZ, AK, AR, CO, CT, IL, IN, IA, MT, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, VA, WA, WI).

**3. States requiring initial (basic) and continuing (advanced) licenses.**

Twenty states (40%), including California, require a multi-tiered licensure system. In most cases, a candidate receives an initial or preliminary license that is active for 1 to 5 years (depending on the state). Continued licensure typically requires the accumulation of additional graduate course units and/or professional development hours (as verified by either an IHE or district office) (CA, AL, GA, KS, KY, LA, MA, MN, MS, MO, OR, RI, SD, TN, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI).

### Professional Endorsements—Site-level Administration

A total of 19 states (38%) required some type of professional endorsement that certifies employment according to school level (e.g., elementary or secondary) or according to position type (e.g., principal, vice/assistant/associate principal, dean). A few states also require separate licensure for the supervision of curriculum and instruction, special education, and teacher leadership functions at the site level (note: virtually all states require separate licensure for service as guidance counselors and school psychologists).

#### **1. *States requiring an elementary endorsement.***

Seven (14%) states require a specific endorsement for administrative service in an elementary school (MA, ME, MN, MO, ND, RI, SC). Endorsements typically involve elementary-focused coursework offered through the candidate's initial credential program, elementary-based professional development activities taken after graduation, or the completion of a supervised internship at an elementary school. In some cases, the endorsement is added to the initial, or basic, credential (but this is the exception).

#### **2. *States requiring a secondary endorsement.***

Five states (10%) require a specific endorsement for administrative service in a secondary school (MA, MN, MO, ND, RI). Endorsement requirements mirrored those described in #3, above.

#### **3. *States requiring a vice principal endorsement.***

Six states (12%) require endorsement to serve as a vice principal (or variation thereof) (GA, ID, MD, MI, NC, OR). As with school-level endorsements, states that require a position endorsement do so through university coursework embedded within the initial licensure program, post-graduation professional development activities, or some combination of the two.

**4. *States requiring a principal endorsement.***

Fifteen states (30%) require endorsement to serve as a principal (GA, ID, MA, MD, ME, MI, MC, OK, OR, SC, SD, TX, VT, WI, WV).

**5. *States requiring both position and school level endorsements.***

Twelve (24%) states required position endorsements only (GA, ID, MD, MI, MC, OK, OR, SD, TX, VT, WV, WI), four states (8%) required school level endorsements only (ND, MN, MO, RI), and three states (6%) required both position and school level endorsements (ME, MA, SC).

**Superintendents**

***States requiring superintendent licensure or endorsement.***

Thirty-five (70%) states require either a special license or credential endorsement to serve as a superintendent (AK, AR, AZ, CO, CT, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MO, MT, NJ, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TX, VT, WA, WI, WV). Typically, these states require coursework taken after one has served as a licensed principal for three or more years. In a few cases, a superintendent endorsement is granted following a period of service as a district office administrator in concert with supervised internship activities.

In the fifteen states that do not require additional certification (like California), one may become a superintendent with a basic administrative credential, or in some cases, with no credential at all (e.g., California).

Note: it is common for states to require special licensure or endorsement for service as a district office business manager/fiscal services administrator, special education director, and/or pupil personnel services director (frequency data were not tallied for these licenses).

### Other Requirements

#### **1. *States requiring a masters degree.***

Twenty-six (52%) states require a masters degree as a condition for administrative licensure (AL, AZ, AK, CT, DE, FL, IL, KY, LA, MT, NB, NC, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OR, RI, SC, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, WV). A review of selected university administrator credential programs in these states revealed that licensure and masters course requirements typically overlap. In a few programs it is possible to acquire licensure without also acquiring a masters degree, however, such variations are the consequence of institutional rather than state policy.

#### **2. *States requiring a competency exam.***

Twenty (40%) states require a passing score on an administrative competency exam in addition to completion of a course of study at an accredited university (AZ, FL, GA, KS, KY, LA, MN, MO, MS, NB, NC, NJ, NM, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, UT, VT). The SLLA exam is the most commonly used assessment, followed by the Praxis test, and home-grown assessments (e.g., OK, OR).

Note: only in California is a competency exam option provided as the sole basis for administrative licensure.

#### **3. *States requiring prior years of teaching or credentialed professional experience.***

Most candidates for administrative licensure are required to have experience as a classroom teacher, other credentialed employee, or some combination thereof. A review of state

department websites, education codes, and university programs revealed data for 28 states. Although data for 22 states were not located, it may be reasonable to assume that for most, some prior teaching or professional experience is required for administrative licensure. The lack of data on this topic may be a consequence of obscure and fragmented formats of state education codes and other policy documents. In states where prior service data were found, the number of years required varies. Following is a breakdown of states by years of service required:

0 years (1, 2%):	OR (see OEC 342.121--a person may obtain certification, indicating a higher degree of competency, knowledge and skill based on work experience and advanced study, from a professional organization of teachers or administrators, either on the state or national level. However, a teaching certificate or administrative certificate shall not be required to teach or administer in a public school of this state.)
1 year:	n/a
2 years (8, 16%):	CT, IL, IN, MD, MO, NB, OK, TX
3 years (16, 32%):	CA, DE, IA, LA, MA, MN, MS, MT, ND, NV, RI, SC, TN, UT, VA, WV
4 years (2, 4%):	ID, PA
5 years (1, 2%):	NJ

#### ***4. Alternative licensure***

Although policies pertaining to alternative pathways to administrator licensure were not examined in this analysis, such options did appear in a number of states (for example--CA, OK, OR, and VA). One interesting and unique variation to state administrator licensure policy was found in the Utah education codes which charges local school boards with the responsibility for determining the proper alignment between specific administrative positions and licensure requirements.

### Conclusions and Implications

The review of data from each state revealed a number of important issues and conclusions. These are described below.

1. The ease of public access to important licensure data varies widely from state to state. In some states (e.g., Virginia), the Department of Education website provided comprehensive and detailed information. In other states (e.g., New York), the search for comprehensive licensure criteria required a combined review of SDE, education code, and university program documents. In some states, education code language was thorough and descriptive, while in other states, the details of administrator licensure were found in the administrative regulations developed by state education departments. In all but a handful of states, the task of acquiring comprehensive and detailed licensure information required a review of more than one resource.
2. In no instance was documentation found that provided a clear articulation of the state's rationale, purpose, or philosophy regarding administrative licensure. Moreover, licensure policies across the 50 states are generally not directly aligned with well-developed theoretical or conceptual frameworks for leadership development or evaluation, nor clearly aligned with standards for administrative practice. This is not to suggest that professional standards are not used to assess program quality and (in many cases) candidate competency, or used as the basis to evaluate administrators. It refers to the finding that in most states the licensure policy language set by the legislature is indirectly connected to professional standards through administrative regulations adopted by appointed bodies such as CCTC. In several states, like California, theoretical and conceptual frameworks commonly exist (albeit obliquely) within state department rules and regulations pertaining to program accreditation and/or standards for professional practice. Although within the profession licensure is required to become an administrator, an explicit or empirically-based rationale for why or how licensure works is largely absent. One notable exception is Virginia, where Wallace Foundation funds have

stimulated the development of a well-articulated administrator licensure system and policy framework.

3. The single administrator credential that certifies a candidate for service at all levels and settings within pre-K-12 systems is the exception rather than the rule. Only eight states (including CA) maintain such policies. One may conclude that the increasing complexities of administering schools and school districts and the numerous contextual variations in institutional settings and professional roles has necessitated the development of specialized administrative credentials (e.g., much like the diversification of medical licenses during the past 50 years). This conclusion mirrors the findings of research by Heck and Marcoulides (1996) on the impact of school contextual variables and the complexity of professional roles on principal evaluation.
4. In the vast majority of states (70%) service as a superintendent requires additional licensure and/or endorsement that typically consists of advanced graduate coursework, prior administrative experience (either as a principal or district office administrator), and/or an internship. In some IHEs, such coursework comes bundled with a doctoral degree. California requires no additional certification to become a superintendent.
5. In rare instances (e.g., Virginia) did state resources or other relevant documentation clearly or comprehensively address the intricate (yet vital) relationship between the “architecture” of licensure policy, professional standards, program accreditation criteria, and administrator evaluation. In no instance did the documentation address instructional practices. This lack of articulation raises legitimate concerns about the capacity of a licensure policy on its own to meaningfully impact professional practice. Licensure, professional development, program accreditation, instructional practice, and administrator evaluation are vital components along a

continuum of interrelated variables that influence performance. Comprehensive and articulated treatment of these variables is rarely found in state licensure policies.

6. State administrator licensure is generally summative in nature. That is, its primary function appears to be in providing public assurance of minimal professional competency. Less than half of the states require some form of advanced licensure or use the licensure system to promote professional growth and development. The criteria for issuing advanced licenses are commonly based upon the completion of additional hours of graduate coursework or professional development activities. Assessments of professional competence or organizational outcomes are rarely used to determine an administrator's eligibility for advanced licensure.

Table 1: Summary of Site-level Administrator and Superintendent Licensure Requirements in the USA (2010)

<u>Licensure Category</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>States</u>
1. States with one license for all admin jobs and levels	8	16.0	CA, DE, FL, NE, NV, NM, OR, UT
2. States with one license for all school-site administrative positions	18	36.0	CA, AZ, AK, AR, CO, CT, IL, IN, IA, MT, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, VA, WA, WI
3. States with initial and continuing licenses (e.g, basic & advanced)	20	40.0	CA, AL, GA, KS, KY, LA, MA, MN, MS, MO, OR, RI, SD, TN, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI
4. States with elementary endorsements	7	14.0	ME, MA, MN, MO, ND, RI, SC
5. States with secondary endorsements	5	10.0	MA, MN, MO, ND, RI
6. States with vice principal endorsements	6	12.0	GA, ID, MD, MI, NC, OR
7. States with principal endorsements	15	30.0	GA, ID, ME, MD, MA, MI, NC, OK, OR, SC, SD, TX, VT, WV, WI
8. States with superintendent endorsements	35	70.0	AZ, AK, AR, CO, CT, GA, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MO, MT, NJ, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, SC, SD, TX, VT, WA, WI, WV
9. Years of teaching or credentialed service required			
0 years:	1	2.0	OR (see EC 342.121)
1 year:	0		
2 years:	8	16.0	CT, IL, IN, MD, MO, NB, OK, TX

	3 years:	16	32.0	CA, DE, IA, LA, MA, MN, MS, MT, ND, NV, RI, SC, TN, UT, VA, WV
	4 years:	2	4.0	ID, PA
	5 years:	1	2.0	NJ
10. States requiring a MA Degree		26	52.0	AL, AZ, AK, CT, DE, FL, IL, KY, LA, MT, NB, NC, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OR, RI, SC, TX, UT, VA, WA, WI, WV
11. States requiring competency exam		20	40.0	AZ, FL, GA, KS, KY, LA, MN, MO, MS, NB, NC, NJ, NM, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, UT, VT