

School Leaders, Principal Certification, and
The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards

Elaine L. Wilmore, Ph.D,
Texas A&M University - Texarkana

This research project was conducted to determine the impact of the updates made in 2014 to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. The ISLLC standards were updated in 2008 and then again in 2014. The 2008 standards included six standards and the 2014 standards were broadened to include eleven standards. As the role of the school leader changes, the policy standards also change (CCSSO, 2014). There is an increasing emphasis on a high level of student achievement for all students. The new ISLLC standards support that vision. The ISLLC standards influence many instructional principal preparation programs that eventually will impact student performance (CCSSO, 2008). Some of the changes made to the 2014 standards was derived from empirical evidence from some of the nation's top performing schools, the experience of the school leaders, and also from values such as equity and ethical conduct (CCSSO, 2014). Dunlap, Li & Kladifko (2015) report that "the ISLLC standards have been widely used for licensure.

The Council of Chief of State School Officers (CCSSO) in collaboration with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) adopted the educational leadership policy standards known throughout the education community as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). (CCSSO, 2008). Canole & Young's (2013) report stated that the purpose of the consortium was "to take up the challenging task of designing the first set of national standards for educational leaders." With a common goal of improving and

strengthening principal preparation programs across the nation, the first set of ISLLC standards were developed in 1996. Canole & Young's (2013) report further explains the need for strong national standards for principals and school leaders. "The ISLLC Standards, which placed great emphasis on the instructional leadership responsibilities of administrators, have provided a common vision for effective educational leadership." (Canole & Young, 2013). "The consortium consists of 32 education agencies and 13 administrative associations that have a stake in representing leaders in the field of education" (Bryant, Hessel, & Isernhagen, 2002). Bryant et al. (2002) explains "the ISLLC standards were designed for those planning to enter the field of educational administration and were developed based on beliefs about the essential components and skills necessary for successful practice." It is not mandatory that states adopt the standards, but it is strongly encouraged. ISLLC is endorsed by two national organizations; National Council for the Accreditation of the Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). NCATE drives the program review and accreditation at all NCATE accredited universities which in turn drives the development of state standards across America, which then drives the preparation program and implementation of curriculum and student passage of the tests. The importance of the ISLLC standards cannot be overstated.

The changes made to the ISLLC standards in 2014 were the catalyst for this research project. All 50 states were contacted through website, by email, or phone calls. The data was collected and put into a spreadsheet. The information that was gathered determined these 2 things; 1) which states use the ISLLC standards or modifications of the ISLLC standards in their principal preparation programs at the university level and 2) which states use the ISLLC standards for developing their state principal examination.

The research shows that states fell into one category, both categories, or neither category. The research also shows that all 50 states are using a wide variety of various combinations of preparation programs and state exams. There is no continuity between the states. Thirty-one states use the ISLLC standards or a modified form of the ISLLC standards in their principal preparation programs at the university level. Sixteen states use their own state developed standards, and seven of those states follow the ISLLC standards for their principal preparation examinations but not for the principal preparation programs. One state uses standards other than ISLLC or state developed standards and two states have no set standards. Interestingly enough, twelve states require principals to complete a principal preparation program which follows the ISLLC standards or modified versions of the standards, but then no state exam is required upon completion of the program.

Thirty-three states have a state certification exam and of these, 23 states follow the ISLLC standards when developing their certification exam. Many states use the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), some states, like Texas, develop their own state exam. Again, no continuity. Seventeen states do not have a certification exam. Thirteen of the 33 states are making immediate changes to their certification exams and/or principal preparation programs based on the 2014 ISLLC standards update. One state, Hawaii, has not utilized the ISLLC standards in the past, but did share that they are incorporating the newly revised 2014 ISLLC standards into their program curriculum beginning this summer. The other 20 out of those 33 states who are not making immediate changes to their certification exams or their principal preparation programs, will make the necessary changes when their standards come up for renewal. Oklahoma shared that they closely follow the ISLLC standards and redevelop their exams every year in an effort to stay current with any changes. Other states, such as Tennessee,

do not have plans to update their standards, but they use SLLA for their examination. If the test changes, then they will follow suit.

When looking at all of the data collected, there are 45 states, or 90%, that rely on the ISLLC standards in whole or part for either their principal preparation programs and/or their state principal examinations. The ISLLC standards are important in the arena of education to influence the quality of principals in our public schools. Research shows that “mostly leaders contribute to student learning indirectly, through their influence on other people or features of their organizations” (Leithwood et al. 2004). Mitgang (2008) further elaborates by saying, “there is growing agreement that with the national imperative for having every child succeed, it is the principal who is best positioned to ensure that teaching and learning are as good as they can be throughout entire schools, especially those with the highest needs.” Canole & Young (2013) understand that it is imperative for schools to have excellent leadership: “As a nation, our expectations for student learning have never been higher. Students are expected to know more and be able to do more with what they know than has previously been the case. These expectations, which have been expanding for some time, now, have significant implications for educators, particularly educational leaders.” The ISLLC standards reflect the wide array of responsibilities that fall on the principal in the new millennium.

References

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