

Education Administrators

(0*NET 11-9031.00, 11-9032.00, 11-9033.00, 11-9039.99)

Significant Points

- Many jobs require a master's or doctoral degree and experience in a related occupation, such as a teacher or admissions counselor.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills are essential because much of an administrator's job involves working and collaborating with others.
- Job outlook is expected to be excellent because a large proportion of education administrators are expected to retire over the next 10 years.

Nature of the Work

Smooth operation of an educational institution requires competent administrators. *Education administrators* provide instructional leadership as well as manage the day-to-day activities in schools, pre-schools, daycare centers, and colleges and universities. They also direct the educational programs of businesses, correctional institutions, museums, and job training and community service organizations. (College presidents and school superintendents are covered in the *Handbook* statement on general managers and top executives.) Education administrators set educational standards and goals and establish the policies and procedures to carry them out. They also supervise managers, support staff, teachers, counselors, librarians, coaches, and others. They develop academic programs; monitor students' educational progress; train and motivate teachers and other staff; manage guidance and other student services; administer recordkeeping; prepare budgets; handle relations with parents, prospective and current students, employers, and the community; and perform many other duties. In an organization such as a small daycare center, one administrator may handle all these functions. In universities or large school systems, responsibilities are divided among many administrators, each with a specific function.

Those who manage elementary, middle, and secondary schools are called *principals*. They set the academic tone and hire, evaluate, and help improve the skills of teachers and other staff. Principals confer with staff to advise, explain, or answer procedural questions. They visit classrooms, observe teaching methods, review instructional objectives, and examine learning materials. They actively work with teachers to develop and maintain high curriculum standards, develop mission statements, and set performance goals and objectives. Principals must use clear, objective guidelines for teacher appraisals, because pay often is based on performance ratings.

Principals also meet and interact with other administrators, students, parents, and representatives of community organizations. Decisionmaking authority has increasingly shifted from school district central offices to individual schools. Thus, parents, teachers, and other members of the community play an important role in setting school policies and goals. Principals must pay attention to the concerns of these groups when making administrative decisions.

Principals prepare budgets and reports on various subjects, including finances and attendance, and oversee the requisition and allocation of supplies. As school budgets become tighter, many principals have become more involved in public relations and fundraising to secure financial support for their schools from local businesses and the community.

Principals must take an active role to ensure that students meet national, State, and local academic standards. Many principals develop school/business partnerships and school-to-work transition programs for students. Increasingly, principals must be sensitive to the needs of the rising number of non-English speaking and culturally diverse students. Growing enrollments, which are leading to overcrowding at many existing schools, also are a cause for concern. When addressing problems of inadequate resources, administrators serve as advocates for the building of new schools or the repair of existing ones. During summer months, principals are responsible for planning for the upcoming year, overseeing summer school, participating in workshops for teachers and administrators, supervising building repairs and improvements, and working to be sure the school has adequate staff for the school year.

Schools continue to be involved with students' emotional welfare as well as their academic achievement. As a result, principals face responsibilities outside the academic realm. For example, in response to the growing numbers of dual-income and single-parent families and teenage parents, schools have established before- and after-school childcare programs or family resource centers, which also may offer parenting classes and social service referrals. With the help of community organizations, some principals have established programs to combat increases in crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and sexually transmitted diseases among students.

Assistant principals aid the principal in the overall administration of the school. Some assistant principals hold this position for several years to prepare for advancement to principal jobs; others are career assistant principals. They are primarily responsible for scheduling student classes, ordering textbooks and supplies, and coordinating transportation, custodial, cafeteria, and other support services. They usually handle student discipline and attendance problems, social and recreational programs, and health and safety matters. They also may counsel students on personal, educational, or vocational matters. With the advent of site-based management, assistant principals are playing a greater role in ensuring the academic success of students by helping to develop new curriculums, evaluating teachers, and dealing with school-community relations—responsibilities previously assumed solely by the principal. The number of assistant principals that a school employs may vary, depending on the number of students.

In preschools and childcare centers, education administrators are the director or supervisor of the school or center. Their job is similar to that of other school administrators in that they oversee daily



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activities and operation of the schools, hire and develop staff, and make sure that the school meets required regulations.

Administrators in school district central offices oversee public schools under their jurisdiction. This group includes those who direct subject-area programs such as English, music, vocational education, special education, and mathematics. They supervise instructional coordinators and curriculum specialists, and work with them to evaluate curriculums and teaching techniques and improve them. (Instructional coordinators are covered elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) Administrators also may oversee career counseling programs and testing that measures students' abilities and helps to place them in appropriate classes. Others may also direct programs such as school psychology, athletics, curriculum and instruction, and professional development. With site-based management, administrators have transferred primary responsibility for many of these programs to the principals, assistant principals, teachers, instructional coordinators, and other staff in the schools.

In colleges and universities, *academic deans*, *deans of faculty*, *provosts*, and *university deans* assist presidents, make faculty appointments, develop budgets, and establish academic policies and programs. They also direct and coordinate the activities of deans of individual colleges and chairpersons of academic departments. Fundraising also is becoming an essential part of their job.

College or university department heads or chairpersons are in charge of departments that specialize in particular fields of study, such as English, biological science, or mathematics. In addition to teaching, they coordinate schedules of classes and teaching assignments; propose budgets; recruit, interview, and hire applicants for teaching positions; evaluate faculty members; encourage faculty development; serve on committees; and perform other administrative duties. In overseeing their departments, chairpersons must consider and balance the concerns of faculty, administrators, and students.

Higher education administrators also direct and coordinate the provision of student services. *Vice presidents of student affairs or student life*, *deans of students*, and *directors of student services* may direct and coordinate admissions, foreign student services, health and counseling services, career services, financial aid, and housing and residential life, as well as social, recreational, and related programs. In small colleges, they may counsel students. In larger colleges and universities, separate administrators may handle each of these services. *Registrars* are custodians of students' records. They register students, record grades, prepare student transcripts, evaluate academic records, assess and collect tuition and fees, plan and implement commencement, oversee the preparation of college catalogs and schedules of classes, and analyze enrollment and demographic statistics. *Directors of admissions* manage the process of recruiting, evaluating, and admitting students, and work closely with *financial aid directors*, who oversee scholarship, fellowship, and loan programs. Registrars and admissions officers at most institutions need computer skills because they use electronic student information systems. For example, for those whose institutions present information—such as college catalogs and schedules—on the Internet, knowledge of online resources, imaging, and other computer skills is important. *Athletic directors* plan and direct intramural and intercollegiate athletic activities, seeing to publicity for athletic events, preparation of budgets, and supervision of coaches. Other increasingly important administrators direct fundraising, public relations, distance learning, and technology.

Working Conditions

Education administrators hold leadership positions with significant responsibility. Most find working with students extremely reward-

ing, but as the responsibilities of administrators have increased in recent years, so has the stress. Coordinating and interacting with faculty, parents, students, community members, business leaders, and State and local policymakers can be fast-paced and stimulating, but also stressful and demanding. Principals and assistant principals, whose varied duties include discipline, may find working with difficult students challenging. The pressures associated with education administrator jobs have multiplied in recent years, as workers in these positions are increasingly being held accountable for ensuring that their schools meet recently imposed State and Federal guidelines for student performance and teacher qualifications, and as they must cope with the additional challenges presented by current budget shortfalls.

Many education administrators work more than 40 hours a week, often including school activities at night and on weekends. Most administrators work 11 or 12 months out of the year. Some jobs include travel.

Employment

Education administrators held about 427,000 jobs in 2002. About 2 in 10 worked for private education institutions, and 6 in 10 worked for State and local governments, mainly in schools, colleges and universities, and departments of education. Less than 5 percent were self-employed. The rest worked in child daycare centers, religious organizations, job training centers, and businesses and other organizations that provided training for their employees.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most education administrators begin their careers in related occupations, and prepare for a job in education administration by completing a master's or doctoral degree. Because of the diversity of duties and levels of responsibility, their educational backgrounds and experience vary considerably. Principals, assistant principals, central office administrators, academic deans, and preschool directors usually have held teaching positions before moving into administration. Some teachers move directly into principal positions; others first become assistant principals, or gain experience in other central office administrative jobs at either the school or district level in positions such as department head, curriculum specialist, or subject matter advisor. In some cases, administrators move up from related staff jobs such as recruiter, guidance counselor, librarian, residence hall director, or financial aid or admissions counselor.

To be considered for education administrator positions, workers must first prove themselves in their current jobs. In evaluating candidates, supervisors look for leadership, determination, confidence, innovativeness, and motivation. The ability to make sound decisions and to organize and coordinate work efficiently is essential. Because much of an administrator's job involves interacting with others—such as students, parents, teachers, and the community—a person in such a position must have strong interpersonal skills and be an effective communicator and motivator. Knowledge of leadership principles and practices, gained through work experience and formal education, is important. A familiarity with computer technology is a necessity for principals, who are required to gather information and coordinate technical resources for their students, teachers, and classrooms.

In most public schools, principals, assistant principals, and school administrators in central offices need a master's degree in education administration or educational supervision. Some principals and central office administrators have a doctorate or specialized degree in education administration. In private schools, which are not subject to State licensure requirements, some principals and assistant

principals hold only a bachelor's degree; however, the majority have a master's or doctoral degree. Most States require principals to be licensed as school administrators. License requirements vary by State. National standards for school leaders, including principals and supervisors, have been developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. Many States use these national standards as guidelines to assess beginning principals for licensure. Increasingly, on-the-job training, often with a mentor, is required for new school leaders. Some States require administrators to take continuing education courses to keep their license, thus ensuring that administrators have the most up-to-date skills. The number and types of courses required to maintain licensure vary by State.

Educational requirements for administrators of preschools and childcare centers vary depending on the setting of the program and the State of employment. Administrators who oversee school-based preschool programs are often required to have at least a bachelor's degree. Child care directors are generally not required to have a degree; however, most States require a credential such as the Child Development Associate credential (CDA) sponsored by the Council for Professional Recognition or other credential specifically designed for administrators. The National Child Care Association, offers a National Administration Credential, which some recent college graduates voluntarily earn to better qualify for positions as childcare center directors.

Academic deans and chairpersons usually have a doctorate in their specialty. Most have held a professorship in their department before advancing. Admissions, student affairs, and financial aid directors and registrars sometimes start in related staff jobs with bachelor's degrees—any field usually is acceptable—and obtain advanced degrees in college student affairs, counseling, or higher education administration. A Ph.D. or Ed.D. usually is necessary for top student affairs positions. Computer literacy and a background in accounting or statistics may be assets in admissions, records, and financial work.

Advanced degrees in higher education administration, educational supervision, and college student affairs are offered in many colleges and universities. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council accredit these programs. Education administration degree programs include courses in school leadership, school law, school finance and budgeting, curriculum development and evaluation, research design and data analysis, community relations, politics in education, and counseling. Educational supervision degree programs include courses in supervision of instruction and curriculum, human relations, curriculum development, research, and advanced teaching courses.

Education administrators advance through promotion to more responsible administrative positions or by transferring to more responsible positions at larger schools or systems. They also may become superintendents of school systems or presidents of educational institutions.

Job Outlook

Employment of education administrators is projected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2012. As education and training take on greater importance in everyone's lives, the need for people to administer education programs will grow. Job opportunities for many of these positions should also be excellent because a large proportion of education administrators are expected to retire over the next 10 years.

A significant portion of growth will stem from growth in the private and for-profit segments of education. Many of these schools cater to working adults, many of whom might not ordinarily participate in postsecondary education. These schools allow students to earn a degree, receive job-specific training or update their skills, in a convenient manner, such as through part-time programs or distance learning. As the number of these schools continues to grow, more administrators will be needed to oversee them.

Enrollments of school-age children will also have an impact on the demand for education administrators. The U.S. Department of Education projects enrollment of elementary and secondary school students to grow between 5 and 7 percent over the next decade. Preschool and childcare center administrators are expected to experience substantially more growth as enrollments in formal child care programs continues to expand as fewer private households care for young children. Additionally, if mandatory preschool becomes more widespread more preschool directors will be needed. The number of postsecondary school students is projected to grow more rapidly than other student populations, creating significant demand for administrators at that level. In addition, enrollments are expected to increase the fastest in the West and South, where the population is growing, and to decline or remain stable in the Northeast and the Midwest. School administrators also are in greater demand in rural and urban areas, where pay is generally lower than in the suburbs.

Principals and assistant principals should have favorable job prospects. A sharp increase in responsibilities in recent years has made the job more stressful, and has discouraged teachers from taking positions in administration. Principals are now being held more accountable for the performance of students and teachers, while at the same time they are required to adhere to a growing number of government regulations. In addition, overcrowded classrooms, safety issues, budgetary concerns, and teacher shortages in some areas all are creating additional stress for administrators. The increase in pay is often not high enough to entice people into the field.

Job prospects also are expected to be favorable for college and university administrators, particularly those seeking nonacademic positions. Colleges and universities may be subject to funding shortfalls during economic downturns, but increasing enrollments over the projection period will require that institutions replace the large numbers of administrators who retire, and even hire additional administrators. While competition among faculty for prestigious positions as academic deans and department heads is likely to remain keen, fewer applicants are expected for nonacademic administrative jobs, such as director of admissions or student affairs. Furthermore, many people are discouraged from seeking administrator jobs by the requirement that they have a master's or doctoral degree in education administration—as well as by the opportunity to earn higher salaries in other occupations.

Earnings

In 2002, elementary and secondary school administrators had median annual earnings of \$71,490; postsecondary school administrators had median annual earnings of \$64,640, while preschool and childcare center administrators earned a median of \$33,340 per year. Salaries of education administrators depend on several factors, including the location and enrollment level in the school or school district. According to a survey of public schools, conducted by the Educational Research Service, average salaries for principals and assistant principals in the 2002-03 school year were as follows:

Directors, managers, coordinators, and supervisors, finance and business	\$81,451
Principals:	
Elementary school	75,291
Jr. high/middle school	80,708
Senior high school	86,452
Assistant principals:	
Elementary school	\$62,230
Jr. high/middle school	67,288
Senior high school	70,874

According to the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, median annual salaries for selected administrators in higher education in 2001-02 were as follows:

Academic deans:	
Business	\$107,414
Graduate programs	100,391
Education	100,227
Arts and sciences	98,780
Health-related professions	89,234
Nursing	88,386
Continuing education	84,457
Occupational or vocational education	73,595
Other administrators:	
Dean of students	\$70,012
Director, admissions and registrar	61,519
Director, student financial aid	57,036
Director, annual giving	49,121
Director, student activities	41,050

Benefits for education administrators are generally very good. Many get 4 or 5 weeks vacation every year and have generous health and pension packages. Many colleges and universities offer free tuition to employees and their families.

Related Occupations

Education administrators apply organizational and leadership skills to provide services to individuals. Workers in related occupations include administrative services managers; office and administrative support worker supervisors and managers; human resource, training, and labor relations managers and specialists; and archivists, curators, and museum technicians. Education administrators also work with students and have backgrounds similar to those of counselors; librarians; instructional coordinators; teachers—preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle, and secondary; and teachers—postsecondary.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on principals and other management staff in public schools, contact:

- Educational Research Service, 2000 Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201-2908. Internet: <http://www.ers.org>

For information on principals, contact:

- The National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3483. Internet: <http://www.naesp.org>
- The National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1537. Internet: <http://www.nassp.org>

For information on collegiate registrars and admissions officers, contact:

- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, One Dupont Circle NW., Suite 520, Washington, DC 20036-1171. Internet: <http://www.aacrao.org>

For information on professional development and graduate programs for college student affairs administrators, contact:

- NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 1875 Connecticut Ave. NW., Suite 418, Washington, DC 20009. Internet: <http://www.naspa.org>