

Certification Requirements for Supervisors in the United States

This article reports a status study of the certification requirements for supervisors of instruction in the United States. It also points to some of the major opportunities and responsibilities of instructional leadership in today's schools.

MANY OF US would agree with the premise that in the field of educational supervision we have a key to the continuous development and maintenance of high instructional standards in America's public schools. It is clear, therefore, that the leadership responsibility of those who serve in this capacity is extremely great. It is important that the standards for selection and the professional preparation of those who aspire to enter this field shall be commensurate with its responsibilities.

It was in the interest of discovering the general nature and extent of the preparation required of supervisors in this nation's schools that a study was made of the certification requirements for supervisors of instruction in the United States. Results of this survey are reported here not only because they are particularly significant to those who are concerned with the training and placement of personnel in the field of educational supervision, but also because of the general interest they may hold for all who are concerned with national trends in professional standards for educators.

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Among the various responsibilities delegated by our educational system to departments of education in the various states, is the responsibility for establishing minimum standards of preparation for school personnel. Thus, to ascertain the national trends in professional training required of those engaging in supervisory services, the current (1953-1954) certification requirements for supervisors of instruction, as they are included in the educational statutes of the state departments of education in the United States, presented the most reliable frame of reference.

Written and published requirements for the certification of public school teachers and administrators were obtained from the offices of the superintendents of public instruction of the various states and the District of Columbia. Of the forty-eight states solicited by letter, all, with the exception of Connecticut, responded and are accounted for in this report. It must be kept in mind, however, that state certification requirements represent the minimum standards which have been established by law. It is also important to remember that any written statement of professional training requirements is subject to periodical review and change, as well as being subject to

the constant variable of interpretation.

Professional standards as they are written into requirements for all types of certification must be subject to interpretation perforce by qualified persons and agencies who have the responsibility for their enforcement. In the field of education, this task is performed by official state committees on certification, teacher education institutions which provide the academic and professional training for school personnel, and the many persons in various official capacities who must individually and collectively pass judgment on the adequacy of preparation and its application to the established standards. And last, but by far not the least important, is the influence upon standards exerted by the processes of selection at the point of actual employment. In the last analysis, much more than minimum requirements can be observed in patterns of training required for institutional recommendations and in additional qualifications which may be set forth in the field among the requisites for placement.

Findings of the Survey

Without benefit of interpretive data, the written and published regulations made available by the various state departments of education indicate that 33 states now require special certificates for supervisors of instruction in the public schools. These are most typically the Elementary School Supervision Certificate, the Secondary School Supervision Certificate, and the Special Subject Supervision Certificate. In only 4 states is a General Supervision Certificate issued (California, Illinois, Indiana, Virginia).

In 14 states and the District of Columbia no special certificate specifically authorizing supervision of instruction is provided for in the regulations governing school personnel (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Maine, Missouri, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin). In these states, however, there is a wide range of difference in the prerequisites for placement in supervisory positions. According to a letter from the Chief Examiner in the District of Columbia ". . . the Board of Examiners has no printed information available concerning the certification requirements and professional preparation required of school supervisors in the District of Columbia. All school officers must present the minimum of a master's degree, together with professional preparation and experience adequate for the specific position. The exact sequence in administration and supervision and in allied courses is not prescribed in detail." The Assistant State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Idaho "advised that this state does not issue special credentials to supervisors but requires that all such people hold regular teacher certificates for the grade level in which they serve. . . . Present requirements are being studied and revisions contemplated." In several of these states where no special certificates are issued for supervisors of instruction, supervision is authorized under the administration of a principal's certificate (Missouri, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina). In Michigan "the responsibility for assigning supervisors rests with the employing of-

ficials who may assign anyone of their choice who holds a valid teaching certificate." In Wisconsin it was also indicated that requirements for school supervisors and administrators are now being determined.

Although the 33 states which require special certificates do not collectively present any characteristic pattern in academic training or professional preparation, they can be grouped into three categories on the basis of amount of academic training required. There is no evidence of correlation of requirements with geographic location, and it is not intended that these categories represent levels of preparation. The grouping is made merely for purposes of greater facility in observing the differences and likenesses in the academic and professional training requirements for supervision certificates. All have their individual merits over and above the academic statements of requirements which are available for comparison here. The recurrent points of emphasis reflected in these training requirements are, however, indicative of a consensus relative to training needs which are regarded as minimum requisites to success in this field. Among the 33 states in which special certificates are issued for supervisors, there are these categories:

1. Those states which require a master's degree including special preparation in supervision ranging from 3 to 36 semester hours, a valid teaching certificate, and from 3 to 5 years of teaching experience: In some of these, a master's degree in educational administration and supervision is specifically indicated. In others no limitation is placed on the field of advanced study,

and in still others, the master's degree is required in the subject field to be supervised. This category includes the following states:

Arkansas	Ohio
Delaware	Oregon
Florida	Rhode Island
Illinois	Texas
Kansas	Utah
Louisiana	West Virginia.
Montana	

2. Those states which require from 8 to as much as 30 semester hours of graduate work, special preparation in supervision, a valid teaching certificate, and from 2 to 5 years of teaching experience: The states included in this group are the following:

Alabama	New Hampshire
California	New Jersey
Iowa	New York
Kentucky	Mississippi
Maryland	Pennsylvania
Nebraska	Tennessee.

3. Those states which require a wide range of academic training and experience for certification as a school supervisor: They differ considerably both in the nature and extent of the training required, and the range of difference extends from selection of supervisors by a state committee with only eligibility for a teaching certificate specified, to a valid teaching certificate required with some special preparation in supervision and from 3 to 5 years of teaching experience. From 2 to as much as 15 semester hours of graduate work, including special courses in supervision, is required among these states. In this category are the following:

Georgia	South Carolina
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Indiana ¹	Vermont
Massachusetts	Virginia
Minnesota	Wyoming.

In Georgia, for example, "the recruitment and selection of persons to enter instructional supervision is handled by a state committee. The candidates must hold a professional 4 year level certificate, have at least 3 years' teaching experience, and be recommended by the committee. Then a master's degree program is planned to fit the needs of the individual to include certain specific courses in supervision and an internship." For a Supervisor's Certificate in Wyoming, the requirements merely specify that the candidate must be able to qualify for their Professional High School or Elementary Certificate with a major in the area to be supervised. This is a case where the only certificate listed for supervisors is by its nature, a special subject supervision certificate.

Recurring Emphases

A survey of the nation's minimum training requirements for school supervisors reveals that the special preparation in supervision most typically prescribes accredited college courses in from one to all of the following areas:

1. General school organization and administration;
2. Supervision, its aims, scope, and desirable outcomes, principles and practices;
3. Curriculum development and construction;
4. Child development;
5. Evaluation of instruction; and
6. Courses appropriate to the type

¹ Source material incomplete on preparation required for General Supervisor's Certificates.

and level of responsibilities of the particular supervisory position.

In three states, training in school-community relations is specifically required, and in five states personal qualifications essential to success in this field are specifically referred to in the minimum training requirements.

Another recurrent point of emphasis in the more recent and more comprehensive statements of requirements indicates that recency of training and experience is considered important. It is frequently specified that training and/or experience must have been completed within the 5 years preceding the certification of school supervisors. In Alabama, California, Georgia, Ohio, Iowa, Kentucky, New York and West Virginia, some experience in administration and/or supervision is required for regular certificates. This is provided for under a provisional certification program such as that required in Ohio and New York, by a field course in the supervision of instruction such as California requires, or by an actual internship which is required in Georgia.

New York goes a step further in its provisional and permanent certification program in that during each 10 year period after the permanent certificate is issued the holder must complete a minimum of 6 additional semester hours of approved in-service training on the graduate or equivalent level. Iowa represents still another approach in its requirement that candidates for supervision certificates shall have supervisory experience under the supervision of an accredited institution offering additional preparation with or without credit and be institutionally recommended. New Hampshire speci-

fies that the minimum training must include some experience in leadership of adults. In Virginia the same sort of thing is prescribed in these terms, "Demonstrated ability to give constructive leadership to and coordinate the work of others."

Suggested Standards of Preparation

The range of the school supervisor's duties and responsibilities has widened to include not only delegated administrative functions but also liaison in school-community relations. He has also become a leader of teachers rather than a teacher of teachers. In terms of this multiplicity of activities and responsibilities, what qualifications and preparation should a supervisor have as the basic equipment for his job? There are personal qualifications which are of primary importance, for if he is to succeed in the first objective of supervision, *i.e.*, to assist in the improvement of instruction, he will need good relationships with those with whom he is to work. The sphere of these relationships involves his superiors; their support is essential in establishing and carrying forward a program of curriculum improvement. The supervisor must also be capable of good rapport with teachers and other colleagues who participate in, and contribute to, such a program. Furthermore, he should help implement cooperation with the community which the program is designed to serve.

The successful supervisor should be an individual with keen intellect and a well developed talent for democratic leadership. He should be capable of creating power *with* people and not

over them, through a stimulation of common interests, persuasion and cooperative group action. These qualities presuppose a sound but not inflexible philosophy of life in general, and of education in the context of a democratic society in particular. A high standard of quality in both the personality and character pattern are important determinatives in the exercise of democratic leadership. If supervision is to realize the leadership goals in education which have been set, school supervisors must exemplify as well as profess them.

Training and Experience

The academic training and experience of a school supervisor should include a broad base of general education. In addition, he should have experience as a teacher, so that he may gain familiarity with the objectives, tools and techniques of the profession. Advanced study of the psychological, social and intellectual needs of children and youth; principles and philosophy of education; principles and practices of curriculum construction; educational research and evaluation; school organization, administration and supervision—all with an emphasis upon the human relations aspects of the total educational endeavor—should likewise be a part of his preparation.

Translated into degrees and graduate study, this would seem to require a bachelor's degree, a valid teaching certificate appropriate to the level of supervision, and a well organized program of graduate study designed especially to serve the needs of school supervisors and administrators, culminating perhaps in a master's degree. Teach-



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ing experience is necessary to demonstrate a thorough, on-the-job knowledge of teaching and learning, as well as the ability to function successfully in the situation in which the prospective supervisor would hope to facilitate improvement.

Although internships in supervision may be administratively prohibitive in many communities, some type of field experience is suggested as the most efficient proving ground in a training program for leadership responsibilities. Supervised teaching is the almost universal approach to this problem in the training of teachers. If a similar experience is not feasibly available to the trainee in supervision, field work should be provided on the graduate

level under the surveillance of institutions equipped to offer such a professional training program. Otherwise, a program of provisional certification should be more widely employed for this purpose.

The current fluidity in the movement of population tends to reinforce the need for more equalization in the level of professional preparation required of all certificated school personnel. Likewise, if the training and preparation required of school supervisors is to be commensurate with the range of their present and future responsibilities, some general, meaningful standards of preparation for supervisory personnel will need to be observed throughout the country.



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