

# **ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO LICENSURE: A STATUS REPORT**

## **SAELP-VA Policy Initiative #3**

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#### **Introduction**

In 2001, at the request of Jo Lynne DeMary, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) applied for, and subsequently received, a grant of \$250,000 from the Wallace Foundation to implement the Virginia State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP). SAELP-VA was designed to focus on school leadership development in the context of the state's recent comprehensive efforts in education policy, which included Standards of Learning for students, the Virginia State Assessment Program, the Standards of Accreditation, and the Standards of Quality. SAELP-VA has continued throughout 2002 and 2003 and is anticipated to conclude in early 2004.

Virginia's attention to the roles and responsibilities of school leaders had begun with the passage of the Education Accountability and Quality Enhancement Act in 1999. This Act led to the development of performance standards for educators, approved by the State Board in 2000 and published as *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents*, and of prototype evaluation instruments, developed by CEPI in 2001 ([www.cepionline.org](http://www.cepionline.org)). In addition, in 1998, the Department of Education had adopted the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards as the framework for administrator preparation programs in colleges and universities. This policy context supported the review of policy, preparation programs, and professional development needs included in SAELP-VA.

In this paper, SAELP-VA efforts toward Policy Initiative #3 are described, with references to Initiatives #1, #4, and #5.

#### **Considerations of Nontraditional Licensure**

In the Design Phase of SAELP in 2001, three summit meetings were held in Richmond with a variety of educators and stakeholders taking part. As a result of these meetings, 80+ recommendations were developed. Among these suggestions were such statements as these:

- *Alternative routes could be developed for differentiated roles (i.e., business manager); Teacher leaders could also assume and be paid for some administrative roles (i.e., special education, assessment coordinator, etc.).*
- *The state should provide for alternative certification for principals and superintendents just as for classroom teachers.*

The 80+ recommendations were subsequently subsumed into the six Policy Initiatives of the Implementation Phase; hence, Policy Initiative #3, Alternative Routes to Licensure, was derived from several statements such as these examples.

### ***Policy Initiative #3: Alternative Routes to Licensure***

Policy Initiative #3 anticipated the development of alternative models of licensure and suggested that nontraditional avenues to licensure should incorporate the redesigned standards for preparation to come from the work of the Task Force (Policy Initiative #4).

In particular, the alternative routes to licensure were to be directed:

- (1) To meet the needs of low-performing and undersupplied school divisions;

And they were to be designed:

- (2) To create the capacity for customized preparation programs; and
- (3) To provide a licensure path for
  - a. teachers with master's degrees in a major other than educational administration,
  - b. persons with master's degrees not presently practicing in the field of education, and
  - c. similarly qualified career switchers from the private sector and the military; and also
- (4) To emphasize on-the-job learning;

Further, to encourage out-of-state applicants with nontraditional qualifications, the Board of Education would eventually need to:

- (5) Add alternative licensure to the reciprocal interstate agreement.

### ***The Joint Legislative Commission***

In addition, SAELP-VA Policy Initiative #1 proposed a Joint Legislative Commission, which was formed in early 2002 and has met periodically since then. The *Interim Report of the HJR 20/SFR 58 Commission to Review, Study, and Reform Educational Leadership* (House Document No. 14, 2003) presents Recommendations and Issue for Study (pp. 33-34). Recommendation 5 further supports the preparation of this paper, as follows:

***“Recommendation 5:*** That the Board of Education review its regulations as may be necessary to incorporate alternative licensure routes for principals and assistant principals that recognizes the various and particular skills required for the particular functions of such positions as well as potential alternative sources of training for such licensure.

- In further support of this recommendation, CEPI will examine the delivery of training programs, the roles alternative candidates might assume, and what skills might be needed for tailored administrative positions; CEPI will also coordinate with the Board and will report to the Commission in 2003.”

### ***The Work of the Task Force (Policy Initiative #4)***

In its deliberations during the Implementation Phase of SAELP-VA, the Task Force to Evaluate and Redesign Preparation Programs and Professional Development for School Leaders did not designate a specific recommendation for alternative routes to licensure. However, in a paper prepared for the Task Force, Doug Fiore (2002), also a member of the Task Force, suggested that nontraditional providers of leadership preparation could be included in the formation of a Leadership Academy.

In addition, the final Task Force report (November, 2003) included several recommendations related to alternative licensure, such as those immediately below. (The italicized statements illustrate the potential relationship to alternative licensure).

**(1) The development of a core curriculum for principal preparation programs;**

*A core curriculum could be used by an alternative licensure provider as a program design framework.*

**(2) The establishment of local and regional leadership academies to prepare and support school leaders and to provide ongoing high quality professional development, and**

*Leadership academies could provide a delivery system for alternative licensure programs.*

**(3) A feasibility study for the establishment of a two-tier licensure program focusing on initial preparation and proven student and school achievement (Fiore, pp. iii-iv).**

*A two-tier licensure program could be designed to enable prospective school leaders to gain the first rung of the licensure ladder by fulfilling the “short form” of requirements, while the second tier would require much broader professional qualifications. (See also Possible Policy Solutions on p. 7 for more on the two-tiered structure.)*

Follow-up to the Task Force recommendations is expected by the Virginia Department of Education, after action by the Legislative Commission on November 17, 2003. (For more information, see the final report, *Task Force to Evaluate and Redesign Preparation Programs and Professional Development for School Leaders*, November 2003, from the Virginia Department of Education.)

**Virginia and the National Perspective, Briefly**

In 2002, the National Center for Education Information conducted a study of school administrator certification in all 50 states and the District of Columbia (*School Administrator Certification in the United States, State-by-State 2003*, n.p.n.). Four basic questions guided the interviews, and Virginia’s answers are given here:

- Is the state experiencing a shortage of school administrators?
  - *Yes, principals.*
- Does the state require certification for principals and/or superintendents?
  - *Yes.*
- Does the state have certification waivers for school administrators?
  - *No, provisional.*
- Does the state have alternate routes to certification for principals and/or superintendents?
  - *Yes, superintendents.*

Taking into account the data from extensive interviews and an analysis of material such as entry and completion requirements, the researchers drew several conclusions, quoted directly (*School Administrator Certification in the United States, State-by-State 2003*, n.p.n.) as follows:

- There is no significant movement in any state toward bringing nontraditional candidates into principal and superintendent positions.
- State officials responsible for licensing administrators report, for the most part, that their states are “thinking about” alternative routes for certifying school administrators, due primarily to interest expressed by politicians and the success of alternative routes for teachers.
- States are not sensing a serious shortage of school administrators. Some states report spot shortages in some areas. Some states report concerns about the quality of people in school administrator positions.
- States report they have far more people getting regular administrator certificates than go in to these jobs. There is no problem with getting enough people to get credentials through these programs. Many are teachers seeking higher pay.
- Nearly all states require that administrators have prior teaching and/or related experience in K-12 schools.
- States see principals as “instructional leaders” more than as managers, thus the emphasis on prior teaching experience as a prerequisite for the job.
- Regular certification routes for principals and superintendents are, for the most part, college/university education administrations programs. These programs vary considerably from state to state in requirements for entry, program requirements, and length and exit criteria. Some require internships; others rely solely on coursework. Some require exit tests or assessments; most do not ([www.ncei.com](http://www.ncei.com)).

The Wallace Foundation recently commissioned three inquiries—by research teams from RAND, the University of Washington’s Center on Reinventing Public Education, and the State University of New York at Albany—concerning the supply of principal candidates, job incentives, and hiring practices. The resulting reports similarly challenge the perception that the nation faces a shortage of certified principal candidates. Rather, the findings suggest enacting a different balance of policies and practices designed to:

- Adjust incentives and working conditions to enable non-competitive schools and districts to attract qualified leadership candidates;
- Bring local recruitment and hiring practices into line with heightened expectations for principal performance; and
- Redefine the job itself in ways that allow principals to concentrate on student learning above all else (*Leaders Count Report*, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 1).

Currently, the U.S. Department of Education is exploring nontraditional licensure in selected program initiatives, apparently as a result of interest in support for charter schools, as reported by Andy Cole, Project Director for LEAD-Fairfax (personal communication, 11.12.03). Further, No Child Left Behind allows states to use ESEA funds to develop alternative routes to teacher certification. ([www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheStaticView=Article&ObjectIdentifier=3&TheArt...](http://www.ascd.org/cms/index.cfm?TheStaticView=Article&ObjectIdentifier=3&TheArt...)).

However, at present, certification in general remains primarily a function of state education policy.

### **Focus on Virginia: Where Do We Stand?**

In March 2002, the State Board of Education approved an alternate route to licensure for superintendents by adding a fourth option to the three previously established routes. This change came about as a result of a regulatory process of updating that began in September 2000, prior to SAELP-VA; the proposed changes were released in October 2001, with a public hearing later that month. The fourth option for acquiring a superintendent's license states:

“The individual must:

- a. Hold a master's degree, or its equivalent, from an accredited institution;
- b. Have held a senior leadership position such as Chief Executive Officer or senior military officer; and
- c. Be recommended by a school board interested in employing the individual as superintendent” (<http://leg1.state.va.us/000/reg/TOC08020.HTM>).

Thus, the Commonwealth of Virginia provides an alternate route for licensure for superintendents and for teachers (the “local license”), but has not taken a similar step to provide alternate routes for principal certification. To date, according to Thomas Elliott, Assistant Superintendent for Teacher Education and Licensure, the Virginia Department of Education has received one such request for the employment of a school division superintendent (personal communication, 11.14.03).

### **Looking at Supply and Demand**

Typically, alternate licensure routes are proposed to address perceived shortages of qualified administrators, as well as the desire to employ leaders who have demonstrated their abilities in other (business and military) organizations. Thus, an important question is whether the Commonwealth has a sufficient supply of licensed administrators to fill anticipated needs.

According to the *Report on the 2001 Virginia Principals Study* (College of William and Mary, VADOE, VASSP, and VAESP, Summer 2001), Virginia anticipates possible shortages. However, other surveys yield additional information.

In Spring 2003, CEPI commissioned a survey of graduates from Virginia higher education programs in educational administration to assess their evaluation of their professional preparation programs and their continuing professional development needs (McMillan, 2003). Two hundred eighteen recent graduates from 7 of 18 Virginia licensure programs responded, for a response rate of 53 percent (p. 8). Forty-two percent of respondents were currently employed as principals or assistant principals; and 34% were serving as teachers. Eighty-six percent of the respondents indicated that they had enrolled in licensure programs “to obtain an administrative position” (p. 9).

Further, 77% of respondents indicated they plan “to seek an administrative position, the same position in a different school, or a different position in the same or a different

school within the next 3-5 years” (pp. 2 & 10). In answering an open-ended question about conditions or incentives that would encourage the respondent to apply for such a position, 25 respondents identified the “right position,” citing factors such as “personality, philosophy, skills, right kind of challenge, being child-centered with minimum bureaucracy, and allowing for growth and development” (pp. 11-12).

In a second survey, to assess the professional development needs and job satisfactions of superintendents, assistant superintendents, and associate superintendents, “50% indicated that they will retire or be in a new position within 3-5 years, and 22% plan to retire or leave the field of education within three years” (McMillan & Fiore, 2003, p. 2).

In any case, although varied sources provide different answers to the question of supply of potential administrators, based on these surveys, the Commonwealth of Virginia appears to have a cadre of licensed candidates intent upon upward mobility, though it is not established that they are prepared to serve as superintendents, nor does this information address the issue of quality.

### **Possible Policy Solutions**

To support the work of the Joint Legislative Commission, Pam Tucker and Megan Tschannen-Moran (2002) examined current issues in school leadership and cited numerous policy solutions adopted by several states. In discussing professional preparation, Tucker and Tschannen-Moran describe *Multiple Licensure Routes* (p. 15). As possible routes, they suggest the following:

- (1) A two-tiered certification system to assist “career switchers” to move from other fields into school leadership;
- (2) The first tier would be a “fast track” abbreviated preparation program emphasizing two of the standards in the Virginia Uniform Performance Standards and yielding a license for “Associate Principals of Operations or Service Coordinators.” The two standards—Organizational Management and Professionalism—could be conveyed by alternative delivery systems such as on-line courses, alternative leadership institutes, or abbreviated full-time intensives; and
- (3) The second tier would address the needs of those who seek full licensure, allowing them to complete their training while employed in a school, taking university courses to develop competency in the remaining three standards: Planning and Assessment; Instructional Leadership; and Communications and Community Relations. This level of training could be supported by financial incentives or released time or through preparation partnerships between higher education institutions and local school divisions (p. 15).

Indeed, several states, such as Maryland and New Jersey, “are implementing a tiered licensure structure under which administrator candidates are granted a provisional license upon completion of an approved preparation program, with permanent license granted after completion of an induction or mentoring program” (pp. 1-2, *The Role of School Leadership in Improving Student Achievement*, “Licensure and Certification,” NCSL,

2002). The clinical or in-school portion of these programs ranges from one to five years, and license renewal and higher levels of certification require both professional development and performance on the job.

Further, several states are presently considering alternative routes to certify principals and administrators from backgrounds outside education. Most frequently these candidates hold master's degrees in management and public policy, with demonstrated leadership experience. Although 45 states have such alternative options for teachers, virtually all states require aspiring principals to be experienced, fully certified teachers, reflecting the expectation that the principal's role emphasizes instructional leadership (NCSL, p. 1), as also seen in the conclusions drawn by NCEI in their state-by-state certification survey.

In contrast, in 2000, the State of Florida dropped its requirement for licensing principals. The Florida legislation gives local school boards the power to appoint candidates who have no education credentials to the position of school principal (NCSL, p. 2). With regard to superintendents' positions, the NCSL report confirms that "many states allow districts to apply for a waiver of certification requirements for superintendents" who may lack conventional licensure but have skills sought by the district (NCSL, p.1).

Tucker and Tschannen-Moran caution policymakers, however, as follows: "Alternate principal licensure programs for professionals outside the field of education are being considered by a number of states as a way to address the shortage of administrators. Yet, these must be structured carefully if we want quality assurance in instruction. A recent study of alternate certification for teachers concluded that student achievement suffered when an alternately certified teacher led the class (p. 13, Tucker & Tschannen-Moran, quoting Laczko-Kerr, I., & Berliner, D.C., [2002, September 6], "The Effectiveness of 'Teach for America' and Other Under-certified Teachers on Student Academic Achievement: A Case of Harmful Public Policy," *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 10 [37]).

Further, Orozco (p. 57, *Virginia Education Law Conference Workshop Presentation Summaries*, 2003) alerted policymakers to the possibility that the removal of administrative licensure requirements represents a lowering of standards just as standards have become intense as applied to students. Such a phenomenon has occurred often in times or places when the demand for educators has exceeded the supply; for example, in isolated and/or impoverished rural school divisions or when federal aid made possible the employment of reading specialists in the 1960s.

### **Delivery of Training Programs**

Alternative providers of training programs for such licensure routes include (1) "grow-your-own" programs in school districts, (2) regional agencies, (3) for-profit and private organizations, and (4) other non-university providers (Orozco, p. 57). Such providers can look to a number of examples and resources in designing their programs. The groundwork has already been laid, should alternative paths to licensure become part of state policy and regulations in Virginia.

### ***Virginia's Own LEAD-Fairfax Model***

Virginia's efforts in leadership development have created resources for such providers, should alternative licensure for principals become available. With funding from Wallace, LEAD-Fairfax has embarked on a major "grow-your-own" effort, which builds job-embedded skills *on top of* the traditional credentials of employees who want to assume leadership positions. Since the LEAD-Fairfax program does not offer alternative licensure, it does not represent a policy-level change. Still, this program demonstrates the power of the "grow-your-own" approach and can be cited as a successful example of training programs designed and organized by a local school division. Should Virginia take the steps necessary to permit alternative licensure for principals, the LEAD-Fairfax effort would be an excellent model.

### ***The Capistrano Unified School District Model***

Another example is the "grow-your-own" model designed and implemented in San Juan Capistrano, California, for the past decade (Lovely, forthcoming). This effort relies on an extensive list of administrative duties—from *Accident Report* through *Volunteers*—developed by the Capistrano Unified School District (CUSD) (pp. 146-155). CUSD identifies "teacher leaders" who assume selected tasks on the list in a first-year internship and additional tasks in a second-year internship, with stipends, until they have experienced sufficient experience to be well prepared for assuming leadership positions. As with LEAD-Fairfax, this program provides on-the-job training but does not provide alternative licensure. Still, the Capistrano effort provides an excellent model that could be incorporated into an alternate route to licensure.

### ***Team Leadership: Participation in Decision-Making***

Related to the concept of "grow-your-own" programs is that of "team leadership," "distributed leadership," or "collaborative leadership." Whatever term we use, *team leadership* counters top-down decision-making and ensures input from all stakeholders, thus establishing an appropriate give-and-take professional climate for teachers and staff members, as well as for administrators.

In 2003, pursuant to SAELP-VA Policy Initiative #5, CEPI commissioned a study in Fairfax, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, and Roanoke City Public Schools—the SAELP demonstration sites—to determine the extent of implementation of team leadership (Mutter, p. 6-8). All five SAELP-VA demonstration sites reported extensive reliance on team leadership concepts, including planning together for professional development activities, persistent attention to student achievement, and mutual efforts to create the culture of professional learning communities.

The major thrust of these five efforts appears to be to ensure participatory decision-making. Each of the leadership development projects is emphasizing team concepts, input into program direction and content, and a spirit of working together to improve student achievement. Other, unanticipated outcomes include the following:

- (1) Increasing collaborative spirit in these school divisions;

- (2) Early identification of administrative talent, with resulting promotions to administrative positions, thus addressing the issue of retiring administrators; and
- (3) A shift in the role of central office administrators from directive to supportive, with a sidelight of serving as talent scouts for identifying potential administrators (called the “tapping” phenomenon) (Mutter, pp. 8-9).

Participation in decision-making, collaborative effort, and team spirit can help to create the climate for “grow-your-own” efforts, since these avenues strengthen familiarity with issues and opportunities, pitfalls and signs of progress, and the sense of efficacy needed for leadership to flourish. Therefore, Virginia has several important examples of some of the prerequisites necessary for alternative licensure. Undoubtedly, other school divisions not included in SAELP-VA also possess these qualities, even though we may not have details on their efforts to include in this paper.

### **Roles for Alternative Candidates**

Traditional licensure paths—with their requirements for demonstrated competencies in student growth and development, learning and motivational theories, curriculum design, principles of effective instruction, etc., as well as teaching experience—remain vitally necessary, in view of the current emphasis on instructional leadership occasioned by the standards and accountability movements and strengthened in No Child Left Behind. However, staff members with alternative licensure could fulfill a variety of roles in schools, while preserving the role of instructional leadership for those with classroom experience and professional credentials.

Potential roles for those who pursue alternate routes to licensure include the following:

- ***School business managers*** to supervise budget management, custodial services, transportation, school stores, fund-raising efforts, maintenance of facilities and grounds, student fee collection, textbook inventories, and the like.
- ***Student activities directors*** to organize and supervise athletics programs, before-and-after-school care, after-school clubs and study halls and library access, tutoring programs, pep clubs, and the like.
- ***Instructional resource teachers*** to serve more than one school in providing consultation and training for teachers, with the positions paid on the teacher’s salary schedule, rather than the administrator’s salary schedule.
- ***“Deans of discipline***, which cost far less than an assistant principal, to handle time-consuming discipline and other operational issues” (Lovely, p. 41).

### **Skills Needed for Such Positions**

For each of the roles shown above, specific job descriptions would be necessary. In turn, such job descriptions would indicate the skills needed, as illustrated in the following samples:

- ***School business managers***: Financial management skills; familiarity with state requirements and local school board policies and practices regarding budget management; human relations skills; knowledge of facilities and grounds

- management; knowledge of custodial services; inventory management skills; general business practices, such as bids, contracts, ordering, procurement; etc.
- ***Student activities directors***: Familiarity with policies and regulations pertinent to on-campus and off-campus activities; knowledge of child/youth growth and development; familiarity with curriculum and instruction; skill in organization and maintenance of schedules, facilities, equipment, and supplies; human relations skills; etc.
  - ***Instructional resource teachers***: Expertise in curriculum development and alignment, data analysis and interpretation, tests and measurements, instructional design, differentiated instruction, cultural competence, selection of instructional media and materials, student grouping strategies, instructional strategies; human relations skills; etc.
  - ***“Deans of discipline”***: Familiarity with school board policies and practices in human resources and student discipline; security training; human relations skills; knowledge of child/youth growth and development; knowledge of community and church-related resources and interagency cooperation; skills in working with media representatives; etc.

### **Conclusion**

The various policy initiatives of SAELP-VA indicate considerable willingness among policymakers and educators to examine and consider alternate routes to licensure. However, throughout the summit meetings, the Task Force deliberations, and the efforts of the Joint Legislative Commission, no groundswell of specific proposals has occurred to date. Thus, we must conclude that any powerful movement to support expansion of pathways to alternative licensure has not yet surfaced in Virginia. In the event such a movement develops, Virginia has its own excellent example of a “grow-your-own” program in the efforts designed by LEAD-Fairfax. Virginia also has examples of visionary leadership development in the other SAELP-VA demonstration sites: Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, and Roanoke City, where conditions for alternate paths might be supportive of non-traditional licensure.

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