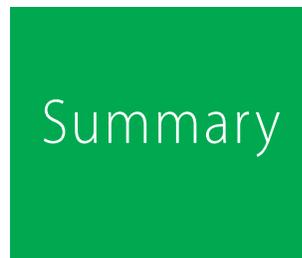




School-site administrators: a California county and regional perspective on labor market trends





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Summary

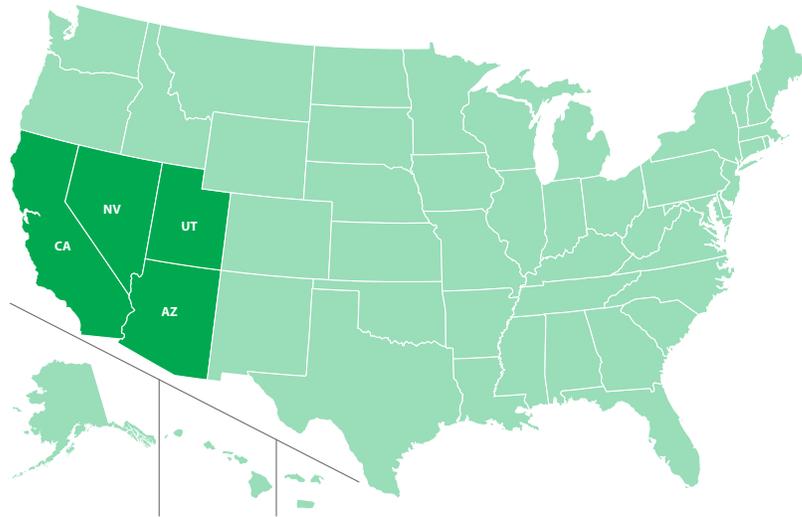
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School-site administrators: a California county and regional perspective on labor market trends

This study explores the differences among California’s counties and regions in their needs for new school-site administrators in the coming decade, as driven by a combination of projected administrator retirements and projected student enrollment changes. The projected need for new school-site administrators, based solely on these combined factors, ranges from 9 percent to 71 percent of counties’ 2007/08 administrator workforce, with the highest need counties generally in the Central Valley and Inland Empire regions.

School leadership makes a difference. Numerous studies have concluded that school-site administrators are central to developing and maintaining effective schools (for example, Brewer 1993; Hallinger and Heck 1998; Leithwood et al. 2004). But leading a school is a complex job. Some evidence suggests that the increasingly demanding nature of the work may deter some qualified candidates from pursuing vacant positions (Darling-Hammond and Orphanos 2007; Whitaker 2003; Farkas et al. 2001). In California, leadership challenges may be even greater because of the large number of students needing extra support (such as English language learner students and students from low-income households) and

some of the highest student–administrator ratios in the country (EdSource 2007; Darling-Hammond and Orphanos 2007).

While research shows no evidence of a national shortage of potential candidates with administrator credentials (Gates et al. 2003; Papa and Wyckoff 2002), it does show evidence of a limited supply of qualified principal and vice-principal candidates for specific types of schools and districts (Clotfelter et al. 2007) and for schools and districts in specific types of geographic areas (Farkas et al. 2001; Roza et al. 2003). The challenges these schools and districts already face in attracting qualified school-site administrator candidates may be exacerbated by two demographic trends: the aging administrator workforce as the baby boom generation begins to retire (Mitgang 2003) and rising student enrollments in some geographic areas (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008).

Across a state as large and diverse as California, these trends would not be expected to play out uniformly. This study was designed to explore the differences among California’s counties and regions in their needs for new school-site administrators in the coming decade, as driven by a combination of projected administrator retirements and projected student

enrollment changes. Although this report does not analyze projected county-level attrition, incoming school-site administrator supply, or other labor market variables, it highlights county and regional variation in these two key variables influencing school-site administrator labor markets, an important step in ensuring an adequate supply of administrators in areas facing high retirements or high student enrollment growth, or both.

This study uses three primary datasets. Data on administrator retirements are from the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS), which serves most public school administrators in California and maintains data on their retirement patterns. Because the CalSTRS data do not distinguish among school-site administrators, teachers, student-services staff, and other certificated employees, the California Department of Education Professional Assignment Information Form dataset was used to adjust the CalSTRS data to reflect only school-site administrators. Historical and projected data on student enrollment are from the California Department of Finance 2008 Enrollment Series dataset.

Administrator retirements were projected using five-year historical retirement rates specific to each county and each age within each county. To calculate projected administrator demand due to changes in student enrollment, five-year historical student-administrator ratios for each county were used. These two demographic trends—retirements and enrollment changes—were then merged to calculate projected need for new administrators in each of California's 58 counties. Projected retirements for 2008/09–2017/18 range from a low of 18 percent of the 2007/08 workforce in Merced

County to a high of 72 percent in Santa Cruz County. The counties with higher retirement projections tend to lie in two parallel geographic bands, one along the coast and one along the state's eastern border, whereas the counties with lower retirement projections are generally located in the center of the state, in the Inland Empire and the Central Valley (North and South San Joaquin Central Valleys and the Upper and Sacramento Metropolitan Valleys).

Projected enrollment changes for the period range from a low of –17 percent of the 2007/08 enrollment in Nevada County to a high of 41 percent in Riverside County. Seventeen of the 24 counties projected to experience double-digit enrollment growth over the 10 years following 2007/08 are in the Central Valley and Inland Empire regions.

Based on key assumptions detailed in the report, including that conditions not directly controlled in the analysis remain constant when projected retirements and enrollment-driven demand are combined, the projected need for new school-site administrators ranges between 9 percent and 71 percent of counties' 2007/08 administrator workforce, with the highest need counties generally in the Central Valley and Inland Empire regions. As a whole, the counties in these two regions are expected to need to hire 46 percent of their 2007/08 workforce (or more than 2,200 principals and vice-principals) over the next decade—compared with an average of 27 percent across California's other regions. Many counties in these two regions face other challenges as well as high projected need for school-site administrators, including high poverty rates, low educational attainment, and diverse student populations.

Without a complete analysis of all the school-site administrator labor market variables in these and other regions of the state (not undertaken in this study), it is not possible to predict any resulting school-site administrator supply–demand imbalances. Thus, as local decisionmakers consider the implications of the findings in this report, they may want to seek additional county- or district-level data to gain a fuller picture of their regional school-site administrator labor market. Further investigation at the state level, such as research into the extent to which the supply of new school-site administrators in

California is localized rather than uniform across the state, could help state policymakers decide what interventions might effectively address the anticipated differential needs for new school-site administrators across counties and regions. When the state’s new longitudinal database, which will include all certificated school staff, becomes available in a few years, it could facilitate a more complete analysis of the regional school-site administrator labor market issues that this report highlights.

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