



The status of the preparation and hiring of school principals in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Region

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This descriptive study on the preparation and hiring of school principals in the Pacific Region responds to the requests of regional state education agencies and the urging of REL Pacific advisory groups to build on the recently published Issues & Answers report, *Preparing and licensing high-quality teachers in Pacific Region jurisdictions* (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?id=55>).

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Summary

This technical brief describes the current status of the preparation and hiring of school principals in the Pacific Region—American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Republic of Palau. The brief answers a central question: what academic, practice-based, and standards and policy criteria are used in the preparation and hiring of principals? It finds that many jurisdictions had relatively recent certification standards and policies and that the procedures and criteria for preparing and hiring school principals vary across jurisdictions in models, requirements, and implementation levels. The only requirements common to all 10 jurisdictions are that principals must complete some college-level coursework and must have teaching experience.

The preparation and hiring of principals are increasingly viewed by policymakers and education research professionals as a key to successful school reform and improved education outcomes (Waters, Marzano, and McNulty 2004a,b; Waters and Grubb 2004). While national baseline information on the certification of school principals exists, less is known about certification requirements across the remote geography of the Pacific Region. Requests of regional state education agencies and the urging of Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory groups to build on the recently published Issues & Answers report *Preparing and licensing high-quality teachers in Pacific Region jurisdictions* (Heine and Emesiochl 2007) motivated this study.

The researchers designed a descriptive study to identify the certification policies and practices used in each jurisdiction. For each jurisdiction the study focused on identifying components of academic, practice-based, and standards and policy requirements for the certification of principals: certification linkage to standards-based protocols, types of certification offered, professional development offered and required, recognition of external certifications, minimum degree requirements, prior work experience required, practicum or internship requirements, approval requirements from institutions of higher education, and requirement of standardized assessments for certification. These components were chosen because they are common among certification procedures nationally (LeTendre and Roberts 2005). Researchers also collected background information on the number of principals employed and the number certified in each jurisdiction.

Researchers conducted an online search for publicly available documents and data. Data profiles, previously developed with each jurisdiction to collect information on current certification practices, provided additional data when adequate information was not attainable in publicly available documents.

Technical brief

Why this brief?

Among the most important challenges faced by Pacific Region jurisdictions are the supply and preparation of educators. The need for this descriptive study on the preparation and hiring of principals in the Pacific Region was generated by the requests of regional state education agencies and the urging of Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory advisory groups to build on the recently published Issues & Answers report *Preparing and licensing high-quality teachers in Pacific Region jurisdictions* (Heine and Emesiochl 2007).

The purpose of this brief is to describe the current requirements for principal instatement in the U.S.-affiliated jurisdictions in the Pacific Region—American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Republic of Palau—and to facilitate comparisons of local practices with regional practice and policy.

Several studies have indicated that skilled principals may make a positive difference in increasing student achievement (Waters, Marzano, and McNutty 2004a,b; Robinson 2006). A review of quantitative research and case studies on school performance finds that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors contributing to how well students learn in school (Leithwood and Riehl 2003). Because student performance in the Pacific Region has room for improvement, the preparation and continuous improvement of school leaders may be of great importance in the Pacific Region.

At the state or jurisdiction level authors cite the need for research-based policy guidelines (Hale and Moorman 2003; Wallace Foundation 2006). These authors recommend a policy framework that creates links between standards, preparation requirements, and

continuing growth for principals. They cite a national trend toward frameworks for principal certification that promote excellence, with clear expectations for preparation programs and continuity through early career support. Hale and Moorman (2003) note that state-level policies and requirements shape the talent pool and support effective leadership preparation.

To document principal preparation and hiring requirements in the Pacific Region for this study, researchers investigated the academic, practice-based, and standards and policy requirements of each jurisdiction in the Pacific Region (for details on data collection, see box 1). Academic criteria included minimum education requirements and standardized assessment requirements. Practice-based requirements included information on teaching certificates, certification, years of teaching experience, and practicum or internship requirements. And standards and policy requirements included renewal procedures, professional development requirements, and interjurisdictional policy alignment. In addition, researchers collected background information on the number of principals employed and the number certified in each jurisdiction.

Findings

An important starting point was the number of certified principals in the Pacific Region jurisdictions. For this study *principal certification* is defined as the process of documenting that a person has met jurisdiction-specific requirements to become a school administrator. Certification is the term used most frequently in the Pacific Region to denote a jurisdiction's requirements for becoming a principal (Adams and Copland 2005).

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the number of certified elementary and secondary school principals in the Pacific Region jurisdictions in 2007/08.

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BOX 1

Data collection and limitations

Researchers conducted an online search for publicly available documents and data on preparation and hiring requirements for school principals in the Pacific Region jurisdictions. The initial document search and review yielded sparse and outdated information in some cases—not entirely unexpected, as some jurisdictions lack the financial, technical, or personnel resources to provide up-to-date web site data on preparation and hiring practices.

To provide additional information when adequate information was not available from public documents and web sites, researchers used data profiles that had previously been developed with each jurisdiction to collect information on current certification practices.¹ These data profiles were obtained directly from designated individuals in each jurisdiction. The checklist used to document information collected for each jurisdiction and the data profiles are available on request from the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory. By coupling the document review results and the data profiles submitted by each

jurisdiction the researchers were able to answer the study questions on principal preparation standards and policies. The study was conducted in fall 2007 and spring 2008.

Note

1. Data profiles on principal certification practices were compiled by representatives of each of the U.S.-affiliated jurisdictions (members of the Research and Evaluation Cadre established to help the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory with its data needs). Each profile details certification requirements, procedures, standards, and policies for the hiring, professional development, and review of principals.

TABLE 1

Number and percent of elementary school principals certified in Pacific Region jurisdictions, 2007/08

Jurisdiction	Number of principals employed	Certified principals	
		Number	Percent of all principals
American Samoa	23	23	100.0
Guam	25	24	98.0
Hawai'i	176	174	98.9
Republic of the Marshall Islands ^{a, b}	11	0	0.0
Federated States of Micronesia			
Chuuk ^a	61	0	0.0
Kosrae ^a	6	0	0.0
Pohnpei ^a	31	0	0.0
Yap ^a	26	0	0.0
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	12	2	16.7
Republic of Palau ^a	14	0	0.0

a. Does not require principal certification.

b. Does not include "head teachers," who administratively oversee the 62 small elementary schools in extremely isolated islands.

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Research and Evaluation Cadre members representing each jurisdiction.

TABLE 2

Number and percent of secondary school principals certified in Pacific Region jurisdictions, 2007/08

Jurisdiction	Number of principals employed	Certified principals	
		Number	Percent of all principals
American Samoa	6	6	100.0
Guam	12	11	91.7
Hawai'i	86	86	100.0
Republic of the Marshall Islands ^a	5	0	0.0
Federated States of Micronesia			
Chuuk ^a	13	0	0.0
Kosrae ^a	1	0	0.0
Pohnpei ^a	3	0	0.0
Yap ^a	3	0	0.0
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	8	2	25.0
Republic of Palau ^a	1	0	0.0

a. Does not require principal certification.

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Research and Evaluation Cadre members representing each jurisdiction.

Pacific Region jurisdictions vary substantially in terms of the percentage of principals who are certified, and the percent certified is related to rules for certification. Almost all principals in Hawai'i (99 percent) are certified. Hawai'i is also the only jurisdiction in the Pacific Region that is required to comply with all provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (No Child Left Behind 2002), including those for hiring highly qualified principals. All the principals in American Samoa and almost all of those in Guam (95 percent), two of the U.S. territories, are certified. In the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the other U.S. territory, 20 percent of principals are certified. The freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau do not have any formally certified principals, but they also do not require certification.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau are

not held accountable to NCLB requirements for hiring highly qualified teachers and principals. They receive compact funds administered by the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs, which holds each entity accountable for 20 indicators of educational progress. Although Palau is not a U.S. territory, its education funds are administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Both the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs encourage all of the nonstate entities to adopt NCLB provisions—such as standards and benchmarks, aligned curricula and instruction, and assessment systems that measure standards and benchmarks.

Each jurisdiction has a unique set of criteria and requirements for preparing and hiring principals. These are discussed in the next section, which describes each jurisdiction's academic, practice-based, and other criteria used in preparing and hiring principals.

Academic requirements for preparing and hiring principals

Table 3 summarizes the academic preparation requirements for principals across the Pacific Region jurisdictions.

Minimum degree requirement. Chuuk, Kosrae, Palau, and Yap all require that principals hold at least an associate’s degree. Hawai’i and the Republic of the Marshall Islands require bachelor’s degrees for incoming principals. Pohnpei separates its degree specifications, requiring a bachelor’s degree for principals for grades K–8 and a master’s degree for high school principals. American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands require a master’s degree for all principals. In addition to a bachelor’s degree, Hawai’i requires applicants to participate in the Administrator Certification for Excellence Program, which includes graduate-level coursework.

Standardized assessment. A majority of jurisdictions (7 of 10) do not require standardized assessments of incoming principals. Guam, Hawai’i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands require a passing score on standardized assessments. Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands require the Praxis I standardized assessment, a teacher certification exam. The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands also requires the teacher certification Praxis II exam, with an emphasis on the subject area of education leadership. Hawai’i requires that incoming principals pass a state-specific assessment.

Institutional recommendation. A majority of jurisdictions (7 of 10) do not require institutional recommendations—an official university statement showing that candidates have completed the necessary associate- or bachelor-level coursework to meet the academic requirements

TABLE 3

Academic requirements for preparing and hiring principals in Pacific Region jurisdictions, 2007/08

Jurisdiction	Minimum degree requirement	Standardized assessment	Institutional recommendation
American Samoa	Master’s degree	No	Yes
Guam	Master’s degree	Yes (Praxis I)	No
Hawai’i	Bachelor’s degree	Yes (Hawai’i-specific)	No
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Bachelor’s degree	No	Yes
Federated States of Micronesia			
Chuuk	Associate’s degree	No	Yes
Kosrae	Associate’s degree	No	No
Pohnpei	Bachelor’s degree (K–8); master’s degree (secondary)	No	No
Yap	Associate’s degree	No	No
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	Master’s degree	Yes (Praxis I [510 composite], Praxis II [600 education leadership])	No
Republic of Palau	Associate’s degree	No	No

Source: Authors’ analysis of data provided by the Research and Evaluation Cadre members representing each jurisdiction.

for certification—for principal instatement. Representatives of American Samoa, Chuuk, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands indicated that they require institutional recommendations for prospective principals.

Practice-based requirements for preparing and hiring principals

In addition to academic requirements, Pacific Region jurisdictions also apply practice-based conditions for principal instatement. Table 4 displays four features of practice-based requirements for becoming a qualified principal across the Pacific Region jurisdictions.

Teaching certification. A majority of the jurisdictions (7 of 10) demand that incoming principals hold a valid teaching certificate at the time of employment. Kosrae, Palau, and Yap do not require teaching certificates as a condition for principal induction.

Principal certification. American Samoa, Hawai'i, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands require that prospective principals have an active principal certificate. Jurisdictions that do not require principal certificates for incoming principals do have other rules and processes for preparation and hiring. The American Samoa Department of Education requires school leaders to successfully complete the School Leaders Certification Plan and meet its stated requirements. Hawai'i requires all applicants, including those certified in other states, to complete the Administrator Certification for Excellence Program. In addition, all candidates must be previously tenured in Hawai'i as teachers.

Prior teaching experience. All the jurisdictions require prior work experience in the public school system for candidates. Prior work requirements range from 3 years (Hawai'i)

TABLE 4

Practice-based requirements for preparing and hiring principals in Pacific Region jurisdictions, 2007/08

Jurisdiction	Teacher certification	Principal certification	Prior teaching experience	Preservice practicum
American Samoa	Yes	Yes	Yes (5 years)	Yes
Guam	Yes	Yes	Yes (5 years)	Yes
Hawai'i	Yes	Yes	Yes (3 years)	Yes
Republic of the Marshall Islands	Yes	No	Yes (5 years)	Yes
Federated States of Micronesia				
Chuuk	Yes	No	Yes (6 years)	No
Kosrae	No	No	Yes (5 or 15 years, depending on degree)	No
Pohnpei	Yes	No	Yes (5 years)	No
Yap	No	No	Yes (5 years)	No
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	Yes	Yes	Yes (3 years)	No
Republic of Palau	No	No	Yes (5 years)	No

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Research and Evaluation Cadre members representing each jurisdiction.

to 15 years (Kosrae, with associate’s degree). Principals in Kosrae are also expected to have at least 2 years of experience as a vice principal. Kosrae requires entry-level vice principals to have at least 5 years of teaching experience if they have a bachelor’s degree and 15 years of experience if they have an associate’s degree.

Preservice practicum. A majority of jurisdictions (6 of 10) report not requiring preservice practicum experience for prospective principals.¹ American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands required a preservice practicum. Guam defines an internship as three credits or 30 semester hours of supervised work in a school as an administrative intern. Hawai‘i requires incoming principals to participate in a one-year supervised internship for initial certification and a two-year supervised mentorship program for continued certification.

Standards and policies for certification and renewal of principals

The standards and policies for preparing and hiring principals vary across the Pacific Region jurisdictions. Table 5 presents information on a number of variables that relate to the systemic requirements for principal induction.

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards. The Council of Chief State School Officers has prepared a set of Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards to guide leadership policy and practice.² These standards are used throughout the continental United States to give policymakers and education leaders a common vision and goals for improving student achievement through better education leadership (Council of Chief State School Officers 2008). American Samoa, Guam, and Hawai‘i base their standards and policies for preparing and hiring principals on ISLLC standards.

American Samoa, Guam, and Hawai‘i began adopting these standards over the past four years.

American Samoa has incorporated the ISLLC standards into locally adopted standards, expecting principals to develop skills in vision, assessment and accountability, school management and operations, leadership and school governance, and diversity and professionalism (American Samoa Department of Education 2004). Guam and Hawai‘i aligned their previously adopted standards with the ISLLC standards (Guam Public School System, Certification Office 2007; Hawaii Department of Education 2007).

Grade levels. Grade designations describe the grade levels that principals administer. Unified designation represents responsibilities that span kindergarten through grade 12. A tiered designation refers to jurisdiction over a subset of those years; for example, either elementary or secondary school. A majority of jurisdictions (6 of 10) use a unified designation for school administrators, meaning that there is no distinction between elementary, middle, and high school-level principal certification.

Certification tenure and mandated professional development. Certification tenure and mandated professional development are considered together because of their congruence; certificate renewal is based on mandated professional development and continued learning. None of the jurisdictions that require principal certification awards permanent principal certification. Representatives of American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands stated that principals were required to renew their eligibility (see table 5). In addition, representatives of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands report mandating professional development for existing principals.

External recognition. A majority of the jurisdictions (6 of 10) reported that they accept principal certifications from other jurisdictions. This acceptance has implications for preparation and

None of the jurisdictions that require principal certification awards permanent principal certification

TABLE 5

Elements of certification and certification renewal for preparing and hiring principals in Pacific Region jurisdictions, 2007/08

Jurisdiction	ISLLC standards-based ^a	Grade levels	Certification tenure	Mandated professional development	External recognition
American Samoa	Yes	Unified	Renewable (Potential School Leader: 3 years, Basic Certificate: 4 years, Professional Certificate: 4 years)	Yes ^b	Yes
Guam	Yes	Tiered	Renewable (Professional I: 3 years; Professional II: 6 years; Professional III: 6 years)	Yes ^c	Yes
Hawai'i	Yes	Unified	Renewable (after ACE)	Yes ^d	No
Republic of the Marshall Islands	No	Unified	na	No	Yes
Federated States of Micronesia					
Chuuk	No	Tiered	na	No	No
Kosrae	No	Tiered	na	No	Yes
Pohnpei	No	Unified	na	No	Yes
Yap	No	Tiered	na	No	No
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	No	Unified	Renewable (every 4 years)	Yes ^e	No
Palau	No	Unified	na	No	Yes

na is not applicable; these jurisdictions have reported not having formal certification processes.

a. Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

b. Professional development for principals is mandated at each of the three levels of school leader certification (Level 1: Potential School Leader Certification, Level 2: Basic Certificate, Level 3: Professional Certificate). Level 1 requires a designated technology course (ED240), plus at least 15 hours on instruction, administration, curriculum, and supervision. Level 2 requires 20 contact hours of professional development, and Level 3 mandates 25.

c. Six semester hours of professional development are required for certificate renewal.

d. Principals are required to complete the Administrator Certification for Excellence Program.

e. 120 hours of professional development per year is mandated.

Source: Authors' analysis of data provided by the Research and Evaluation Cadre members representing each jurisdiction.

hiring policy and procedures across the jurisdictions, such as increasing the pool of qualified applicants for school leadership positions.

Conclusions

This study on preparing and hiring principals in the Pacific Region found regional disparities in preparation and certification ranging from the

absence of certification programs (the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau) to state-mandated certification policies (American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

In 2007/08 all elementary and secondary school principals in American Samoa were

In jurisdictions where certification for principals is not currently required for induction, components of a qualification process illustrated a certain level of state decisionmaking regarding the hiring and training of principals in the jurisdictions

certified. In Hawai‘i, the only jurisdiction in the Pacific Region required to comply with the highly qualified principals provisions of the NCLB Act, on average of 99 percent of elementary and secondary school principals were certified. In Guam an average of 95 percent of elementary and secondary school principals were certified, while in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the other U.S. territory, an average of just 20 percent of elementary and secondary school principals were certified. The freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau did not have formal certification programs for principals. In jurisdictions where certification for principals is not currently required for induction, components of a qualification process illustrated a certain level of state decisionmaking regarding the hiring and training of principals in the jurisdictions.

The academic, practice-based, and standards and policy criteria used in the preparation and hiring of principals in the region vary by jurisdiction. American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have established state-mandated principal certification policies. The Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau do not have state-mandated certification policies but adhere to a set of academic and practice-based requirements, as well as standards and policies for principal preparation and hiring.

Only American Samoa, Chuuk, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands require an institutional recommendation from an institution of higher education. American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands require a master’s degree for principal certification, while Pohnpei requires a bachelor’s degree for elementary school principals and a master’s degree for secondary school principals. Hawai‘i and

the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands require a passing score on a standardized assessment for incoming principals. Hawai‘i requires a passing score on a state-specific assessment.

All Pacific Region jurisdictions require classroom teaching experience. American Samoa, Chuuk, Guam, Hawai‘i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands require a teaching certificate as part of principal preparation and hiring. Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands also require an administrative internship, and Pohnpei requires increasing levels of administrative experience as a requirement for moving through their classification levels.

American Samoa, Guam, and Hawai‘i base their requirements on the ISSLC standards. But implementation of these requirements differs by jurisdiction. The only requirements common to all 10 jurisdictions in the preparation and hiring of principals in the Pacific Region are that principals must complete some college-level coursework and must have teaching experience.

Next steps

The findings of this technical brief could lead to discussions of the current requirements for preparing and hiring principals and of potential adjustments to these criteria and processes across all regions.

Notes

1. Preservice practicums provide prospective or new principals with opportunities to observe experienced principals, to experience the expectations professionals in the school setting must meet, and to apply professional development skills in a school setting. The aim is to provide prospective principals with the knowledge, experiences, guidance, and resources they will need in their position.

2. The six ISLLC standards were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with the National Policy Board on Educational Administration. Each standard is accompanied by knowledge required for the standard, the dispositions manifest by the accomplishment of the standard, and performances that may be observed by an administrator who is accomplished in the standard. For a complete listing of ISLLC standards, see Council of Chief State School Officers (2008).

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