

Projected Need for Principals Varies Widely Across California

Effective school-site administrators play a key role in student achievement. Over the next decade, as baby boomer principals and assistant principals retire and student enrollment increases, California will be challenged to recruit a sufficient number of well-qualified administrators to lead its schools.

While there is no shortage nationally of candidates earning administrative credentials, it can be difficult to attract highly qualified administrators to the schools that most need them — for example, those with high concentrations of students living in poverty or English language learner students, or those located in rural areas. Schools designated as in need of improvement also benefit from strong leadership, and in 2008/2009 more than a quarter of California schools fell into this category as a result of repeatedly failing to meet student achievement goals set by the No Child Left Behind Act.

To provide state education leaders and policymakers with labor market data to address this important issue — on which there have been few comprehensive studies — WestEd prepared two reports. The first, *School-Site Administrators: A California County and Regional Perspective on Labor Market Trends*, was published by the Institute of Education Sciences, U. S. Department of Education in 2010.

Analyses were performed on five-year historic data on administrative retirements from the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS) and the California Department of Education Professional Assignment Information Form (PAIF); and both historic and projected student enrollment data from the California Department of Finance 2008 Enrollment Series. Projected increase in demand for school administrators between 2008 and 2018 was calculated by region and county.

After reviewing the first report, state education agencies, including the Association of California School Administrators and the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, requested that REL West break the projected demand for school administrators into four two-year increments so that data could be used to plan for new administrator training and support in coming years. In response, REL West extended data analysis of the previous report to prepare a technical brief, *Projecting the Need for California School Administrators Over 2010/11–2017/18: The Effects of Projected Retirement and Projected Changes in Student Enrollment Over Two-Year Increments*, published in March of 2011.

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Findings

Statewide, based on combined projections of administrator retirement and changes in student enrollment, increased demand for administrators in California for each two-year period, relative to the 2007/2008 baseline, is expected to grow from 6.3 percent in 2010/2011 – 2011/2012 to 7.5 percent in 2016/2017 – 2017/2018. The Bay Area region, including the San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose metropolitan areas, is the only region where demand will decline over the eight years, from 7.2 percent to 6.4 percent.

Among the 11 California regions defined for the studies, increased demand for principals and assistant principals over the next eight years varies between 17.4 percent and 42.3 percent, compared to 2007/2008 workforce levels.

The South Coast region, which includes the Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan areas, was projected to have the smallest increase in demand for new school administrators over the eight years, at 17.4 percent. Based on retirement rates alone, the region could have expected a 19 percent increase in administrator demand. However, a projected decline in student enrollment of more than 5 percent reduces that estimate.

Conversely, the Inland Empire region (San Bernardino and Riverside Counties), which borders the South Coast region on the east, is projected to have the highest percentage increase in school administrator demand over the eight years, at just over 42 percent. While the region was projected to have the lowest increase in administrator needs based solely on retirements (19 percent), anticipated growth in student enrollment of 23.3 percent – by far the highest in the state – drove the higher projected increase in demand.

For more details, download free copies of the reports:

School-Site Administrators: A California County and Regional Perspective on Labor Market Trends at http://relwest.wested.org/research_reports/34

Projecting the Need for California School Administrators Over 2010/11–2017/18: The Effects of Projected Retirement and Projected Changes in Student Enrollment Over Two-Year Increments at http://relwest.wested.org/research_reports/23