



ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Review of the Administrative Services Credential

Background

The Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) has begun a review of the Administrative Services Credential (ASC). Such a discussion is an appropriate part of the approval cycle now that all programs are aligned to the *Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Administrative Services Credential* adopted in 2004. As the professional organization representing school administrators in the state of California, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) has a keen interest in the discussion of the Administrative Services Credential. ACSA has formed a working group to study issues related to the ASC and to formulate an organizational position. We have studied the current Standards, received input from our administrator councils representing superintendents, central office administrators, and principals, and considered the current and future leadership skills, knowledge and attributes needed for administrators.

The strongest ASC programs have always been a result of close communication and cooperation among the provider, the candidates, school districts, and professional organizations for school administrators. The process for credentialing has expanded to include assessments, as well as adding school districts, county offices of education, and professional organizations, private corporations, as well as institutions of higher education as providers of ASC programs. It is critical that all agencies maintain the highest standards of quality and continue to work together to create programs that will prepare candidates to meet the complicated needs of California's students. It is through an agenda that includes learning through inspired teaching, scholarship, research and service that candidates can best be prepared for school administration. All preparation pathways must focus on the "on the job" work of school leaders.

School leadership has been identified as a key factor associated with high student achievement levels in California schools (For example, see Williams, T., Kirst, M., Haertel, E., et al. (2005). *Similar Students, Different Results: Why Do Some Schools Do Better? A large-scale survey of California elementary schools serving low-income students*. Mountain View, CA: EdSource.). ACSA has long supported well-prepared leaders for California's schools. We are pleased to present our positions on the structure of the Administrative Services Credential.

Program Standards for the Administrative Services Credential

The Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for the Administrative Services Credential, a booklet prepared by the CTC in January of 2004, identifies the California Professional

Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs) as “the centerpiece for curriculum development for California’s administrator preparation programs.” These standards, identified in Category III as Standards 10—15 are:

1. Vision of Learning: Promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, and stewardship of the vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
2. Student Learning and Professional Growth: Promote the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. Organizational Management for Student Learning: Promote the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.
4. Working with Diverse Families and Communities: Promote the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. Personal Ethics and Leadership Capacity: Promote the success of all students by modeling a personal code of ethics and developing professional leadership capacity.
6. Political, Social Economic, Legal and Cultural Understanding: Promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger, political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.

Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Administrative Services Credential, Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Jan, 2004 pp 51-58

The position of ACSA is that these standards provide a sufficient framework to describe the breadth of the complexity of school administration. However, the expectations for public schools in California have grown more complex over the years. Changing demographics of the student population, uncertain funding, increased state and Federal regulations, the increasing number of retirements of teachers and administrators, increased accountability measures and their consequences, and a diminishing pool of administrators all call for attention to accessible, dynamic and well planned preparation programs. As we identify the changes in the demands on public education, it is necessary to focus specific aspects of these standards. ACSA calls on the CTC to ensure that the following areas under each standard are emphasized in preparation programs.

Vision of Learning: California schools have become the most diverse schools in the nation and perhaps the world. Preparation programs must ensure that its graduates are able to recognize diversity, but also respond to it in powerful ways. Creating visions of learning that are “shared and supported by the school community” requires leaders with a strong understanding of how to support students, teachers, parents, and the entire school

community as they both embrace and also manage change. Administrators must learn to look to the future while shaping the present, and be able to see and effectively communicate the steps needed to move from vision to reality.

Student Learning and Professional Growth: The creation of a school culture that nurtures and sustains an “instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” requires the use of active and ongoing systems of inquiry that enable faculty and support staff to translate a variety of data on student learning into powerful action. Preparation programs must produce graduates with a deep understanding of the role of data and the facilitation skills to ensure that teachers frequently participate in and contribute to powerful conversations that lead to increased student learning of a standards-based, including career technical standards, curriculum. It is essential for principals to understand the research behind the need for frequent targeted assessments and how to provide resources for teachers to obtain immediate feedback for students. Analysis of data is paramount for student learning. In California it is particularly important that administrators understand and can respond to the needs of English learners. Administrators must value the time for reflection and understand that a combined and ongoing focus on both student work and teacher practices is essential for optimizing learning.

Organizational Management for Student Learning: The effective “management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment” requires providing equitable support to meet the identified needs of students. Therefore, preparation programs must produce graduates who are able to implement and/or develop school structures and processes that adapt to the changing needs of students, staff, and community. The ability to lead a collaborative process has become an important management skill.

The following quote from the 2008 revision of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards precisely describes the needed emphasis in this standard:

“The recent shift to leadership for learning dictates that simply maintaining an orderly environment is not sufficient. It has become essential for education leaders to adopt a systems approach to the operation of the complex organization of school and district. In order to ensure the success of all students and a high performing learning environment, education leaders manage organizational systems in the daily operations and environment of a school through the use of financial, human, time, materials, technology and physical resources. They identify and allocate resources equitably to address the unique academic, physical and mental health needs of all students. They promote and maintain a professional work environment by managing legal requirements and policies, supporting due process and protecting civil and human rights of all individuals. Leaders take steps to address any conditions that might impede student learning.

A systems approach is essential to the operation of the complex organizations to achieve goals in local, state, and federal policy and public expectations about achievement of all students.”

Working with Diverse Families and Communities: In California’s schools today promoting “the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources” requires leaders who can utilize the strengths of diverse groups. California’s diversity certainly includes vast ethnic and cultural aspects, but planning for diversity also requires consideration of diversity of parents and the community as well as students’ learning styles, languages used, economic levels, and social capital. Therefore, ASC preparation programs must produce leaders who can empower and involve parents and students from a wide range of life experiences, personal strengths, and cultural backgrounds. Preparation programs must include deep discussion around issues of diversity and equity.

Personal Ethics and Leadership Capacity: School leaders who are successful at “modeling a personal code of ethics and developing professional leadership capacity” must not only reflect on the impact on others of their leadership practices but also act on that reflection. The ability to demonstrate skills in decision-making, problem solving, change management, planning, conflict management, and evaluation has become paramount in developing professional leadership capacity. Candidates must also learn to see the leadership potential in others and develop skills at building the leadership capacity of others through creating and maintaining teams. Preparation programs must help candidates understand that part of sustaining their leadership capacity includes maintaining a balance between personal and professional goals.

Political, Social Economic, Legal and Cultural Understanding: The ability of leaders to understand, respond to, and influence the larger, political, social, economic, legal and cultural context is dependent upon their ability to work effectively within a larger system than the school alone. This larger system includes the district, city, region, state and national components. It is essential that graduates of ASC credential programs are skilled in working in as well as understanding the complexity of these systemic systems of influence.

Throughout all of these preparation standards it is important to recognize and respond to a growing dichotomy between the need for administrators to manage the day-to-day operations of a school and to exhibit the leadership skills necessary to positively impact student achievement. Preparation programs must address both management and leadership skills. The preparation program must quickly move from theory to hands-on learning and the demonstration of skills. A major focus should be on the instructional leadership and change management skills that are needed to take low-achieving schools and bring them to “achieving” status as well as to take achieving schools and move them to even high achievement. Preparation programs must emphasize the need for school administrators to be agents of change. Data access, management, interpretation, and planning from data must be part of the candidate’s program. Candidates must be

proficient in technology that can be used for scheduling, communications to staff, students, parents and the community.

School leaders must have strong collaborative skills that bring groups of people together to solve problems and implement solutions. Relationship skills that enable the administrator to inspire and to work with individuals and groups of people are critical. Preparation programs must help the administrator appropriately focus support on students with special needs whether they are special education students, English language learners or the gifted.

Administrative Services Credential Authorization of Work

Currently the ASC authorizes the following work for grades 12 and below:

- Develop, coordinate, and assess instructional programs
- Evaluate certificated and classified personnel
- Provide students' discipline, including but not limited to, suspension and expulsion
- Provide certificated and classified employee discipline
- Supervise certificated and classified personnel
- Manage school site, district, or county level fiscal services
- Recruit, employ, and assign certificated personnel
- Develop, coordinate, and supervise student support services

In order to perform the following duties an individual **must** hold an ASC:

- Evaluate, the quality and effectiveness of instructional services at the school site level
- Evaluate certificated personnel employed at the school site level, with the exception of the site administrator
- Provide student and certificated personnel employee discipline at the school site level

ACSA believes that these are the correct work authorizations and supports the concept of a single administrative credential with its focus on preparation for the school principalship. ACSA believes it is important for the ASC to have this focus on the principalship because all other administrative positions within a school system must have an appreciation for the complexities of a school's operations and must know how their position can support the school's efforts.

The Assessment Alternative for the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential

Currently receiving a score of 173 or more on the School Leaders' Licensure Assessment (SLLA), administered by the Educational Testing Service, provides one of the pathways to obtain the Preliminary Credential (as long as the other prerequisites have been met). It is likely that the SLLA will become an online assessment that includes mostly multiple-choice responses.

ACSA believes that awarding the Preliminary Service credential requires the demonstration of adequate knowledge of the curriculum described by the CPSELs, and that, therefore, an assessment could be a legitimate pathway for attaining the preliminary ASC. However, it is essential that an assessment include breadth as well as depth to ensure that sufficient knowledge of the full curriculum has been demonstrated. ACSA believes that the CTC should identify or develop an assessment that covers the full range of the CPSELs, particularly the areas of emphasis that have been identified in this paper. Additionally, any such assessment must be thoroughly scaled to ensure that the score considered as passing reflects a demonstration of a thorough knowledge of the curriculum. ACSA believes that it is unlikely that the new SLLA will be sufficient to measure the full range of knowledge required to lead California's schools and districts and, therefore, encourages California to develop its own assessment pathway to the preliminary credential.

Prerequisites for the Preliminary Credential

The current prerequisites for Preliminary Credential are:

- Satisfy the basic skills requirement
- Complete three years of full-time experience requiring a teaching or pupil personnel services credential (or librarian, speech-language, clinical or rehabilitative services, clear school nurse)
- Complete approved program alternative and one of the following:
 - Valid teaching credential
 - Valid Designated Subjects teaching credential
 - Valid Pupil Personnel Services credential

ACSA believes that these are the appropriate prerequisites. We also recognize that school district employers may set employment criteria for years of experience beyond the three years. Currently, the state of California has determined that after two years of experience, a teacher is qualified for lifetime tenure. An additional year of experience is a sufficient minimum for the awarding of the Preliminary ASC.

Alternative Pathways for the ASC

ACSA strongly supports the concept of having many alternatives for both the Preliminary and Clear credential. Preparation programs must be flexible and accessible as most administrator candidates will be endeavoring to complete the requirements for both Preparation and the Clear credential while working in very demanding positions. Alternatives may include course work, induction programs, internships, field work, coaching, assessment or an alternative program. The use of technology as a means of delivering information must be part of the alternatives.

A major emphasis must be placed on the application of skills as they relate to the real-experiences of the school administrator. Candidates for the credential, in order to respond

effectively to the wide range of student needs in California must have the skills and knowledge required to effectively advocate and implement change. ACSA believes that while Preliminary Credential pathways should focus on knowledge it is essential that all Clear credential pathways focus on induction.

ACSA believes that all pathways for either the Preliminary or Clear Credential program must meet the same program standards. In that regard ACSA believes that if the AB430 Administrative Training Program is to continue as an alternative for meeting the Clear Credential it must be reviewed for its relationship to the CTC standards.

ACSA encourages the CTC to seek funding and approval to pilot an Induction Program for New School Administrators. This program should revolve around the on-the-job assignment of the new administrator and involve the application of theory and best practice to actual school situations. The induction program should include: CPSEL-based formative assessment, pursuit of individualized leadership development goals, site based support provided by well-trained certified leadership coaches, seminar training that focuses upon typical needs/challenges of new site leaders, small group networking and the assessment of performance in real-time situations. In California, we know of the efficacy of a beginning teacher induction program through BTSA. It is only reasonable to assume that a new administrator induction program will enhance the performance of administrators and provide stronger learning opportunities for students.

Summary

As California schools have embraced an awareness that all students are capable of success, and that, therefore, schools must be structured to ensure that all students are learning at high levels, the importance of skilled and ethical leadership has never been more clear. The Administrative Services Credential must provide a strong and secure gateway to ensure that those seeking to be school leaders in California possess the knowledge and have the skills required to lead the high quality systems that California's students deserve. Multiple pathways to receive the credential must be based on the same program standards as defined the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Awarding the Preliminary Credential should be based on acquiring and demonstrating essential knowledge, whereas the Clear Credential should be awarded after that knowledge has been applied in meaningful leadership that leads to high level of student success. Leadership requires the dispositions, beliefs, values, knowledge and skills that allow a leader to influence others to create systems that respond to the incredible strengths of our students. The Administrative Services Credential must serve as a gateway to ensure that the administrators in California's schools and districts are able to provide such high quality leadership.

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