Reading Preparation of Principals: A Review of U.S. Initial Principal Licensure Requirements

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Abstract

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Leadership is second only to classroom instruction in its impact on student achievement, but the fact that more than half of U.S. fourth and eighth graders are reading below proficient levels underscores the urgency of identifying the essential qualities of such leadership. Among these qualities is the principal's knowledge of reading, which has a documented relationship to reading achievement. Accordingly, professional organizations are citing the need for principals with deep reading knowledge to effectively lead the significant school-wide literacy initiatives demanded by the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in nearly all states. This study describes the current status of reading knowledge requirements for initial educational administration licensure in 51 state education agencies (SEAs): 50 states and the District of Columbia. Using deductive content analysis, current published educational rules and regulations along with mandated assessment materials were analyzed for reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure in 51 SEAs. Of these, only four required varying degrees of reading knowledge for initial licensure for administrators: Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Missouri. None of the required examinations utilized in any of the 51 SEAs for initial principal licensure assessed reading knowledge. Implications of the disparity between the importance of a principal's reading knowledge and the widespread failure to require it for licensure are discussed.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is written in memory of my brother, James Preston Lovette, IV, who faced every challenge in life with a quiet determination and a wicked sense of humor, and whose insatiable thirst for knowledge inspires me every day. I miss you, J. P.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership. (Leithwood, Day, Sammon, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006, p. 5)

Research has shown that a principal's knowledge of reading has been linked both directly (Kean, Summers, Raivetz, & Farber, 1979) and indirectly (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Hickman, 1996) to student achievement in reading. Moreover, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) concluded that leadership is "second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (p. 5) and that the schools that have the most need are the ones in which leadership effects are the largest. An estimated 90,000 principals[1] worked with 3 million teachers and 55 million students in K-12 public schools during the 2011-2012 school year (Clifford & Ross, 2012; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013a) and yet more than half of all fourth- and eighth-grade students in U.S. schools continue to read below proficient levels (NCES, 2013b). Given the link between achievement and principals' knowledge of reading, finding ways to enhance their level of expertise may be key to bringing about substantive changes in reading achievement.

[1] These statistics do not include assistant principals; therefore, the number of certified administrators currently leading schools within the United States is likely to be substantially larger than this number reflects.

The lagging reading achievement of U.S. students is not a new phenomenon by any means (International Reading Association [IRA], 1999); however, the past two decades especially have seen the implementation of a number of initiatives at the federal and state levels that have required administrators to lead instructional reforms targeted at improving the reading skills of all students. Most recently, the near-universal adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) requires that students in all grades comprehend texts at increasing levels of complexity and that teachers across content areas be responsible for integrating informational texts into their instruction (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2012). Currently, many schools are vastly unprepared for the comprehensive school-wide literacy initiative needed to effectively implement CCSS (National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP], 2013a; National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 2013a). Clearly, the reading knowledge of the principal is essential to the implementation process. To put it more simply, "standards alone will not improve schools and raise student achievement, nor will they narrow the achievement gap. It will take implementation of the standards with fidelity by school leaders and teachers to significantly raise student achievement" (NASSP, 2013a, p. 2). Consequently, we need to know more about the reading knowledge that principals are required to possess in order to obtain licensure and act as a building leader

Statement of the Problem

Although principals are held more accountable for student achievement than ever before, the vast majority of their preparation remains focused on the managerial responsibilities inherent to the position with much less time spent acquiring the content knowledge they will need to evaluate, develop, and model effective instruction – in other words, to act as effective instructional leaders (Levine, 2005). To be sure, it is extremely important that educational administrators are fluent in theories of organizational management and educational law. Yet, on a daily basis, administrators face decisions by virtue of their roles as instructional leaders that can significantly influence the quality of the instructional program delivered in their schools. Such decisions include analyzing student data, choosing curricular materials, and conducting informal classroom walkthroughs, to name only a few (NAESP, 2013). In fact, almost all public school principals report having major input in evaluating current teachers (94%), hiring new ones (85%), and determining the content of the professional development provided within in the school (72%) (NCES, 2013a). In light of the mandates inherent to the implementation of the CCSS, the consequences of these actions have risen to unprecedented levels (NAESP, 2013; NASSP, 2013a). Indeed, they spotlight as never before the principal's role as instructional leader.

As a group, however, principals are less than enthusiastic about their ability to fulfill the expectations of such a role. Despite the widespread attention that the rollout of the CCSS has attracted from researchers, policymakers, and popular media, a survey conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2013)

revealed that principals overwhelmingly felt that they had inadequate resources and insufficient preparation to effectively lead the type of extensive curricular reforms mandated by the standards. Moreover, in a joint action brief, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and NAESP recently asserted that the implementation of the CCSS in English Language Arts (ELA), with its focus on cross-content literacy skills, is "perhaps the most significant change faced by middle and high schools," with few schools prepared for this undertaking as middle and high schools "currently lack the capacity to integrate literacy instruction in the content areas" (NASSP, 2013a, p. 10). Nevertheless, policymakers have not adequately studied the role of the principal in leading these massive instructional changes (NAESP, 2013a).

In contrast, researchers often place school leadership among the most essential components of an effective school-wide literacy program (e.g., McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Murphy, 2004). Biancarosa and Snow (2006) stress the importance of a principal who utilizes "his or her own personal knowledge of how young people learn and struggle with reading and writing and how they differ in their needs" (p. 21). Reading is, arguably, the most crucial skill that students acquire in school. In consequence, ensuring that all students receive effective, appropriate reading instruction is an important instructional responsibility of a principal. It follows, then, that in order to be effective, a principal's knowledge of reading must surpass a certain threshold. However, given the diverse backgrounds of preservice principals (Levine, 2005) and the absence of reading requirements for licensure (Roach, Smith, & Boutin, 2011), this threshold may very often

not be reached. The vast majority of SEAs require *some* teaching experience for licensure as an administrator; however, the type and quality of that experience can vary significantly (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2007; Roach et al., 2011). A key policy question is therefore the extent to which principals are required to demonstrate reading knowledge in order to obtain licensure as an administrator.

The answer to this question is unclear if we base it on changes in the standards required for licensure. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards (CCSSO, 2008) were developed in 1996 in response to calls for substantive reform in the preparation and licensure of school leaders. The vast majority of SEAs have adopted the ISLLC Standards for administrator licensure in their entirety or have aligned their own standards with those of the ISLLC (CCSSO, 2007; Jacobson & Cypres, 2012; Roach et al., 2011). The 2008 revision of the ISLLC Standards brought about changes that focused needed attention on role of the principal as an instructional leader (CCSSO, 2008). However, there is no mention of the reading knowledge necessary for principals, at any level, to effectively act in the capacity of an instructional leader in the area of reading. The silence of the ISLLC Standards on this issue is at odds with the longstanding concerns about the sheer volume of students who are struggling to master basic reading skills, the evidence showing the relationship between the principal's knowledge of reading and student reading achievement, and the school-wide literacy initiatives demanded by the CCSS.

There appears to be general agreement between researchers, on the one hand, and professional organizations, on the other, that requiring a principal to be an instructional leader is critically important. Instantiating such leadership in the area of reading, however, requires that a principal possess the requisite knowledge to guide teachers. The difficulty lies in the enactment of such a requirement at the SEA level in ways that are clear and specific to reading.

One possible barrier to such specificity is the tendency of SEAs to emulate one another in the matter of requirements. For example, in a 2010 study, Roach, Smith, and Boutin (2011) surveyed each of the 51 SEAs' requirements for initial administrative licensure through the lens of institutional isomorphism – that is, whether the SEAs influenced each other's regulations, and specifically, the widespread adoption of the ISLLC Standards – in order to create a sense of expediency, "legitimacy, certainty, and professionalization rather than developing policy based on metrics of efficiency or effectiveness" (p. 71). In the course of their review, Roach et al. noted that only two SEAs modified the ISLLC Standards to include a requirement that principals demonstrate knowledge of literacy processes and instruction, a surprisingly small number considering the near-universal adoption of the CCSS. The purpose of this study was to update and expand upon Roach et al.'s work with a specific focus on the extent to which principals must demonstrate reading knowledge to obtain initial educational administration licensure.

Conceptual Framework

Foregrounding the present study is the underlying assumption that principals function as instructional leaders. Unfortunately, the term *instructional leadership* has been used in such a variety of ways that it has lost its focus, along with any real consensus concerning what it denotes (Leithwood et al., 2004; Levine, 2005). Perhaps the best-known conceptualization is that of Hallinger and Murphy (1987). Their three-dimensional model includes defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school-learning climate. The second dimension of this model, managing the instructional program, serves as the framework for this study. Included within this dimension are three functions of the effective instructional leader: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. In order for a principal to effectively perform these functions with regard to literacy, she must possess a deep knowledge of reading.

Consistent with this claim, Stein and Nelson's (2003) *leadership content knowledge* construct provides the theoretical platform on which to build the argument that comprehensive reading knowledge is an essential requirement for those acting as school leaders. Leadership content knowledge is conceptualized as nested learning communities wherein the subject matter serves as the foundation for the model (shown on p. 28). Each successive tier of the model represents the interactions between the individuals within each of the respective learning communities as they interact with the subject matter: teachers and students, principals and teachers, district leaders and adult professionals. Principals must act as constant intermediaries between the subject matter

and these learning communities, with the principal's deep knowledge of the content guiding the collaborations. In order to accomplish this task effectively, principals must also possess a thorough understanding of how each group learns the content. In other words, the principal must also possess knowledge of how students learn and also how teachers learn, two decidedly different concepts (MacKeracher, 2004; Stein & Nelson, 2003). In terms of reading, Stein and Nelson (2003) found that, unlike the unidimensional knowledge base required for mathematics, literacy knowledge is multidimensional and spread across several different content areas. This complexity furthers the argument that preservice principals must possess a deep, thorough understanding of reading – how it is learned and how it is taught – before assuming the role of instructional leader. As Stein and Nelson conclude,

> administrators need substantial experiences of some depth in every subject, in which they experience what it is like to be a learner of that subject, in which they study what is known about how children learn that subject and become familiar with the best instructional methods for that particular subject. (p. 443)

Rationale and Purpose

The documented relationship between achievement and principal expertise would, in itself, justify an examination of licensure requirements to determine if such expertise is required. Currently, however, there is an additional reason, one that lends greater urgency to such a study. This is the implementation of the CCSS, through which the vast majority of U.S. public school students at all levels are, for the first time ever, being instructed and assessed on a set of universal standards in ELA. Yet, the very teachers tasked with

delivering the type of developmental reading instruction needed to ensure that all students meet the new benchmarks may or may not have received any preparation in reading, depending on the SEA that granted their initial licensure (Levine, 2006; Lovette, 2013; National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ], 2012). This is especially true at the secondary level, where the vast majority of SEAs do not require reading development knowledge of ELA teachers for licensure (Lovette, 2013). Moreover, most secondary content area teachers have received minimal, if any, preparation in reading, with some, but not all, SEAs mandating a course in content area reading comprehension strategies for licensure (Dillon, O'Brien, Sato, & Kelly, 2011). Such a policy may leave them underprepared both to integrate literacy throughout their content instruction and to concurrently meet the needs of the struggling readers in their classrooms (NASSP, 2013a). For a time, literacy coaches were able to work toward bridging this knowledge gap by serving as in-house reading experts and a valuable resource to principals and by working with teachers to implement effective literacy instruction (McKenna & Walpole, 2008); however, budget cuts and the removal of funding sources have eliminated coaching positions in many schools (Cassidy, 2013). Therefore, the vast majority of building administrators in the U.S., no matter how experienced, are facing new challenges in terms of leading the literacy instruction reforms necessary for the CCSS (NASSP, 2013a), and many lack requisite the content knowledge those challenges require.

It is unrealistic – and, I argue, unreasonable – to expect that principals without a deep knowledge of reading act as literacy leaders, spearheading the implementation of

initiatives such as the CCSS that require them to build teachers' capacity in reading instruction while also addressing their "common misconceptions about literacy instruction" (NASSP, 2013a, p. 10). And yet, by virtue of the position, administrators are routinely faced with situations in which they must act as instructional leaders and rely on their leadership content knowledge (Stein & Nelson, 2003) in reading, however minimal it may be, to impact the instruction delivered in classrooms. The resources needed to enhance the expertise of principals to the point at which they can provide effective guidance to their schools have been slow to materialize (Cheney & Davis, 2011). In recent years, SEAs have allocated significant resources to improving students' reading achievement (CCSSO, 2007), but they have given minimal attention to the reading preparation of the cadre of school leaders tasked with implementing these reforms (Roach et al., 2011).

To that end, the purpose of this study was to describe the current status of reading knowledge requirements for initial educational administration licensure in 51 SEAs (50 states and the District of Columbia). Specifically, I endeavored to answer the following research questions:

1) What, if any, reading knowledge is explicitly required for initial licensure as an educational administrator?

2) What, if any, reading knowledge is assessed for initial licensure as an educational administrator?

Significance of the Study

Both indirect and direct relationships have been demonstrated between the principal's knowledge of reading and students' reading achievement (Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Kean et al., 1979). When we consider these connections together with the challenges of the increased literacy expectations inherent to the CCSS; the well-established ongoing concern among educators, researchers, and policymakers over the sheer volume of students struggling to meet reading benchmarks; and the influence the principal has as an instructional leader, an investigation of the reading knowledge required of administrators is well warranted. Given the NAESP's (2013b) stance that current principals feel unprepared to lead the extensive curricular changes necessary to fully realize the CCSS, the results of this study can serve to inform stakeholders within SEAs of the need to explicitly require that principals demonstrate reading knowledge for initial administrative licensure.

Key Terms

It is important to provide clarity as to the meanings of terms used throughout this dissertation. Unless otherwise noted, the accompanying definitions are to be applied to the following terms:

Administrators, principals, educational administrators, and school leaders: Individuals who are acting in a leadership capacity in a public school, including assistant principals, and who hold educational administrator licensure from an SEA. These terms do *not* include instructional coaches or literacy coaches. Additionally, when appropriate, I have

alternated gender pronouns when referencing a single individual in order to represent the fact that both men and women serve in this capacity.

Licensure and *certification*: SEA licensing of an individual as an educational administrator. In some of the SEAs, *licensure* refers to the initial license that is granted to an individual. For example, a teaching license may first be issued, with subsequent endorsements or certificates added as requirements are completed. Other SEAs refer to all credentialing as *certification*. The educational administration research uses both terms interchangeably, a policy I have followed in this dissertation.

Reading knowledge: I have used the term broadly to represent four areas: reading development, instruction, assessment, and remediation. These areas are closely connected with the major components of a school-wide reading program (Walpole & McKenna, 2012) and are therefore representative of the knowledge that might inform a principal's leadership.

Literacy: I use the terms *reading* and *literacy* interchangeably throughout this dissertation to avoid redundancy. I fully acknowledge, however, that the term *literacy*, for most educators and researchers, represents more than just the ability to read, that it also encompasses writing and oral language, and that these skills do not develop independently of each other.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The national conversation has shifted from "whether" leadership really matters or is worth the investment, to "how" — how to train, place and support high-quality leadership where it's needed the most: in the schools and districts where failure remains at epidemic levels. (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007, p. 5)

Among all school influences, leadership is second only to instruction in its impact on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). Consequently, one might reasonably expect there to be a substantial body of inquiry into how building administrators are prepared as instructional leaders. This is not the case, however. The history of research regarding the preparation of school principals can be described as limited at best (Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006). With the educational accountability movement gaining significant momentum over the past two decades, the paucity of research directed at the preparation of the very individuals who are charged with leading instruction may occasion some concern (Levine, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006). With limited inquiry to guide them, developers of administrator preparation programs are perhaps poorly positioned to equip the principals they license with the skill set needed to face the twin challenges of improving reading achievement and implementing school-wide reforms such as the CCSS. However, given that a good working knowledge of reading is instrumental in meeting these challenges, it is appropriate to ask whether principals are required to possess such knowledge as a condition of licensure.

First, however, it is important to be clear about the positive link between principals' knowledge of reading and students' reading achievement. This connection has been widely cited – in fact, it has been characterized as "axiomatic" (McKenna & Walpole, 2008, p. 35) – but closer inspection of the literature reveals that few studies have empirically demonstrated this relationship. These studies date back several decades, to a different era in terms of current educational reforms, and the findings may or may not generalize to the present day. Nevertheless, despite the lack of robust empirical findings, there is cause to believe that this relationship does in fact exist in very significant ways. The broader literature base surrounding the skills necessary for effective instructional leadership includes a deep knowledge of subject matter and instruction (Burch & Spillane, 2003; Hallinger, 2005; Murphy, 2004; Stein & Nelson, 2003). What follows is a review of the literature regarding reading knowledge and the principalship.

Reading Knowledge and the Principal

As previously stated, a search of the published literature in the areas of reading and educational leadership identified few empirical studies investigating principals' knowledge of reading. The studies discussed hereafter examined the effects of the principal as only one of the variables within a larger study, but only those findings associated with a principal's reading knowledge will be examined in this literature review.

Kean et al. (1979)

In 1979, Kean, Summers, Raivetz, and Farber published a widely cited study linking the reading knowledge of a principal to student reading achievement. The

subjects of the study were 1,828 fourth-grade students in 25 public schools located in Philadelphia. The authors gathered data about the students, principals, reading teachers, classroom teachers, and reading aides. Reading achievement was measured using the Level II Total Reading Achievement Development Scale Score on the *California Achievement Test*. The authors controlled for variables related to the demographics of the student population including socioeconomic factors. They also gathered historical data concerning each student's instructional history (e.g., whether the child had attended kindergarten and whether the materials used in the primary grades embodied an explicit approach to decoding instruction). Principal and teacher data were collected through personnel records, questionnaires, and interviews. The interview questions were piloted and revised before they were administered in this study.

Over 500 multiple regression equations were computed to determine the unique influence of teacher, student, and principal factors on reading achievement. The authors found only two significant relationships between principal variables and reading achievement: 1) principals with backgrounds as reading specialists had fourth-grade students who achieved more reading growth and 2) the more the principal observed in fourth-grade reading classrooms, the higher the reading achievement of those students. The researchers suggested that these two findings demonstrated that principals with extensive reading knowledge were likely to be active instructional leaders in the area of reading, with the principal, the reading specialists, and classroom teachers "speaking the same language" (p. 31) about reading and thus benefitting their students. A third

implication also seems likely: A principal conversant with the research underlying effective reading instruction is better positioned to gauge a school's status and guide it in the direction of enhanced achievement. In other words, when principals have a clear idea of the features that characterize an effective program, they can take the steps needed to help their schools acquire those features. The authors concluded that "involvement of elementary principals in reading has a payoff in reading achievement growth" (p. 31).

The study also failed to support several potential principal factors previously thought to have an effect on student achievement. These included the amount of administrative experience a principal had, whether or not the principal had an elementary teaching certificate, the length of teaching experience, and the number of years that the principal had been working at the school. None of these were significantly associated with reading achievement. Nor were a number of less likely factors, such as the gender and race of the principal. These were included in the spirit of casting a wide net in search of significance – a common practice in the process-product investigations of that era (see Brophy, 1986).

Miller et al. (1986)

Miller, Ellsworth, and Howell (1986) compared 12 elementary schools with higher-than-expected reading achievement (based on students' socioeconomic status [SES], as measured by family income level) with 12 schools performing below expectation. All 24 schools were in a single large school district in Kansas. The Comprehension Subtest of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills measured student achievement.

The researchers examined 67 independent variables representing teacher, principal, and student-related factors. Noting that the research regarding the relationship between principals' reading knowledge and students' reading had not been "carefully documented" (p. 33) in previous research, the authors administered the Artley-Hardin Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading (Artley & Hardin, 1975) to school principals in order to assess their knowledge of reading. Additionally, they created an instrument that they believed reflected the principals' attitudes toward the way reading was taught in their schools.

On the surface, some of the results concerning the principal-related factors appeared to contradict the results of Kean et al. (1979); however, deeper inspection of the measurement tools reveals that the results may, in fact, support previous research. Although Miller et al. (1986) found no significant mean difference in the reading knowledge of principals in the overperforming and underperforming schools, as measured by the inventory, it is important to note that the validity of the particular edition of the Artley-Hardin Inventory of Teacher Knowledge of Reading used in the study was contested (Kingston, Brosier, & Hsu, 1975).

Moreover, Miller et al.'s (1986) attitude survey was not validated before it was administered in this study, a customary practice in research today, so the results may not be representative of the principals' true attitude toward reading instruction. However, it can be argued that significant differences on several of the items in the attitude survey actually reflected the principals' knowledge of reading. For example, the principals of

schools with higher-than-expected reading achievement demonstrated knowledge of effective reading instruction by disagreeing with statements such as "too much time is spent in the primary grades on reading instruction at the expense of other curriculum areas" and "the effectiveness of a reading program can be determined by scores on reading tests" (p. 43). Further, the principals of schools with lower-than-expected achievement were more strongly in agreement with the statement, "If a child consistently does not respond to phonics instruction, he should be taught to read by sight." Advocating a sight-word approach is contrary to research on effective reading instruction, including research that was both available and widely disseminated at the time of the study (e.g., Chall, 1967). Such a position, even though described as an "attitude" by the authors, demonstrated the lack of knowledge regarding effective reading instruction on the part of principals in the lower-than-expected schools.

Braughton and Riley (1991)

Braughton and Riley (1991) asserted that much of the discussion until that time concerning the positive relationship between principals' knowledge of reading and students' reading achievement had overstated the connection. However, with very few exceptions, the research that the authors used for their study's framework came from unpublished dissertations, an issue that Murphy and Vriesenga (2006) cite as a major weakness of the educational administration research literature. Further, they did not cite or refer to the Kean et al. (1979) study.

In their study, Braughton and Riley used data from 20 principals and 68 teachers from 20 elementary schools in one small, Western city to investigate the possible relationships between fourth-grade student reading achievement and both the principals' knowledge of reading and the principals' involvement in the school reading program. The authors also studied the correlation between teachers' knowledge of reading and students' reading achievement.

Citing the validity concerns for the reading knowledge instrument used by Miller et al. (1986), Braughton and Riley (1991) developed the Educators' Understanding of Reading (EUR) inventory and piloted the instrument prior to administration in this study. The authors asserted that the first 20 items on the EUR, which they administered to both teachers and principals, measured knowledge of reading skills, process, programs, and assessment. The principals were then administered an additional 20 items to measure their level of involvement in the school reading program in the areas of instruction, material selection, program development, and program evaluation. Student achievement in reading was measured by the Total Reading raw scores on the 1987 Stanford Achievement Test.

Braughton and Riley (1991) did not find significant correlations between student reading achievement and principals' reading knowledge (in any of the subareas). The authors did report a significant correlation between grade-four reading achievement and principal involvement in program evaluation. Because the EUR instrument was not included in the report, it is not possible to further investigate what is meant by "program

evaluation" and whether the corresponding items may have actually reflected some reading knowledge on the part of the principals. Additionally, the authors noted that a closer study of the raw data indicated that the schools that scored well below the mean in teacher knowledge of reading were led by principals who scored highly on the involvement subtest. This particular finding led the authors to posit that perhaps the principals who led less knowledgeable teachers were compelled to become more involved with the reading program, thus demonstrating some knowledge of reading on the part of the principals.

A critical component absent from the Braughton and Riley (1991) study was any mention of the demographics of the school populations that were studied. Whereas Kean et al. (1979) controlled for certain variables that were shown to affect student achievement, Braughton and Riley provided no information about the students except that they excluded those who received more than half of their daily instruction in special education settings. Additionally, similar to the instrumentation issues discussed previously with Miller et al.'s (1986) study, the tool that Braughton and Riley developed to measure the principals' knowledge of reading had not been thoroughly validated and its psychometric properties are consequently unknown.

Notably, Hallinger and Heck (1996) reanalyzed the data from this study by redesigning the original conceptual model utilized by Braughton and Riley (1991) so that the construct of principal leadership included knowledge, supervisory behavior, and attitudes. They then reconsidered some of the teacher effects as mediating variables, took

the data analysis a step further than Braughton and Riley, and found that principals were able to impact student reading achievement by influencing teacher practices. Hallinger and Heck concluded that "active involvement of the principal in supervising the work of teachers has a substantial positive indirect effect on students' reading outcomes" (p. 764). It seems unlikely that just any sort of "involvement" would lead to greater achievement – only involvement guided by knowledge of effective reading instruction.

Hallinger et al. (1996)

In a separate study, Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) proposed that the effects that principals had on student reading achievement needed to be conceptualized indirectly – in other words, by taking into account antecedent variables such as student SES. The effectiveness of a principal, they argued, must be viewed through the context of the school. The authors sampled 87 elementary schools in Tennessee and collected data about several antecedent variables along with responses to self-report questionnaires administered both to teachers and principals, and student achievement data in the form of a state-designed, criterion-referenced reading test. The questionnaire was designed by the authors to include three broad domains: instructional leadership, instructional climate, and instructional organization (Hallinger et al., 1996).

Hallinger and colleagues began with a simple bivariate analysis that revealed no significant relationships between any of the three domains of principal leadership and student reading achievement. However, when they used a recursive model to include some of the antecedent variables in the analysis, they found that a significant relationship

existed between instructional climate (which included setting a clear school mission based on instruction) and student achievement. Additionally, the authors found that student SES was significantly related to instructional leadership. This finding led Hallinger et al. to conclude that the school context played an important role in instructional leadership behaviors, with principals in higher-SES schools exhibiting more active instructional leadership (as measured by the questionnaires) than those in lower-SES schools. Although this particular study did not consider principals' actual knowledge of reading, the findings suggest that "principals who are perceived by teachers as strong instructional leaders promote student achievement through their influence on features of the school-wide learning climate" (Hallinger et al., 1996, p. 543).

Concluding Thoughts

As Sherman and Crum (2007) have surmised, "principals of successful schools in general will hold firm beliefs about, and core knowledge of, the teaching of reading – both of which serve as trickle down effects toward increased student achievement" (p. 396). Indeed, as the previous studies have demonstrated, both directly or indirectly, the more knowledgeable a principal is about reading instruction, whether measured through knowledge, attitudes, or both, the better the students achieve in reading. Despite the lack of recent, robust research that continues to confirm these findings, the relationship makes sense conceptually (Sherman & Crum, 2007). Many principal behaviors, especially those that are supervisory, are indicative of content knowledge (Au, Strode, Vasquez, & Raphael, 2014; Burch & Spillane, 2003; McKenna & Walpole, 2008; Murphy, 2004;

Stein & Nelson, 2003). Hallinger and Heck (1996) concluded that ultimately the study of principal leadership is "complex and not easily subject to empirical verification" (p. 5). The paucity of research directly connecting the principal's reading knowledge to student achievement may reflect, at least in part, the difficulty in isolating the principal as an independent variable. More likely, "student achievement is tied to scores of contextual and social factors" and "unraveling the effects of principals and instructional leadership practice is a complicated, if not impossible, business" (Sherman & Crum, 2007, p. 395). For these reasons, it is prudent to examine research into the constructs that underlie a principal's influence on reading achievement.

Research into Component Constructs

Without a doubt, the job of a school administrator is a complex and demanding one with an expectation that principals juggle the management of the operational functions of a school while simultaneously leading the drive for effective instruction and answering to numerous stakeholders (CCSSO, 2008; Ferrandino, 2001; Harold K. L. Castle Foundation, 2010). Effective instructional leadership has long been considered one of the most critical factors to increasing student achievement (Blase & Blase, 1999; Brazer & Bauer, 2013; CCSSO, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Neumerski, 2012), yet this complex role is not well understood (Leithwood et al., 2004) and it is one for which principals are the least prepared (Cheney & Davis, 2011; Crum, Sherman, & Myran, 2009; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Levine, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006; Walpole & McKenna, 2012). Leithwood et al. (2004)

cautioned against leadership by "adjective" (p. 6), with principals being charged with a vague notion of keeping teaching and learning at the center of all decision-making but having little knowledge of how to effectively serve as an instructional leader. For this reason, it is important to clarify the constructs that underlie the principal's role by summarizing inquiry into their nature.

Instructional Leadership

Hallinger (2005) identified the most salient, well-developed definition of *instructional leadership*, and the one most used in empirical studies (Leithwood et al., 2004), as Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) three-dimensional conceptualization of the role of principal as instructional leader: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate. Though all three dimensions are equally important, I will focus the remainder of this literature review primarily on Hallinger and Murphy's second dimension, managing the instructional program.

Within the dimension of managing the instructional program, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) further delineated three leadership functions of the effective instructional leader: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress. Hallinger (2005) noted that these functions require the principal to become "hip deep" (p. 226) in the curriculum and to possess expertise about both the content and effective instruction of that content. These functions are especially important with regard to implementing and sustaining effective reading instruction

leadership (Murphy, 2004; NASSP, 2005). This conceptualization of instructional leadership serves as the foundation for this study.

Instructional Leadership in Reading. Lickteig, Parnell, and Ellis (1995) examined the reasons that teachers nominated administrators for a variety of literacy awards. Analyzing the results of award nominations for common themes, Lickteig et al. found that characteristics of the ideal principal in terms of literacy instruction included according literacy a top priority in the school. Doing so was reflected in acquiring materials, providing professional development opportunities, rendering moral support to teachers, and maintaining a high level of involvement with both the teachers and the students during literacy instruction. Similarly, as Au, Strode, Vasquez, and Raphael (2014) guided 150 schools through the process of building each schools' curriculum, instruction and assessment models, they found that the principals who were effective instructional leaders in literacy made reading improvement a central priority of the school, participated extensively in professional development, and protected scheduled time for both reading instruction and teacher collaboration about reading.

Moreover, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) reported that several teachers commented on the fact that one principal demonstrated her monitoring of student progress by knowing offhand the reading levels of every student in her very large elementary school. Similarly, Blase and Blase (1999) surveyed over 800 teachers using an open-ended questionnaire and deduced two major themes of instructional leadership that teachers identified as most effective: talking with teachers to promote reflection and

promoting professional growth. In order to promote reflection, principals made suggestions, modeled instruction, gave feedback and praise, and solicited input from teachers. Promoting professional growth strategies included an emphasis on the study of teaching and learning. As these cases demonstrate, the principal's knowledge of reading is not only an asset but is also an essential component of successful instructional leadership in literacy.

Leadership Content Knowledge

How much knowledge does a principal need in order to impact reading achievement? One might operationalize such knowledge along a continuum, with the expertise of a reading specialist anchoring one end. This level of knowledge has been associated with higher achievement (Kean et al., 1979), but many principals assume their leadership position near the other end of the spectrum, with little knowledge of how reading skills develop, which instructional methods are likely to be effective, and how to educate, evaluate, and lead teachers in providing such instruction (NAESP, 2013a; NASSP, 2005, 2013a). Although this knowledge is particularly crucial for administrators at the elementary level, at which foundational skills are acquired (Murphy, 2004), it is widely acknowledged that many adolescents continue to struggle with reading at the secondary level, a problem requiring teachers and principals who are knowledgeable about reading (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy [CCAAL], 2010; NASSP, 2005, 2013b). A NASSP guide (2005) states that to have an effective literacy program in middle and high schools and to be an effective

literacy leader, "the principal must be viewed by the teachers as a role model of a reflective, life-long learner and have their respect as knowledgeable in the area of adolescent literacy" (p. 7). The conceptual model of *leadership content knowledge* discussed in the sections that follow serves as the theoretical foundation of the argument that a principal must have reading knowledge in order to effectively act as an instructional leader.

The notion of a knowledge continuum is appealing in its simplicity, but it masks the fact that a principal requires knowledge from different domains. Shulman (1987) introduced a useful distinction between content knowledge (knowledge of what to teach) and pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of how to teach). The interface of these funds of knowledge involves how to apply instructional strategies to accomplish specific goals. For example, a teacher who wishes to teach a particular decoding skill might craft a lesson that involves the implementation of evidence-based instructional principles. The flexibility involved in the overlap of these two types of knowledge is called pedagogical content knowledge.

Where the principal is concerned, a third domain must be added: knowledge of how to lead teachers toward the goal of more effective pedagogy. Stein and Nelson (2003) asserted that principals must be knowledgeable about the content areas in which they are responsible for supervising teaching and learning.

> As demands increase for them to improve teaching and learning in their schools, administrators must be able to know strong instruction when they see it, to

> encourage it when they don't, and to set the conditions for continuous academic learning among their professional staffs. (p. 424)

In Shulman's terms, a principal must know the components of reading proficiency and how they develop (content knowledge), the most effective methods of reading instruction (pedagogical content knowledge), and approaches to leading teachers toward implementation of those methods. Stein and Nelson called the last of these constructs leadership content knowledge. They envisioned it as part of a three-dimensional knowledge framework. In developing the leadership content knowledge construct, Stein and Nelson (2003) studied the nested learning communities in which principals operate, represented in Figure 1 below.

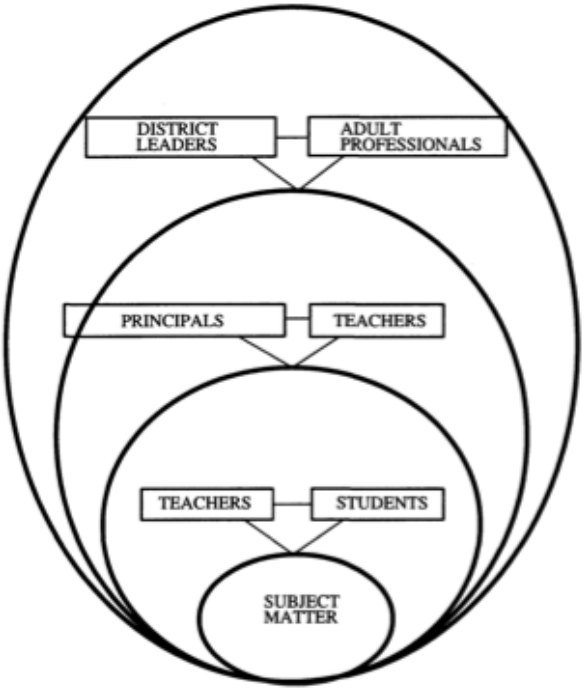

Figure 1. Leadership Content Knowledge (Stein & Nelson, 2003)

The content of what is taught in the classroom serves as a foundation, with teachers and students interacting with each other and the subject matter in the second oval. At this level, teachers must also be knowledgeable about effective practices for teaching the content to students, in addition to knowledge of the content area. The third layer of the diagram involves principals as they interact with teachers to improve instruction while cognizant of the two ovals beneath them. At this level, principals must know effective methods for teaching teachers in addition to "the subject matter, what is known about how to teach the subject matter, and how students learn the subject matter" (Stein & Nelson, 2003, p. 426). In other words, to be effective, principals must possess knowledge in all three domains: content, pedagogy, and leadership. Finally, the top circle of the diagram represents the district-wide leaders and professionals such as principals, teachers, instructional coaches, and those who provide professional development. Those at the top of level of the diagram must have knowledge of *how* administrators and groups of teachers learn, along with the knowledge necessary for the effective leadership of the levels beneath them. Thus, Stein and Nelson do not view leadership content knowledge as limited to the principal. Ideally, it should be possessed by all of the leaders in a district.

Moreover, Stein and Nelson (2003) found that the knowledge base needed for school literacy was not as straightforward as it is for school mathematics, a conclusion also supported by the work of Burch and Spillane (2003). Whereas mathematics has a distinct, singular base of disciplinary knowledge, the content knowledge necessary for literacy is multidimensional and spread across several academic disciplines. For this

reason, Spiro, Vispoel, Schmitz, Samarapungavan, and Boerger (1987) had earlier characterized reading as an "ill-structured domain" (p. 177). Consequently, leaders in the top three ovals of Stein and Nelson's diagram must possess an extensive, complex knowledge base.

In order to further understand the leadership content knowledge that principals need to effectively lead a school with respect to reading, Stein and Nelson (2003) studied administrators of a school district in the process of undergoing literacy instruction reform. The authors found that the leadership content knowledge in literacy required for the principals included being "expected to know everything that teachers and professional developers knew" regarding the content of effective literacy instruction "coupled with leadership knowledge that consists primarily of how to build the capacity of groups of teachers to improve" (p. 441). In fact, with regard to knowledge of content, the authors concluded that "as we move away from the classroom, knowledge about subject matter does not disappear, and what administrators need to know does not become more generic. The needed knowledge remains anchored in knowledge of the subject and how students learn it" (p. 442). In short, it appears that the ability of principals (and the other professionals in the top circle of the diagram) to act as true instructional leaders relied heavily upon their content knowledge of effective literacy instruction in tandem with their ability to lead their teachers' learning of the content. Therefore, the principals' knowledge of reading instruction served as a crucial underpinning for the literacy reforms that were taking place within their schools.

Burch and Spillane (2003) drew similar conclusions from their study of 15 administrators and 15 curricular coordinators from eight elementary schools. After coding data collected from observations, interviews, and video of leadership practice, the authors identified several themes with regard to the leaders' actions and beliefs surrounding the literacy and mathematics instruction in their schools. The authors found that these leaders needed content knowledge and expertise in the subject matter in order to effectively implement reforms. Moreover, they found that 87% of the principals interviewed were involved in the daily work of literacy reform compared with 67% of the curriculum coordinators. The principals' involvement included performing daily observations of individual teachers, offering substantive feedback to them, suggesting reading materials for students, and acquiring resources for teachers. The literacy reform that was taking place required the principals to be aware of effective reading instruction practices. As one assistant principal observed, teachers lacked this knowledge themselves, especially new teachers who were implementing these reforms "on a wing and a prayer" (p. 530).

In a survey of 204 school administrators of schools with varying demographics, Manning and Manning (1981) likewise found that a principal's knowledge of reading played an important role in students' reading achievement. These principals were sampled from 18 states and led schools that were identified as having "excellent reading programs" (p. 131). The authors designed a self-report questionnaire to collect data about the principals' perceptions concerning an effective reading program. A sizable

majority of the principals (88%) stated that previous reading coursework influenced their professional growth as they developed as instructional leaders. Additional findings included the fact that 90% of these principals reported assisting teachers with the diagnosis of reading difficulties and that 98% agreed that "they should be fully aware of different reading approaches…" (p. 132). Moreover, 90% of the principals felt that it was very important for a principal to have previous teaching experience. On the other hand, 83% of the principals stated that finding money for reading professional development for teachers was a serious problem. Among the salient conclusions from the study, the principals believed that being knowledgeable about the components of an excellent reading program and having the ability to support teachers by assisting with the assessment of students' reading abilities were important factors in leading schools with successful reading programs. Put differently, the principals believed that knowledge in all three domains was important to their role.

Distributing the Knowledge Requirement through Literacy Coaching

When literacy leadership is shared with a coach, it may be reasonable to view leadership content knowledge as likewise shared. That is, the coach's expertise might, to some extent, compensate for deficits on the part of the principal. This possibility makes it important to note the recent phenomenon of the literacy coach position (IRA, 2006; Neumerski, 2012) in any discussion surrounding instructional leadership and leadership content knowledge in literacy. Administrators are repeatedly called upon to practice distributed leadership, wherein the responsibilities for leading a school are shared

amongst a leadership team (Burch & Spillane, 2003; Copland, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, 2006), usually comprising administrators, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches (Neumerski, 2012; NASSP, 2005). However, many elementary schools are not assigned assistant principals, leaving principals with fewer personnel options for sharing instructional leadership (Sherman & Crum, 2007). Federal initiatives such as Reading First and Reading Excellence necessitated that districts and schools identify literacy coaches to guide the implementation of research-based reading instruction (Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2013; IRA, 2006; Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, & Lamitina, 2010). Broadly, literacy coaches usually serve as literacy experts tasked with coaching teachers in delivering effective literacy instruction (IRA, 2006; McKenna & Walpole, 2008). McKenna and Walpole (2008) further define this type of coaching as providing site-based professional development intended to increase teachers' capacities for delivering effective literacy instruction. A professional development sequence consisting of modeling, observation, and feedback is an especially useful approach through which a coach assures that new instructional techniques are implemented. Although the aforementioned initiatives helped to give the literacy coaching movement momentum among educators and reading researchers (Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2013), the effects of literacy coaching on student reading achievement, especially when compared with traditional methods of delivering professional development, have been mixed (Walpole et al., 2010). As funding for these initiatives has been reduced along with decreases in school and district budgets, the literacy coaching position has faced

increasing competition from other mandates and programs, and many coaching positions have been eliminated entirely, particularly at the secondary level (Cassidy & Ortlieb, 2013). In fact, Cassidy and Ortlieb (2013) noted that the topic of literacy coaching went from being considered "very hot" by leading literacy researchers beginning in 2005 to "very cold" by 2013 (p. 13).

The compensatory reliance a principal may once have had on a coach's expertise may consequently no longer be an option for most principals. Additionally, Robinson (2006) has argued that even if a principal practices distributed leadership by delegating the responsibilities for overseeing the literacy instruction in a school, "the problem still remains of how a principal without in-depth knowledge of a curriculum area can recognize, let alone evaluate, the expertise of staff to whom curriculum leadership has been delegated" (p. 70).

It seems crucial, then, that principals themselves possess reading knowledge so that they have the ability to develop their teachers' capacity to provide all students with appropriate reading instruction (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004) with or without the assistance of a literacy coach. The Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy (CCAAL, 2010) has asserted that principals in "exemplary secondary schools" function as "the literacy leader, ensuring that "teachers demonstrate proficiency in teaching literacy strategies" (pp. 4-5). In other words, "knowledgeable principals have a clear idea of which practices to advocate and which to discourage" (McKenna & Walpole, 2013, p. 225). Many teachers, especially those at the secondary level, have not received any

preparation in reading development (Burch & Spillane, 2003; Lovette, 2013; NASSP, 2013a; Sherman & Crum, 2007), making the reading knowledge of the principal a crucial component of the evaluation and professional development processes inherent in instructional leadership (Manning & Manning, 1981). Moreover, building teacher capacity in literacy instruction is one of the crucial tasks confronting principals with regard to effective implementation of the CCSS (NASSP, 2013a). Sherman and Crum (2007) reported that one elementary principal stated that "some of the teachers coming out of college now don't know how to teach reading" (p. 399), and many of the principals that the authors interviewed expressed their "frustrations with new teachers' lack of preparation in reading…they [the principals] spent a great amount of time with new teachers…while they struggled to get these teachers up to par [in reading]" (p. 399).

Common Core State Standards and the Principal

The role of the administrator as an instructional leader has never been as crucial to the quality of literacy instruction delivered to students than at the present moment (NASSP, 2013a,b). Currently, 45 states and the District of Columbia have adopted and are in the process of implementing the CCSS for ELA in kindergarten through grade 12 (CCSSI, 2012). These new standards require that teachers help students to comprehend texts of increasing complexity – a challenging task considering that the textual difficulty of reading materials in K-12 classrooms has been steadily declining (CCSSI, 2012). Moreover, the CCSS charge teachers across all content areas with incorporating an unprecedented level of informational text into their instruction, a new practice to many

teachers (Lewis, Walpole, & McKenna, 2014; NASSP, 2013a). With many students struggling to read (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; NCES, 2013b), especially at the secondary level, all teachers must now possess an understanding of both reading development and effective reading instruction (Lovette, 2013).

Leithwood et al.'s (2004) finding that leadership is the second biggest contributor to student learning after classroom instruction and Hallinger's (2005) assertion that principals be "hip deep" in the curriculum (p. 226) underscore not only the importance of an administrator's knowledge of the CCSS in ELA but also his ability to know how reading develops, how it is best assessed, and how it is most effectively taught (NASSP, 2013a). A NASSP position statement indicates that "for school leaders and counselors, implementing the CCSS is not about thinking out of the box. It is about transforming the box itself" (2013a, p. 4). It would appear to follow then that the successful implementation of the CCSS in ELA is largely dependent upon the depth of principals' leadership content knowledge in reading. But to what extent do current licensure requirements prepare them for this?

The Current State of Educational Administration Licensure

The relationship between educational administration preparation and state certification has been fraught with issues, with numerous researchers and policy pieces calling for reforms of both (Levine, 2005; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006; Roach et al., 2011). Although candidates are completing programs that make them eligible for certification based on SEA requirements, there is little debate over the fact that many

cannot be considered well qualified for a principal position (Levine, 2005; Roach et al., 2011). Moreover, as Murphy and Vriesenga (2006) pointed out in their analysis of research on school leadership preparation in the United States, there is a paucity of empirical research regarding school administration preparation. Specifically, in a discovery they deemed "as surprising as it is disappointing" (p. 187), the authors found that only 8% of the 2,000+ articles that focused on school leadership actually dealt with the preparation of leaders and fewer than 3% (n=56) were also empirically anchored. Of these 56 studies, 18% comprise dissertation work, "a small, but not insignificant proportion of the published research" (p. 188), suggesting that those employed as faculty in programs in educational administration preparation were not adding sufficiently to the scholarship in the field.

The ISLLC Standards

Decrying the paucity of high-quality principals equipped to lead increasingly diverse and struggling schools, members of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), in their report, *Leaders for America's Schools* (1987), demanded substantive reform of the preparation and licensure of school leaders. Citing the need for licensure systems to promote excellence and the absence of a national sense of cooperation in the preparation of school leaders, the Council recommended that state policymakers base licensure procedures on defensible claims about what equips an individual to effectively lead a school: "Standards should be written in terms of skills, knowledge, and attitudes considered desirable for educational administrators, not in

numbers of courses. Merely accumulating course credits should not be a 'back door' entrance to school administration" (UCEA, 1987, p. 26).

Beginning in 1996, these recommendations resulted in the development of a set of standards for school leaders by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a representative body comprising most of the major stakeholders in educational leadership, including national associations, states, colleges, and universities. These are now widely known as the *ISLLC Standards* (CCSSO, 2008)[2]. According to the organization responsible for revising and updating the ISLLC Standards in 2008, the 1996 Standards "helped lay the foundation necessary for states to develop – and be more informed as they built and supported – various levels of the educator system, from preparation and induction to professional development and performance evaluation" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 2). The current iteration of the ISLLC Standards expand upon the original standards through the incorporation of research-based best practices for school leaders and are intended to influence both the licensure standards and the assessment of principals (CCSSO, 2008). ISLLC Standard 2 is dedicated to the popular

[2] It is important to mention the existence of the *Education Leaders Constituent Council* (ELCC) *Standards*, which serve as the standards for institutions seeking approval of school leadership preparation programs by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). CAEP represents the 2013 merger of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). The ELCC Standards were developed from the ISLLC Standards and the content of the two sets of standards is virtually identical. Because the focus of this study is on SEA policies for licensure in educational administration, not on the programs that prepare those seeking this type of licensure, a discussion of the ELCC Standards would be out of place. However, the ELCC Standards also do not make any direct mention of the necessity for principals to have any knowledge of reading.

conceptualization of instructional leadership as shown in Table 1 (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

In order to effectively perform all of the functions within Standard 2, the principal's leadership content knowledge is essential (Stein & Nelson, 2003); however, the Standard and functions are written in broad terms without mention of content areas or literacy. Although this vagueness may have been intentional to give SEAs a wide berth for licensure, NASSP (2013b) calls for a "focused and sustained effort to invest resources in comprehensive literacy education at the local, state, and federal levels" (para. 7). In fact, the NASSP (2013a) position statement specifies that with the implementation of the CCSS, "explicit literacy instruction is now a shared responsibility of all teachers throughout the school" and "the reality is that the responsibility for ensuring…fidelity of [CCSS] implementation will fall squarely on the shoulders of school leaders" (p. 4). Moreover, the oversight of an effective literacy program is one of the most important jobs of the principal (NAESP, 2013a; NASSP, 2005, 2013a,b). As will be addressed in a later section, the absence of any mention of literacy practices in the ISLLC Standards may well have been a disservice, as Roach et al. (2011) found that only two SEAs have incorporated any mention of the literacy knowledge necessary for a principal to effectively perform the listed functions.

Table 1
ISLLC Standard 2 (CCSSO, 2008)

Standard 2
An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Functions:
A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations
B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program
C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students
D. Supervise instruction
E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress
F. Develop the instructional leadership capacity of staff
G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction
H. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning
I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program

The CCSSO Survey. In 2007, the Council of Chief State School Officers released the report, *Key State Education Policies on PK-12 Education: 2006*, summarizing the status of initial school leader licensure and assessment at that time in the United States. The CCSSO study included a survey of 50 SEAs (not including the District of Columbia) regarding standards and policies for educational administrator licensure. The organization found that completion of a preparation program, with varying requirements for numbers of courses and credit hours, was mandated for initial certification in 31 SEAs, with 45 SEAs requiring at least a master's degree, not necessarily in educational administration. In addition, 43 SEAs used the ISLLC Standards for administrator certification, with five SEAs reporting full adoption of the

ISLLC Standards, 21 SEAs modifying or adapting the standards, and 17 SEAs reporting alignment of their standards with the ISLLC Standards. Finally, 30 SEAs required a teaching certificate and 39 SEAs mandated teaching experience for initial school leader licensure.

In the CCSSO (2007) report, it was also noted that 33 SEAs required assessments for initial licensure as a school administrator. One SEA, Wisconsin, required a portfolio-based performance assessment while 14 SEAs reported use of the School Leadership Licensure Assessment (SLLA, Educational Testing Service [ETS], 2006, as cited in CCSSO, 2007), a standardized written assessment "designed to test a candidate's ability in a variety of areas related to the ISLLC Standards" (Roach et al., 2011, p. 90). Additionally, 11 SEAs used the Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision Praxis exam (ETS, 2006 as cited in CCSSO, 2007), a standardized assessment consisting of multiple-choice questions, coupled with the SLLA, and 11 SEAs utilized SEA-developed standardized assessments for school administrators (CCSSO, 2007). Some 17 SEAs used licensure assessment results to monitor and improve the quality of administrator preparation programs, and 10 SEAs reported that they used assessment results to guide individual professional development or induction programs. Finally, four SEAs (Arkansas, Hawaii, Illinois, and Ohio) actually linked assessment results to measures of school and student outcomes; however, the CCSSO report provided no further information regarding how that process worked.

Institutional Isomorphism? Seeking to expand upon and update the findings of the aforementioned CCSSO (2007) report, Roach et al. (2011) further examined each SEA's policy for the certification of educational administrators, framing their work in the organizational phenomenon of institutional isomorphism, whereby "state policy makers adopt similar policies across states in an effort to create a sense of certainty and legitimacy" (p. 72). Table 2 presents a comparison of the data collected from the CCSSO (2007) survey with Roach et al.'s (2011) survey. Roach et al. suggested that to the extent that institutional isomorphism exists in education, innovation is stifled because SEAs tend to focus on expediency rather than adopting policies based on effectiveness, efficiency, or equity. The adoption or adaptation of the ISLLC Standards as the basis for operating preparation programs in 44 states (CCSSO, 2008), despite concerns that the standards may not represent best practice for leadership (Murphy, Moorman, & McCarthy, 2008), serves as a salient example of the type of institutional isomorphism to which SEAs contribute with regard to educational administration (Roach et al., 2011).

Table 2
Data Collected from CCSSO (2007) and Roach et al. (2011)

SEAs	CCSSO (2007)	Roach et al. (2011)
Adopted, aligned, modified ISLLC Standards	43	44
SLLA	14	18
Praxis	11	8
SEA developed	11	9
Portfolio	1	11

Roach et al. (2011) surveyed the requirements for educational administration licensure of the SEAs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia using published education codes of regulations and rules. Among the data collected from each SEA were the standards for educational administrators and the policies for licensure and assessment of principals. For the former, Roach et al. found that "the vast majority of states have either adopted the ISLLC Standards verbatim or made minor adjustments to the wording of those standards" (p. 84). One particular point of modification to the ISLLC Standards for a few of the states was adding additional emphasis to the role of the principal as an instructional leader (Roach et al., 2011). However, Roach and her colleagues found that only two SEAs, Florida and Maryland, expanded the ISLLC Standards to incorporate specific requirements for administrators to possess reading knowledge. In the case of Florida, the SEA's 2005 standard related to instructional leadership stated: "High performing leaders promote a positive learning culture, provide an effective instructional program and apply best practices to student learning, especially in the area of reading and other foundational skills" (Florida Administrative Code, FAC Rule 6A-5.080.1A, 2005). On the other hand, the reading requirement in Maryland, although much more specific in terms of its emphasis on reading theory and best practices, was only for certificate renewal and did not apply to initial principal licensure (as cited in Roach et al., 2011).

In terms of licensure and assessment policies, Roach et al. (2011) found that the vast majority of SEAs (n=49) mandated building leader licensure for employment as a principal, and that completion of an SEA-approved administrator training program was

required for initial licensure in all but six states. Additionally, 35 SEAs required candidates to complete a standardized assessment and/or a portfolio assessment for initial principal licensure. Of those SEAs, 33 required a standardized assessment for licensure and 11 SEAs required a portfolio assessment (Roach et al., 2011). Most of these SEAs (n=18) mandated a certain cut score on the SLLA (ETS, 2009, as cited in Roach et. al, 2011). Fewer states (n=8) utilized the Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision Praxis exam (ETS, 2009, as cited in Roach et al., 2011), and some of those SEAs coupled this exam with the SLLA. Finally, Roach et al. observed that the remaining nine SEAs relied on either their own SEA assessment or one commercially developed by a test-maker organization other than ETS.

More than half of the SEAs (n=29) had established tiers of licensure in which principals must complete additional requirements, including mentoring, administrative experience, and professional development for full licensure (Roach et al., 2011). The most common requirement for the first tier of licensure was an advanced degree, typically in educational leadership from an SEA-approved university program, and teaching experience.

Upon conclusion of their examination, Roach et al. noted "a high and increasing degree of homogeneity among state policies related to licensure and assessment" (p. 92), thus demonstrating the influence of institutional isomorphism among SEAs with regard to the standards for and licensure of educational administrators. To that end, the authors stressed that

> institutional isomorphism, to the degree it is experienced in state-level school leadership policy, is unlikely to generate new knowledge in the field and new forms of practice to meet the needs of an increasingly complex set of school and student factors facing educational leaders in the United States. (Roach et al., 2011, p. 102)

Roach et al. noted only two instances of SEAs requiring reading knowledge for preservice principals, individuals who will be charged with serving as instructional leaders despite their possible lack of leadership content knowledge. Consequently, it is possible that the influence of the widespread adoption of the ISLLC Standards – absent any mention of reading – coupled with the power of institutional isomorphism – will perpetuate the tacit exclusion of leadership content knowledge of reading as a requirement of licensure. Despite the almost universal adoption by SEAs of the CCSS, many future and current principals may take the helm without the knowledge necessary to effectively act as literacy leaders (CCAAL, 2010; NAASP, 2013a) within their schools.

The Present Study

A focus on just the broad ISLLC Standards alone for licensure does not adequately prepare administrators for the challenges inherent to instructional leadership (Jacobson & Cypres, 2012; Roach et al., 2011), especially with regard to leadership content knowledge (Stein & Nelson, 2003). As principals of schools at all levels in the majority of states are leading the implementation of the CCSS, the necessity for administrators to be knowledgeable about reading has never been more crucial (NASSP, 2013a, b). The purpose of this study was to describe the current status of reading requirements for initial educational administration certification on the basis of a review of

51 SEAs (50 states and the District of Columbia). Specifically, I sought to answer the following two research questions:

1) What, if any, reading knowledge is explicitly required for initial licensure as an educational administrator?
2) What, if any, reading knowledge is assessed for initial licensure as an educational administrator?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The present study was my third review of SEA requirements for reading knowledge for licensure in 51 SEAs. The first study (Salerno & Lovette, 2012) was an examination of the reading and math knowledge requirements for initial teaching licensure for English as a Second Language (ESL) along with the initial licensure requirements for secondary content teachers with regard to knowledge of methods for teaching English Language Learners. In the second study (Lovette, 2013), I examined reading development knowledge requirements for initial licensure for secondary ELA teachers. The methodology employed for data collection and analysis was similar in each of these studies, with slight modifications relevant to the research questions.

In the present descriptive study, I sought to determine the reading knowledge required for initial licensure as a principal in each of 51 SEAs (the 50 states and the District of Columbia). Specifically, the following two research questions guided the collection and analysis of the data:

1) What, if any, reading knowledge is explicitly required for initial licensure as an educational administrator?
2) What, if any, reading knowledge is assessed for initial licensure as an educational administrator?

Rationale for Research Design

The two major studies discussed in the previous chapter, CCSSO (2007) and Roach et al. (2011), offered important insight into effective and ineffective methodology for collecting data from the SEAs regarding licensure policies for educational administrators. In the CCSSO (2007) report, *Key State Education Policies on PK-12 Education: 2006*, a survey design was employed to collect data. Online surveys regarding standards and licensure procedures were distributed to respondents in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. This particular method resulted in incomplete or missing data from many of the SEAs. Additionally, the accuracy of the data provided through the online survey was dependent on the knowledge and expertise of the person responding to the survey (Roach et al., 2011), and the predetermined survey questions constrained the data that were collected.

In an effort to avoid the discrepancies and missing data presented in the CCSSO (2007) report and in order to collect more comprehensive data regarding the licensure of principals, Roach et al. (2011) obtained and reviewed the published education code of regulations and rules and any supporting policies for 51 SEAs. The authors reported reviewing other state documents to "gather a more complete understanding of the code" (p. 83); however, they only reported data collected from official, approved and published state rules and regulations to ensure that the data conveyed "actual state policy versus plans or the 'wishful thinking' of [SEA] respondents" (p. 84). The data were then reviewed and "descriptive themes were generated to describe trends in the policies

through an open-coding process" (p. 84). Roach et al. did not specifically identify their research methodology beyond that statement. Therefore, in order to best answer the two research questions guiding this study with complete and accurate data, I chose to conduct a content analysis of published rules and regulations (along with any referenced supporting documents) for educational administration licensure for 51 SEAs.

Krippendorff (2004) defines *content analysis* as a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" with the purpose of providing "new insights, increasing a researcher's understanding of particular phenomena, or informing practical actions" (p. 18). Although content analysis has been criticized as being overly positivist (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Hoffman, Wilson, Martinez, & Sailors, 2011), it has been used broadly with qualitative data in educational research (Hoffman et al., 2011). As a research tool in education, content analysis of qualitative materials

> typically focuses on the presence of certain words or concepts within the text or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meaning, and relationships of such words and concepts, and then make inferences about the messages within the texts. (Hoffman et al., 2011, p. 31)

In literacy research specifically, content analysis has been used most often to analyze the text found in curricular materials such as leveled and basal readers and teacher's guides (Hoffman et al., 2011).

In content analysis, codes or themes are developed from the data through either a deductive or an inductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Inductive content analysis

should be utilized when the categories for coding are not yet known and are derived (induced) from the data. Deductive content analysis is appropriate for use when the coding categories are already known, based on a review of existent research (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). I employed a deductive approach in this study, as my goal was to determine if evidence of reading knowledge was required for initial principal licensure. Accordingly, the data (in the form of published rules and regulations for each SEA) were coded specifically for the inclusion or exclusion of this requirement.

Elo and Kyngäs (2007) described three main phases in the deductive content analysis process: preparation, organizing, and reporting. These three phases are represented in Figure 2. In the preparation phase, the unit of analysis is chosen based on the research questions. The unit of analysis needs to be "large enough to be considered as a whole and small enough to be kept in mind as a context for meaning unit during the analysis process" (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007, p. 109). Next, the researcher develops a coding scheme and all of the data are coded for correspondence to these predetermined categories. Finally, the results of the analysis are presented in enough detail so that readers have a "clear understanding of how the analysis was carried out and its strengths and limitations" (p. 112).

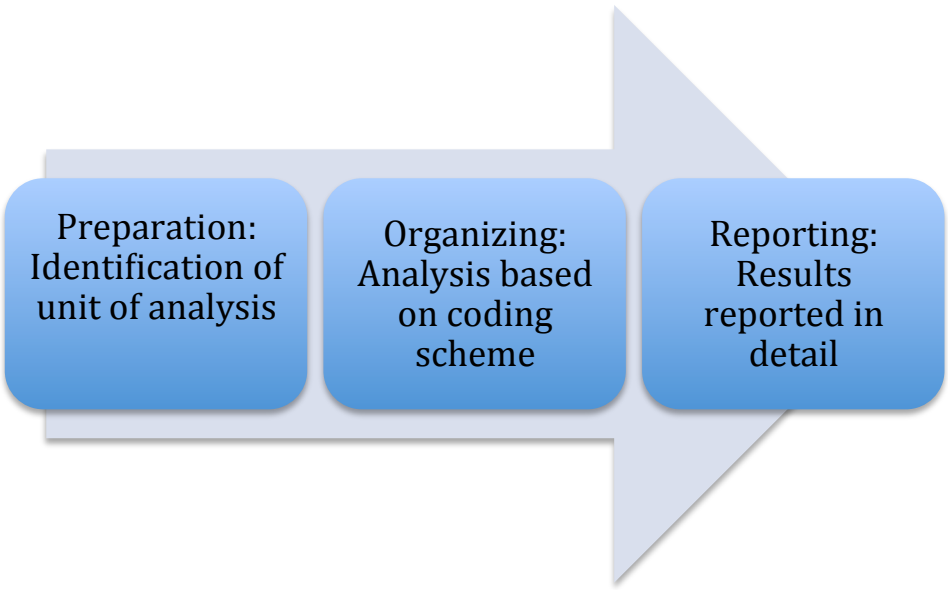

Figure 2. Three Phases of Deductive Content Analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007)

Phase One: Preparation

There were two distinct units of analysis for this study, based on the two research questions. To address the first research question – What, if any, reading knowledge is explicitly required for initial licensure as an educational administrator? – the unit of analysis was the published education code of regulations and rules pertaining to the initial licensure of principals. Consistent with the approach employed by Roach et al. (2011), only the most current, published state educational rules and regulations for each of the 51 SEAs were inspected. Proposed legislation, which is subject to approval by lawmakers and tends to be more general in that it directs SEA boards to develop rules and regulations (Roach et al., 2011), was not considered. However, published supporting policies (e.g., SEA approved Standards for Principals) were also accessed and reviewed

in cases of ambiguity in an effort to further understand and/or give additional context to the requirements found in the educational code. In several cases, the regulations referred to certain supporting documents, usually adopted standards or competencies for principals, and those were then inspected. Further, a handful of regulations gave leeway to the SEA to determine certain policies related to licensure and the subsequent documents pertaining to those policies were examined. However, only the requirements related to initial principal licensure were analyzed, as this study focused on the least restrictive method for obtaining licensure to act as a principal. In the case of tiered administrative licensure, through which a candidate must successfully complete a series of requirements in order to obtain the next level of certification, such as a one-to-two-year mentoring program (Roach et al., 2011), I examined the requirements for only the first tier in which a person can assume the role as a school administrator.

Next, in order to answer the second research question – What, if any, reading knowledge is assessed for initial licensure as an educational administrator? – the unit of analysis was the assessment materials (e.g., exam frameworks, portfolio objectives) required by the SEA. As Roach et al. (2011) found, more than half of the SEAs utilized a standardized assessment and/or a portfolio assessment though a number of SEAs did not require an assessment for licensure. All pertinent assessment resources were considered.

Data Sources. All of the SEA Department of Education websites contained links to the published rules and regulations regarding licensure along with other supporting materials. Likewise, direct links to the assessment publisher's (e.g., ETS or Pearson)

websites were found on the DOE website and in all cases, examination resource materials, including content guides and test frameworks, were readily available. A folder for each SEA containing all collected data was maintained on both my hard drive and in the Cloud.

Phase Two: Organizing

Phase two consisted of organizing and analyzing the data. In a deductive approach to content analysis, a constrained coding scheme is utilized (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Neuendorf, 2002). Krippendorff (2004) defines *coding* as the "term content analysts use when this process [organizing] is carried out according to observer-independent rules" (p. 126). All documents collected for each SEA in phase one were analyzed using the constrained coding scheme in Table 3. The coding scheme was revised and expanded slightly during the content analysis process to account for variations in data (Neuendorf, 2002). Once revisions were made to the coding scheme, all SEAs that had been previously coded were recoded using the most current scheme.

To begin, I collected data about all initial administrative licensure requirements for each SEA. All data were collected in February 2014. From that data, 20 constrained categories were coded as shown in Table 3. Next, in order to capture the most robust reading requirements, I examined the regulations and/or supporting policies for the words *reading* and/or *literacy* as shown in row M. I then made an analytical decision as to whether the words were intended to signify students' reading or denoted another meaning (e.g., reading current research). When the reference was to students' reading, I further analyzed the terms, shown in rows P and U to get a sense of the type of reading

knowledge that was required. Finally, I applied the coding scheme represented in rows Q through U to all available required assessment materials.

Table 3. *Coding scheme*

Column Letter on Spread-sheet	Title	Codes		Link(s) to this information
A	SEA	Date		
B	Adopted	Year of latest adoption of published administrative licensure codes of regulations and rules 9 don't know		
C	Certification Levels	Levels of principal certification 1 PreK-12 2 P-12 3 K-12 4 PreK-8 5 K-8 6 6-12 7 7-12 8 Combination (specify)		
D	ISLLC	Are the ISLLC Standards referenced in the regulations? 1 Yes 2 No		
E	Licensure requirements	What is the **least restrictive** method of obtaining principal licensure? 1 Certification added to license with a Master's Degree (through completion of approved program) 2 Master's Degree in ed		

		leadership 3 Testing into certification 4 Certification added to license with only a Bachelor's (through completion of approved program)		
F	Tiered Licensure Requirements	Is progression through tiers of licensure ***required***? 1 Yes 2 No 3 Available but not required		
G	Tiered Licensure Level	What is the most basic tier that must be completed in order to **act** as an administrator? (Explain.) 1 Not required		
H	School Experience Requirement	Is school experience required for principal licensure 1 Yes 2 No		
I	Length of School Experience Required	If school experience is required, is the length specified? (# of years with 0 meaning no experience required)		
J	School Experience Content	If school experience is required, is the content specified? 1 Not specified 2 Teaching experience 3 Not required		
K	Teaching Experience Content	Is the content of teaching experience specified? 1 Yes (explain)		

		2 No 3 No experience required		
L	Sources Reviewed	Type of other source that was reviewed 1 Principal standards/competencies developed by SEA 2 Licensure requirement document 3 DOE Website 4 SEA certification officer with interview attached (use interview protocol) 5 No other sources were reviewed 6 Combination (specify) 7 Other (explain)		
M	Reading Term	Are the words *reading* or *literacy* present? 1 Yes 2 Not present 3 Not referring to students' reading		
N	Reading Knowledge Requirement	Is reading knowledge required for licensure as a principal 1 Yes 2 No 3 Other (specify)		
O	Reading Knowledge Requirement Levels	If reading knowledge is required, at what grade levels of licensure: 1 Not required 2 PreK-12 3 K-12 4 PreK-8 5 K-8 6 6-12 7 Other		
P	Type of	What type of reading		

	Reading Knowledge Required	knowledge is specified as a requirement? 1 No reading knowledge required 2 General reading knowledge- no explanation 3 Knowledge of reading development 4 Knowledge of effective reading instruction 5 Knowledge of reading assessment 6 Knowledge of reading processes 7 Knowledge of reading theories 8 Combination (specify) 9 Other (specify) 10 NA		
Q	Principal Licensure Assessments	Type of licensure assessment for principals 1 No assessment 2 SLLA 3 Praxis: Administration and Supervision 4 SEA Developed 5 Portfolio Assessment 6 SLLA and Portfolio 7 PRAXIS and Portfolio 8 SEA Developed and Portfolio 9 Other (explain)		
R	Principal Licensure Assessment Score	If SLLA or Praxis, list the minimum required passing score 2 Different assessment 3 No assessment		
S	Reading Term in Assessment documents	Are the words *reading* or *literacy* present? 1 Yes		

		2 Not present 3 Not referring to students' reading 4 No assessment required		
T	Reading Knowledge Assessed	Is reading knowledge assessed for initial licensure? 1 Yes 2 No 3 No assessment required		
U	Type of Reading Knowledge Assessed	What type of reading knowledge is assessed? 1 No reading knowledge assessed 2 General reading knowledge- no explanation 3 Knowledge of reading development 4 Knowledge of effective reading instruction 5 Knowledge of reading assessment 6 Knowledge of reading processes 7 Knowledge of reading theories 8 Combination 9 Other (specify) 10 No assessment required		

To ensure the validity of the coding scheme and the reliability of the analytic process described above (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007), a colleague and fellow Ph.D. candidate, who also worked with me on a similar project addressing the analysis of SEA licensure requirements (Salerno & Lovette, 2012), independently coded five SEAs. In total,

comparison of the independent coding garnered 95% agreement for all categories and 100% agreement was achieved after discussion.

Phase Three: Reporting

Elo and Kyngäs (2007) suggest that both the analytic process and the results of the analyses be described in as much detail as possible so that the reader gains a clear understanding of the content analysis along with its strengths and limitations. The ability to make defensible inferences is dependent upon the collection and analysis of reliable data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). Therefore, the reporting of the process and results should contain enough descriptive information that another researcher would be able to follow the procedures and draw similar conclusions.

To that end, this chapter contains both the coding scheme that was used for each SEA and a description of the sources of data. Additionally, descriptive data addressing the two research questions were compiled, and they are reported in several forms for comparisons across jurisdictions in Chapter 4. Upon analysis of the data, common themes regarding the reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure are also reported in Chapter 4.

Summary

In summary, in an effort to answer the two research questions guiding this study, deductive content analysis was applied using a constrained coding scheme to the most current published regulations and rules governing initial educational administrator

licensure along with pertinent assessment materials for each of the 51 SEAs (the 50 states and the District of Columbia).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading knowledge requirements for initial licensure as a principal in 51 SEAs. This inquiry was guided by the following two research questions:

1) What, if any, reading knowledge is explicitly required for initial licensure as an educational administrator?
2) What, if any, reading knowledge is assessed for initial licensure as an educational administrator?

In this chapter I present the results of this examination in three parts. I first review general initial principal licensure requirements for all 51 SEAs. Next, I present the results corresponding to each of the research questions. I conclude the chapter with a summary of findings.

General Initial Administrator Licensure Requirements

Of the 51 SEAs (50 states and the District of Columbia) that were included in this study, the vast majority (n=45) offered initial principal licensure spanning all grade levels (e.g., P-12, PreK-12, K-12). Six SEAs (Massachusetts, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, and South Carolina) licensed administrators across distinct grade levels (e.g., K-6, 5-9, and 6-12) and five SEAs (Alaska, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming) offered licensure both across all grades levels and at distinct grade-level spans. For example, Nebraska granted initial licensure to administrators for grades PK-8, 7-12,

and PK-12, and candidates were licensed in the grade levels for which they held a certification to teach. In order to obtain PK-12 principal licensure, preservice principals would have needed to complete an additional nine credit hours specific to the level in which they were not licensed to teach (Nebraska Administrative Code, 92.24.005.02D, 2013). Figure 4 provides a comparison of SEAs.

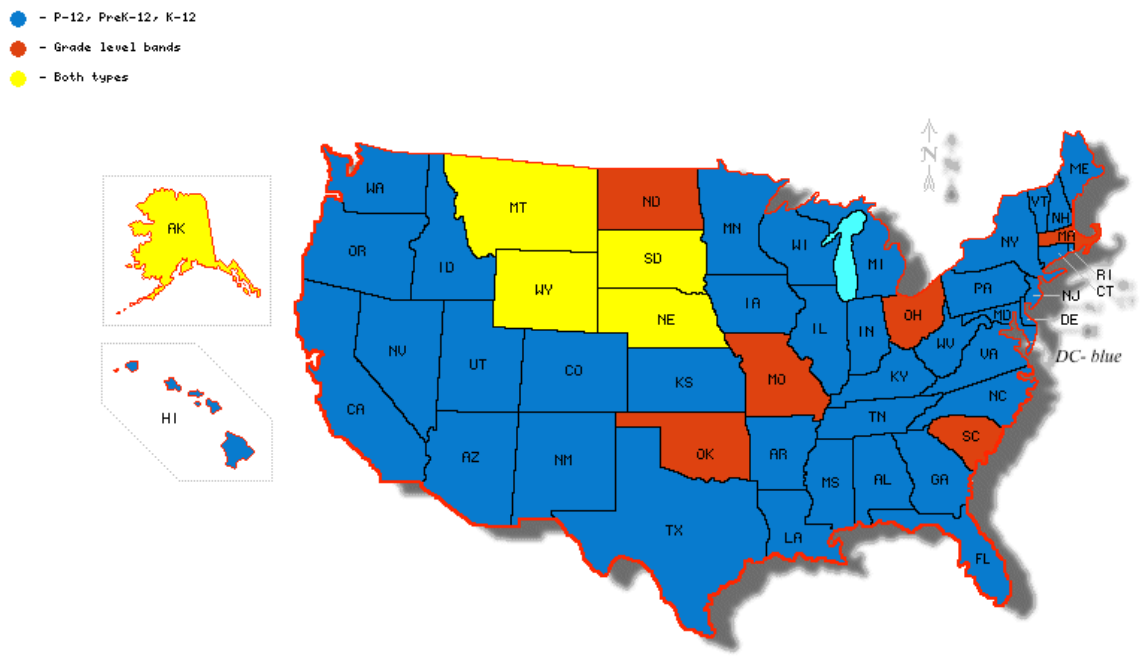

Figure 4. SEA Grade-level Spans for Licensure

In terms of the least restrictive method of obtaining initial certification as a principal, in most cases (n= 44) SEAs required that candidates hold at least a master's degree and also complete a regionally accredited a graduate-level preparation program. Three SEAs (Alabama, Mississippi, and Missouri) required that the master's degree be in

educational administration. There were seven SEAs (California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Wyoming) that mandated just a bachelor's degree and the completion of an accredited program. Additionally, California and Maine offered the option for candidates to test out of the preparation program requirement; however, Maine required the completion of a school-based internship (California Education Code Section 44270.5.3, 2013; Maine Department of Education Regulations, 05-071 Chapter 115 Part II Sect. 4.5B, 2012).

School experience was another common requirement among SEAs for initial administrative licensure. For initial licensure, the vast majority of SEAs required educational experience ranging from two to seven years. The content and type of the experience was generally not specified beyond overarching terms such as *teaching*, *leadership*, or *professional experience*. However, five SEAs (Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, South Dakota, and West Virginia) did not mandate any school experience for initial licensure. South Dakota, for example, required that a candidate have "three years of verified experience on a valid certificate in an accredited K-12 school, one year of which includes classroom teaching experience or direct services to students." However, as the regulation went on to note, "the three years of verified experience may be waived if the candidate receives a passing score on the Educational Leadership Praxis II test" (South Dakota Legislation, Certification and Evaluation of Teachers, Principals, and Superintendents, 13:24:53:08:01, 2010). Another case was Massachusetts, where candidates were required to have either "three years employment in an executive

management/leadership role or in a supervisory, teaching, or administrative role" in a variety of school settings (Massachusetts Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval, 603 CMR 7.10, 2013). Finally, Florida, Michigan, and West Virginia made no mention in their published rules and regulations of required experience of any type for initial certification as a school administrator.

Summary

The vast majority of SEAs (n=45) offered initial principal licensure spanning all grade levels beginning at the level of preschool or kindergarten and extending through grade 12. The remaining SEAs offered licensure at specific grade-level bands, with five SEAs offering either option. Additionally, 44 SEAs required that candidates hold a master's degree and complete an SEA-approved principal preparation program. Although seven SEAs required candidates for licensure to hold at least a bachelor's degree and to complete a principal preparation program, California and Maine also allowed candidates to test out of the program requirement through an SEA-approved examination. Finally, school experience ranging from two to seven years was required for initial administrator licensure by 45 SEAs, though the nature of this experience varied widely.

Reading Knowledge Required

In this section, I address the first research question, concerning what, if any, reading knowledge was explicitly required for initial licensure as an educational administrator. I inspected the current published rules and regulations and any supporting

documents, and I analyzed these for explicit references to reading knowledge as a condition of initial licensure. Of the 51 SEAs, four (Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri) required some degree of reading knowledge of candidates for initial licensure as an educational administrator (see Figure 5). In the next sections I present the specific findings for these four SEAs.

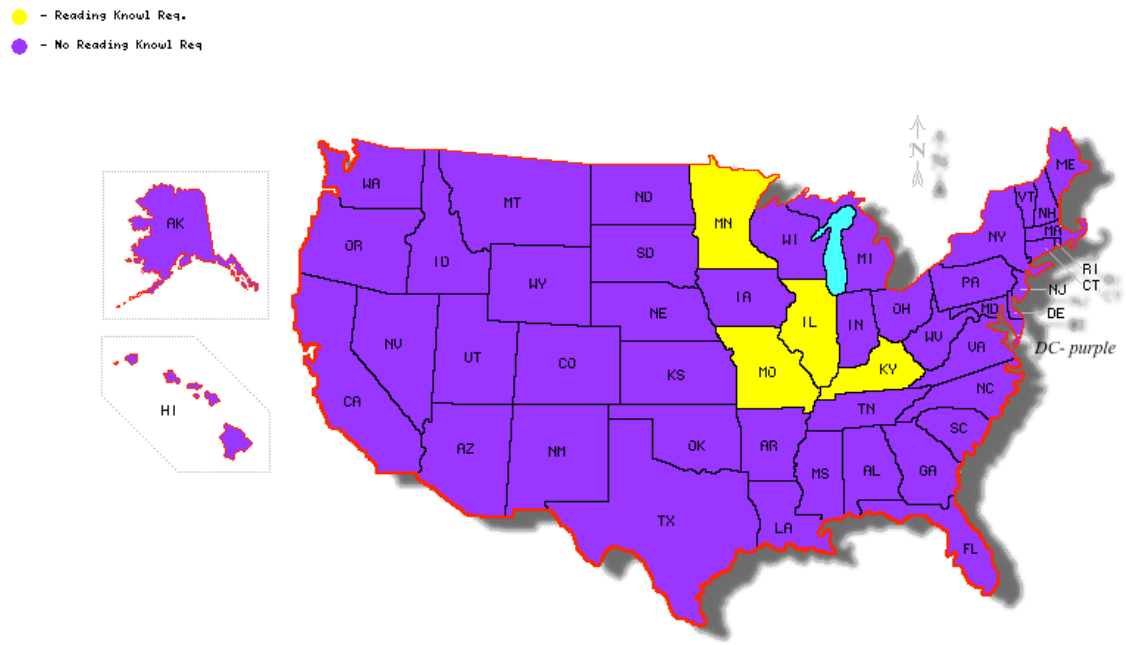

Figure 5. SEA reading knowledge requirements

Illinois

In order to qualify for initial PreK-12 principal licensure in Illinois, candidates were required to possess a current SEA-issued teaching license and a master's degree (23 Illinois Administrative Code 25, 23:1b: 25.337, 2013). Four years of licensed teaching experience in a public or nonpublic school recognized by the Illinois Department of

Education were also mandated. Further, completion of an SEA-approved principal preparation program that included an internship component, plus a passing score on an SEA-developed examination pertaining to educational administration, were necessary for licensure. After all of these requirements were met, the principal endorsement could be added to an active Illinois teaching license.

Reading requirements. In terms of reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure, Illinois' current education code was the most specific and comprehensive of the four SEAs. The 2013 Illinois Code specified that all principal preparation programs provide coursework that addresses the

> literacy skills required for student learning that are developmentally appropriate (early literacy through adolescent literacy), including assessment for literacy, developing strategies to address reading problems, understanding reading in the content areas, and scientific literacy. (23 Illinois Administrative Code 30, 23:1:30.50A5, 2013)

The code then further delineated the required elements specifically for the reading in the content areas requirement mentioned in the reading knowledge requirements:

> For teachers and administrators [this course] shall address each of the following: i) varied instructional approaches used before, during, and after reading, including those that develop word knowledge, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and strategy use in the content areas; ii) the construction of meaning through the interactions of the reader's background knowledge and experiences, the information in the text, and the purpose of the reading situation; iii) communication theory, language development, and the role of language in learning; iv) the relationships among reading, writing and oral communication and understanding how to integrate these components to increase content learning; v) the design, selection, modification and evaluation of a wide range of materials for the content areas and the reading needs of the student; vi) variety of formal and informal assessments to recognize and address the reading, writing, and oral communication needs of each student; and vii) varied instructional

> approaches that develop word knowledge, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and strategy use in the content areas. (23 Illinois Administrative Code 25, 23:1:25.25a1B, 2013)

This content area requirement was relatively new to Illinois—the code explicitly stated that the requirement was to take effect on July 1, 2013, and would thereafter apply to any candidates who received their license, both teaching and administrative (23 Illinois Administrative Code 25, 23:1:25.25, 2013).

Finally, candidates in Illinois-approved principal preparation programs were required to complete an internship as part of their preparation. Illinois code explicitly required that, as a part of this internship, the candidate:

> evaluate a school to ensure the use of a wide range of printed, visual, or auditory materials and online resources appropriate to the content areas and the reading needs and levels of each student (including ELLs, students with disabilities, and struggling and advanced readers). (23 Illinois Administrative Code 30, 23:1:30.45a4B, 2013)

Missouri

Missouri offered initial administrative licensure spanning specific grade-level bands: K-8 (elementary), 5-9 (middle school), and 7-12 (secondary). Candidates for elementary and secondary principal licensure were required to hold, or be eligible for, a Missouri-issued teaching license and to have a minimum of two years of teaching experience; however, the grade levels for the former and the content of the latter were not specified (Missouri CSR Rules of Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 5 CSR 20-400.160, 2012). Passing the SLLA exam (ETS, 2014b) was also required.

Additionally, coursework in special education was required for both elementary and secondary administrator licenses. Completion of an SEA-approved principal preparation program that included a field experience component and resulted in a master's degree in educational leadership was mandated for initial principal licensure. In order to qualify for middle school principal licensure, the applicant was required to hold a valid SEA-issued elementary or secondary principal license.

The elementary and secondary principal licenses differed in requirements only with regard to the nature of two components of the mandated coursework during the respective principal preparation programs. The elementary principal preparation program was mandated to provide the candidate with at least two credit hours each in both "elementary administration" and "elementary curriculum" while the secondary program was required to provide at least two credit hours each in both "secondary administration" and "secondary curriculum" (Missouri CSR Rules of Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 5 CSR 20-400.160, 2012). No further explanation regarding the content of this coursework was provided.

Reading Requirements. Both the elementary (grades K-8) and secondary (grades 7-12) principal licensure regulations required that candidates have "knowledge and/or competency" regarding "instruction in communication skills (reading, writing, spelling, listening, speaking)" (Missouri CSR Rules of Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 5 CSR 20-400.160, 2012). Reading knowledge requirements beyond that broad statement were not provided in the regulations.

Although the middle school principal (grades 5-9) regulations did not include the general reading knowledge statement mentioned above, they did mandate that the candidate "shall have earned undergraduate or graduate credit" in "Methods of Teaching Reading (minimum of five (5) semester hours to include one (1) course in Techniques of Teaching Reading in the Content Fields)" (Missouri CSR Rules of Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 5 CSR 20-400.160, 2012).

Kentucky

In Kentucky, initial administrative licensure was offered for grades P-12. The SEA required three years of "documented teaching experience in a public school or a nonpublic school which meets the state performance standards … or which has been accredited by a regional or national accrediting association" (16 Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 16 KAR 3.050:2:2b, 2011). Additionally, successful completion of the SLLA examination was mandated for licensure. Finally, candidates were required to have a master's degree and complete an SEA-approved principal preparation program that included field experiences.

The regulations for principal preparation programs in Kentucky specified that the program must document the candidate's performance using the SEA-developed document, *Dispositions, Dimensions, and Functions for School Leaders* (16 Kentucky Administrative Regulations, 16 KAR 3.050:3:2, 2011). This document both cited and greatly expanded upon the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008). Under the title of "Dispositions," the document noted eight statements that the "administrator believes in,

values, and is committed to" (Education Professional Standards Board, 2008, p. ii). Additionally, a list of "Dimensions and Functions" that align with each of the ISLLC Standards included "Aspiring Principal Indicators" (pp. iii-xi) for each of the Functions.

Reading requirements. One of the "Aspiring Principal Indicators" under the Dimension of "Leading Teaching and Learning" and the Function of "Curriculum" was the expectation that a principal "understands the strategies and structures to support improvements in literacy and numeracy as the priority in a well rounded curriculum" (Education Professional Standards Board, 2008, p. iii). No further explanation was provided in this document or in the regulations regarding the type and depth of literacy knowledge that the candidate for initial licensure as a principal was expected to possess in order to demonstrate competency with respect to this indicator. There was no other reference to reading or literacy throughout the rest of the document or in any of the regulations.

Minnesota

Minnesota offered initial principal licensure for grades K-12. Candidates for licensure were required to have at least three years of teaching experience with an SEA-issued teaching license (Minnesota Administrative Rules, 3512.0200 Subp.2, 2006). A specialist or doctoral-level program or a "program consisting of 60 credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree that includes a terminal degree" (Minnesota Administrative Rules, 3512.0200 Subp.3A1, 2006) was another requirement for initial principal licensure. The preparation program was required to include a full year of field experience at the

elementary, middle, and high school levels as an administrative aide to a practicing school principal. This experience was mandated to include at least one week at each of the levels "not represented by the applicant's primary teaching experience" (Minnesota Administrative Rules, 3512.0200 Subp.3B, 2006). The regulations also specified that candidates must demonstrate SEA-developed competencies for principals during the preparation program.

Reading Requirements. Minnesota required that principals demonstrate competency in the area of "instructional leadership by demonstrating the ability to understand and apply schoolwide literacy and numeracy systems" (Minnesota Administrative Rules, 3512.0510 Supb.3A1, 2006). However, there was no further explanation regarding the depth or content of the literacy knowledge needed to demonstrate this competency. There was no other reference to reading throughout the rest of the regulations.

Summary

The current published regulations and rules for each SEA regarding initial principal licensure were inspected for reading knowledge requirements. Of the 51 SEAs, four required varying degrees of reading knowledge. The requirements in Illinois were the most comprehensive, with pre-service principals expected to complete coursework in reading addressing the PreK-12 continuum of reading development, reading assessment, addressing reading problems, reading instruction, and scientific literacy. Missouri required broader reading knowledge for licensure as either an elementary or secondary

principal, and also required that middle school principal candidates complete coursework in reading that specifically included techniques for teaching reading in the content areas. Finally, Kentucky and Minnesota required that candidates for P-12 and K-12 licensure demonstrate a general knowledge of literacy curriculum, but neither the depth nor content of reading knowledge needed to do so was specified.

Reading Knowledge Assessed

In order to address the second research question – what, if any, knowledge of reading is assessed for initial licensure as an educational administrator? – I collected and analyzed data regarding the assessment requirements for all 51 SEAs. Although Roach et al. (2011) reported that 11 SEAs utilized portfolio assessments as a component of initial licensure, I did not find a portfolio requirement in any of the regulations regarding initial licensure by the SEA.[3] Several SEAs did mandate that principal preparation programs evaluate candidates through a portfolio assessment as a requirement for completion of the program; however, the SEA did not also evaluate the portfolio for the purpose of licensure. The impetus was on the SEA-approved preparation program to determine if the portfolio demonstrated the required components.

Of the 51 SEAs, 18 did not require an assessment of any kind for initial principal licensure, including Minnesota, one of the four SEAs that did require some form of

[3] Likewise, in their review of administrator licensure policies in the United States, Cheney and Davis (2011) did not find an SEA that utilized a portfolio assessment for initial principal licensure, although a handful of SEAs used this type of assessment for licensure renewal.

reading knowledge of candidates. The remaining 33 SEAs utilized one of three types of standardized examinations: the School Leadership Licensure Assessment (SLLA, ETS, 2014b), an SEA-developed assessment, or Praxis: Educational Leadership (ETS, 2012). The map in Figure 6 provides cross-SEA comparisons. Following are the specific results regarding the reading knowledge requirements assessed for each of the three SEA-mandated assessments.

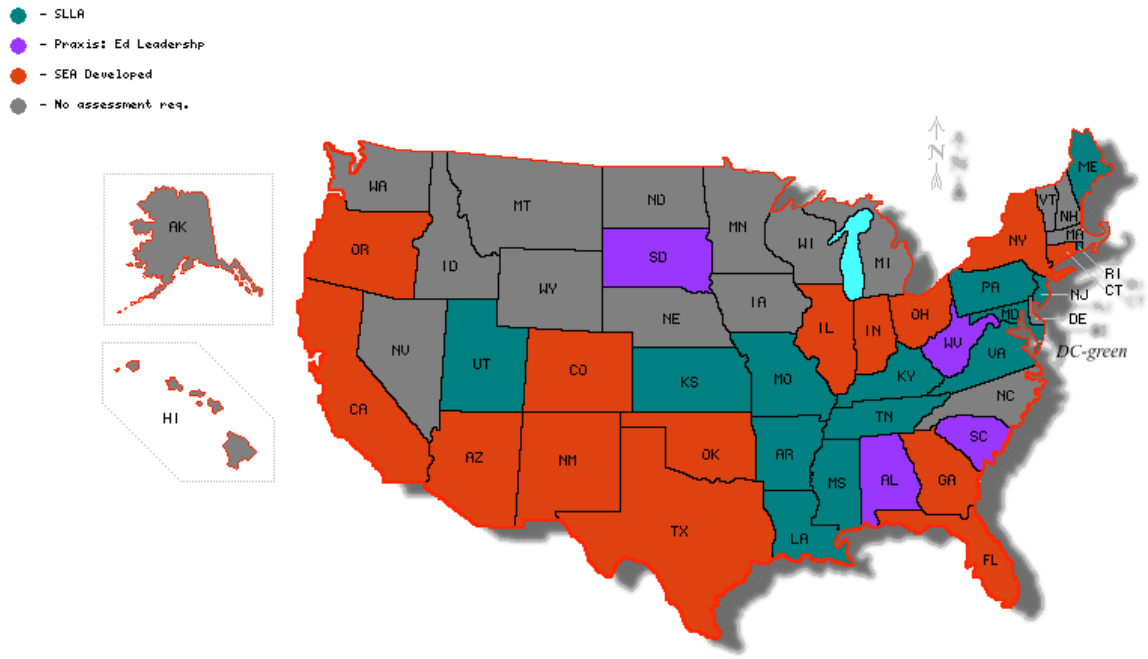

Figure 6. SEA Assessments

SLLA

The SLLA was required for initial administrative licensure by 15 SEAs. Aligned with the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008), the SLLA "measures whether entry-level

education leaders have the standards-relevant knowledge believed necessary for competent professional practice" (ETS, 2013, p. 11). The examination comprises 100 multiple-choice and seven constructed-response questions. The constructed-response questions are "based on scenarios and sets of documents that an education leader might encounter" (p. 12), and each question focuses on a specific content area related to the ISLLC Standards.

As shown in Table 4, the minimum scaled score required for initial licensure as an educational administrator varied among the SEAs, with Kentucky and Tennessee requiring the lowest minimum score (160 out of 200 points) and Mississippi requiring the highest (169). The minimum score that was most often required by the SEAs (n=8) was 163 (ETS, 2014b). As I previously discussed, Maine permitted candidates who received a minimum score of 163 on the SLLA and who also completed an internship requirement to test out of the principal preparation program requirement (Maine Department of Education Regulations, 05-071 Chapter 115 Part II Sect. 4.5B, 2012).

Table 4. *SLLA Minimum Scaled Scores by SEA (ETS, 2014b)*

SEA	Minimum Score
AR	163
DC	163
KS	165
KY	160
LA	166
MD	165
ME	163
MO	163
MS	169

NJ	163
PA	163
RI	166
TN	160
UT	163
VA	163

Reading knowledge assessed. I analyzed and coded the SLLA test framework and content guide documents for any assessment of reading knowledge. The test framework contained an extensive description of the topics covered by the examination. Although the list of topics for the standard relating to instructional leadership spanned more than two pages, reading knowledge was not addressed (ETS, 2013).

In order to capture the most robust reading requirements, I also searched the documents for the terms *reading* and *literacy*. Although *reading* was used throughout the document, it was not used in a way that represented reading knowledge. Rather, the term was meant to signify the test taker's reading of the passages and questions presented on the examination (ETS, 2013). *Literacy* was not present in any of the documents. Based on the analysis of the available resources for the SLLA, I determined that reading knowledge was not assessed on this examination.

Two of the SEAs that required some reading knowledge of principal candidates, Kentucky and Missouri, also required the SLLA as the assessment needed for licensure. Therefore, on the basis of the SLLA, the SEA could not have determined whether candidates for initial principal licensure met the requirement that they possess reading knowledge.

SEA-Developed Assessments

The next most frequently mandated type of assessment after the SLLA was a standardized examination developed specifically for the SEA (n=14). These examinations were generally based on specific SEA requirements and principal standards and/or competencies. The format of these assessments varied by SEA. Most of the SEAs (Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, and Oklahoma) used a similar format to the SLLA, with a mix of multiple-choice and constructed-response questions. The format utilized by Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon and Texas consisted entirely of multiple-choice questions. The assessment used in Connecticut and New York required candidates to answer multiple-choice questions and also to respond to video scenarios with constructed responses.

Finally, as previously noted, California offered the option for candidates to test out of the principal preparation program requirement through the attainment of an SEA-approved minimum score on the SEA-developed examination. Similar to the other assessments discussed in this section, the first part of the examination comprised both multiple-choice and constructed-response questions; however, the second part of the examination required the candidate to submit a video for scoring. The video was required to be 10 minutes long, to include both a context and reflection form, and to show the candidate demonstrating "competency in using effective communication skills in a professional interaction" (Pearson Education, 2012, p. 1).

Reading knowledge assessed. I inspected and analyzed all of the test framework and content guide documents for each of the 14 SEA-developed assessments, using the same method described above for the SLLA examination. I found that the candidate's knowledge of reading was not assessed in any way on any of the 14 examinations. Despite the comprehensive reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure in Illinois, the required SEA-developed examination did not assess this knowledge.

Praxis: Educational Leadership

Finally, four SEAs (Alabama, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming) required the Praxis: Educational Leadership examination (ETS, 2012) for initial principal licensure. This particular Praxis exam comprised 95 multiple-choice questions aligned with the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008). The four SEAs varied with regard to the minimum score required to qualify for licensure. As Table 5 shows, Alabama required the highest minimum scaled score, 149 out of 200 points; West Virginia required the lowest, with 141; and South Carolina and South Dakota required the same minimum score of 145 (ETS, 2014a).

Table 5. *Praxis: Educational Leadership Minimum Scaled Scores by SEA (ETS, 2014a)*

SEA	Minimum Score
AL	149
SC	145
SD	145
WV	141

Reading knowledge assessed. Using the method described for the SLLA, I analyzed and coded the Praxis test framework and content guide documents for any assessment of reading knowledge. The content guide for the Praxis was identical to the SLLA document and the candidate's knowledge of reading is not addressed in any way on the exam (ETS, 2012).

Summary

Three different forms of assessment were required for initial principal licensure by 43 SEAs: the SLLA, an SEA-developed measure, or the Praxis: Educational Leadership. All test frameworks and content guide documents were investigated and analyzed. Reading knowledge was not assessed by any of the required examinations.

Of the four SEAs that required varying degrees of reading knowledge, Missouri did not require an assessment. Both Kentucky and Missouri mandated the SLLA, and Illinois required an SEA-developed examination. The requirement that a candidate possess knowledge of reading was not assessed by these examinations.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, I presented the findings of a content analysis of two types of documents for 51 SEAs (50 states and the District of Columbia): (a) the current published rules and regulations regarding initial licensure for educational administration, along with supporting documents referenced in the rules; and (b) the test frameworks and content guides for any SEA-required assessments. Table 6 summarizes the results for all 51 SEAs.

I found that four SEAs, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Missouri, required varying degrees of reading knowledge for initial licensure as a principal. The requirements for initial principal licensure in Illinois were the most comprehensive; however, this knowledge was not assessed on the required SEA-developed examination. Although Missouri required general knowledge of reading for elementary and secondary principals and specific reading knowledge for middle school principals, none of this knowledge was assessed on the required SLLA examination. Finally, Kentucky and Minnesota mandated that candidates for P-12 and K-12 initial administrator licensure have a general knowledge of literacy curriculum. Kentucky did not assess this literacy knowledge with the required SLLA exam, and Minnesota did not mandate an assessment for initial administrative licensure.

Table 6. *Summary of Reading Knowledge Requirements by SEA*

SEA	Administrator Licensure Levels	Requirements for reading knowledge for licensure	Type of Licensure Assessment	Assessment addresses reading knowledge
AL	P-12	No	PRAXIS	No
AK	K-8; 7-12; K-12	No	None	NA
AZ	PreK-12	No	SEA Developed	No
AK	P-12	No	SLLA	No
CA	P-12	No	SEA Developed	No
CO	K-12	No	SEA Developed	No
CT	K-12	No	SEA Developed	No
DE	K-12	No	None	NA
DC	P-12	No	SLLA	No
FL	K-12	No	SEA Developed	No
GA	P-12	No	SEA Developed	No
HI	K-12	No	None	NA

SEA	Administrator Licensure Levels	Requirements for reading knowledge for licensure	Type of Licensure Assessment	Assessment addresses reading knowledge
ID	PreK-12	No	None	NA
IL	PreK-12	Yes	SEA Developed	No
IN	K-12	No	SEA Developed	No
IA	PreK-12	No	None	NA
KS	PreK-12	No	SLLA	No
KY	P-12	Yes	SLLA	No
LA	PreK-12	No	SLLA	No
ME	K-12	No	SLLA	No
MD	PreK-12	No	SLLA	No
MA	PreK-6; 5-8; 9-12	No	None	No
MI	K-12	No	None	No
MN	K-12	Yes	None	No

SEA	Administrator Licensure Levels	Requirements for reading knowledge for licensure	Type of Licensure Assessment	Assessment addresses reading knowledge
MS	K-12	No	SLLA	No
MO	K-8; 5-9; 7-12	Yes	SLLA	No
MT	K-8; 5-12; K-12	No	None	NA
NE	PK-8; 7-12 PK-12	No	None	NA
NV	K-12	No	None	NA
NH	K-12	No	None	NA
NJ	K-12	No	SLLA	No
NM	PreK-12	No	SEA Developed	No
NY	PreK-12	No	SEA Developed	No
NC	K-12	No	None	NA
ND	K-8; 5-12	No	None	NA
OH	PreK-6; 4-9;	No	SEA Developed	NA

SEA	Administrator Licensure Levels	Requirements for reading knowledge for licensure	Type of Licensure Assessment	Assessment addresses reading knowledge
	5-12			
OK	K-8; 4-8; 6-12	No	SEA Developed	No
OR	PreK-12	No	SEA Developed	No
PA	K-12	No	SLLA	No
RI	PreK-12	No	SLLA	No
SC	K-8; 7-12	No	PRAXIS	No
SD	PreK-8; 7-12; PreK-12	No	PRAXIS	No
TN	PreK-12	No	SLLA	No
TX	EC-12	No	SEA Developed	No
UT	K-12	No	SLLA	No
VT	PreK-12	No	None	No
VA	PreK-12	No	SLLA	No

SEA	Administrator Licensure Levels	Requirements for reading knowledge for licensure	Type of Licensure Assessment	Assessment addresses reading knowledge
WA	P-12	No	None	NA
WV	PreK-12	No	PRAXIS	No
WI	EC-12	No	None	NA
WY	K-6; 5-8; 6-12; K-12	No	None	NA

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

We remain a nation without a clear sense of what we want our students to learn, how we want our teachers to teach, and in turn, what instructional leaders need to do to facilitate improved teaching. (Neumerski, 2012, p. 330)

Research has demonstrated that the principal's impact on student achievement is second only to classroom instruction (Leithwood et al., 2004). At the same time, nearly a half century of NAEP results have repeatedly shown that more than 50% of all fourth- and eighth-grade students across the United States are reading below proficient levels (NCES, 2013b). In 1979, Kean et al. documented a link between a principal's knowledge of reading and students' reading achievement, and although few subsequent investigations have pursued that relationship explicitly, related inquiry into the nature of the principal's role has helped to provide a more detailed picture.

Not long after Kean et al.'s (1979) study, the role of the principal as an instructional leader became a prominent line of research (Hallinger, 2005). Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) three-dimensional conceptualization of instructional leadership is the most thoroughly articulated and widely cited model (Leithwood et al., 2004). The three leadership functions within the dimension of managing the instructional program– supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress–require the principal to be "hip deep" (p. 226) in the curriculum and to possess expertise about both the content and effective instruction of content (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). These functions are especially critical with regard to implementing and

sustaining effective leadership in reading instruction. Stein and Nelson (2003) described the leadership content knowledge in literacy that principals must possess as having three components: a thorough knowledge of reading, an understanding of effective approaches to instruction, and the ability to lead their teachers' professional learning.

Translating the research into practice, as the literacy demands on students have increased, the authors of several policy pieces (e.g., Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; CCAAL, 2010) and the leadership of key organizations (e.g., NAESP, 2013a, b; NASSP, 2005, 2013a,b) have called for principals to possess reading knowledge in order to act effectively as instructional leaders in literacy. But to what extent are principals *required* to possess leadership content knowledge in reading as a condition of initial licensure? In their 2011 review of general educational administrator licensure policies, Roach et al. (2011) found that only two SEAs, Florida and Maryland, specifically mentioned reading knowledge as a condition of principal licensure, and in the case of Maryland the knowledge was required only for recertification purposes, five years after the issuance of the initial administrative license. The disconnect between what research has documented and professional organizations have demanded, on the one hand, and what licensing bodies require, on the other, warrants close inspection. To that end, the purpose of this descriptive study was to review the current reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure for 51 SEAs (50 states and the District of Columbia).

In the next section, I discuss my findings and consider possible limitations to my research. I conclude with a discussion of the policy implications of my results and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Through this study, I endeavored first to determine what, if any, reading knowledge was explicitly required for initial licensure as an educational administrator and then what, if any, reading knowledge was assessed for licensure. It was important to explore each of these avenues because requirements and assessments might work independently of one another to assure reading expertise. For example, if an SEA required an assessment that reflected reading knowledge but did not explicitly mention that knowledge in its requirements, it would be reasonable to assume a certain level of expertise on the part of principals, simply because they had passed the assessment. In contrast, an SEA that did not mandate an assessment but required reading knowledge might assure that a candidate possessed such knowledge by indicating coursework, endorsements, teaching experience, or other manifestations of attainment.

Reading Knowledge Required and Assessed

The first research question explored the reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure for each of the 51 SEAs included in this study. The second research question sought to identify whether any reading knowledge was assessed for initial principal licensure. I found that four SEAs, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Missouri, explicitly required varying degrees of reading knowledge for initial

administrative licensure. None of the 51 SEAs assessed this knowledge for licensure. In fact, all 16 of the examinations analyzed for this study (the Praxis: Educational Leadership (ETS, 2014a), the SLLA (ETS, 2014b), and 14 SEA-developed examinations) did not assess the candidate's reading knowledge in any way. This was not an entirely unexpected result considering that the vast majority of SEAs did not explicitly require reading knowledge for initial licensure as an educational administrator. Likewise, the SLLA and the Praxis: Educational Leadership examinations are based directly on the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008), which do not include any mention of the reading knowledge that principal candidates should possess to effectively act as instructional leaders.

Licensure Range. Arguably, the leadership content knowledge necessary to be a successful school administrator differs considerably between the elementary and secondary levels. Yet, all but six SEAs offered administrator licensure that spanned grades P-12, PreK-12, or K-12. These broad ranges span every stage of reading development (Chall, 1983/1996). In order to act as an effective instructional leader in reading across all of these grade levels, the leadership content knowledge (Stein & Nelson, 2003) relating to the subject matter that a principal must possess includes a comprehensive understanding of the developmental trajectory along with effective reading instruction, assessment, and remediation at each stage of development. Yet, only one out of the 45 SEAs offering this type of wide-ranging licensure, Illinois, explicitly required this depth of reading knowledge for PreK-12 initial principal licensure.

Illinois. The reading knowledge that was explicitly required for initial principal licensure in Illinois was the most comprehensive in terms of the depth and content, with administrator licensure candidates expected to complete coursework in reading development, instruction, assessment, and remediation (23 Illinois Administrative Code 30, 23:1:30.50A5, 2013). Moreover, the SEA also delineated the required elements of the mandated content area reading coursework (23 Illinois Administrative Code 25, 23:1:25.25a1B, 2013).

However, it appears that the mandated SEA-developed assessment had yet to align with the newly adopted regulations. The content of the *Illinois Testing Licensure Testing System: Principal* was last revised in 2003 (Illinois State Board of Education, 2012a) while the regulations that include extensive, explicit reading knowledge requirements for principals were last adopted in 2013. Whether Illinois was in the process of updating the required SEA-developed assessment to reflect these new mandates was not clear from the available documents.

Despite the lack of an assessment, the newly revised regulations in Illinois certainly demonstrated the SEA's prioritization of ensuring that candidates for initial educational administrator licensure are equipped with the subject matter knowledge in reading required of an effective instructional leader across all grade levels.

Kentucky and Minnesota. Although Kentucky and Minnesota mandated general knowledge of school-wide literacy curricula for P-12 and K-12 initial principal licensure (Education Professional Standards Board, 2008; Minnesota Administrative Rules,

3512.0510 Supb.3A1, 2006), respectively, it was difficult to discern the type and content of this required knowledge. Whether this general knowledge would fully prepare a principal to effectively act as an instructional leader in literacy across the grade-level spectrum in which they are licensed is unclear. Neither SEA utilized an assessment that included a measure of the required reading knowledge. Kentucky required the SLLA exam, and no assessment was required in Minnesota. Consequently, the inconsistency between the knowledge required by these two SEAs and how possession of that knowledge was assessed could lead to different interpretations by the programs responsible for preparing and licensing principals.

Missouri. Missouri proved distinctly different from the three SEAs discussed above in that it was one of only six SEAs in the United States that licensed principal candidates at distinct grade levels. In order to obtain initial principal licensure at the elementary or secondary level, specialized coursework in either elementary administration and curriculum or secondary administration and curriculum, respectively, was required (Missouri CSR Rules of Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 5 CSR 20-400.160, 2012). At both levels, Missouri required that principal candidates were knowledgeable and/or competent in the "instruction" of reading. However, no further description of the type or depth of this knowledge was provided in the regulation. The requirements for initial middle school principal licensure, available only if the candidate qualified for either elementary or secondary licensure, were more specific in terms of reading knowledge. Candidates for middle school licensure were

mandated to have completed coursework in "methods of teaching reading" with at least one course in teaching reading in the content areas.

Although Missouri's requirements for initial middle school principal licensure were more explicit than for elementary and secondary licensure, the regulations were nonetheless vague in terms of the content and depth of reading knowledge necessary to meet the requirements. Further, Missouri required the SLLA examination (ETS, 2014b) for licensure, an instrument that does not assess the candidate's reading knowledge.

Florida. In Roach et al.'s (2011) study of licensure requirements, Florida was one of two SEAs that specifically required reading knowledge for principal licensure. However, by the time of the present study, Florida's reading knowledge requirements for initial K-12 principal licensure had changed significantly–and not necessarily for the better.

Then. In 2005, Florida's Principal Leadership Standards mandated that "high performing leaders…provide an effective instructional program and apply best practices to student learning, especially in the area of reading and other foundational skills" (Florida Administrative Code, FAC Rule 6A-5.080.1A, 2005). The third edition of the *Competencies and Skills Required for Certification in Educational Leadership in Florida* (Florida Administrative Code, FAC Rule 6A-4.00821, 2008) included several competencies related to reading development, instruction, assessment, and remediation within the overarching instructional leadership standard. For example, initial principal

licensure candidates were expected to demonstrate their "knowledge of instructional leadership" as follows:

1. Given school-based student assessment data on reading performance, identify research-based reading instruction to improve student achievement.
2. Given school-based student assessment data on reading performances, identify instructional strategies to facilitate students' phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension throughout the content areas. (Florida Administrative Code, FAC Rule 6A-4.00821, 2008)

Notably, this document also served as the test framework for the required SEA-developed assessment for initial principal licensure in Florida.

Now. As of January 1, 2014, the competencies and knowledge described in the 2008 document cited above are no longer valid and will not be assessed on the required SEA-developed examination (Florida Administrative Code, FAC Rule 6A-4.00821.2C, 2013). This action was taken to align the competencies and assessment with the 2011 revision of Florida's Principal Leadership Standards (Florida Administrative Code, FAC Rule 6A-5.080, 2011). The newly revised standards are

> based on contemporary research on multi-dimensional school leadership, and represent skill sets and knowledge bases needed in effective schools. The Standards form the foundation for school leader personnel evaluations and professional development systems, school leadership preparation programs, and educator certification requirements. (Florida Administrative Code, FAC Rule 6A-5.080.1A, 2011)

However, all references to any required reading knowledge have been eliminated from the standards for principals. Likewise, the fourth edition of the *Competencies and Skills Required for Certification in Educational Leadership in Florida* (Florida Administrative

Code, FAC Rule 6A-4.00821, 2012) no longer requires competencies related to any type of reading knowledge, meaning that it is no longer assessed for initial principal licensure.

In short, until 2011, Florida would have been the only SEA to both require and assess comprehensive reading knowledge for initial principal licensure. It is unclear what precipitated this very significant change regarding the deletion of all reading knowledge requirements for principals in Florida.

Institutional Isomorphism and the ISLLC Standards

Roach et al. (2011) cited institutional isomorphism as a potential explanation of the reliance by most of the SEAs on the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008) to determine requirements and qualifications for principal licensure. Although not the direct focus of this study, data regarding the SEAs' reference to or use of the ISLLC Standards were collected. Similar to Roach et al.'s findings, the majority of SEAs continued to directly cite the ISLLC Standards, with many adopting the Standards verbatim as regulations for initial licensure.

Many SEAs are also expanding upon the ISLLC Standards (2008) to explicitly require that principal candidates for initial licensure demonstrate specific knowledge of and/or competencies in areas such as educational technology, special education, and English language learners. These modifications go well beyond the scope of the Standards and offer a subtle recognition by policy makers that the Standards may not fully encompass the knowledge and competencies necessary for the principalship– especially with respect to instructional leadership.

Despite the research demonstrating the impact of effective instructional leadership on student achievement (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006), only one of the six ISLLC Standards is devoted to the principal's role in the instructional program. Moreover, the functions within that standard are written in broad terms and may not offer the specificity necessary to prompt SEAs to ensure that initial principal licensure candidates are fully prepared to meet the challenges of leading and evaluating instruction–hence, the SEA-specific modifications. Likewise, the modifications to the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008) also demonstrate the priorities of the SEA. Undoubtedly, all SEAs prioritize special education; however, several took the extra step of explicitly requiring that principals possess this knowledge and/or demonstrate competencies for initial licensure. To that end, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri explicitly recognized the crucial role that the principal plays with regard to literacy by modifying the ISLLC Standards to varying degrees to include requirements for principals with respect to reading knowledge. (Minnesota did not reference the ISLLC Standards.) Regardless of whether institutional isomorphism is, in fact, responsible for the widespread use of the ISLLC Standards (CCSSO, 2008), blanket adoption of the Standards may not address all of the crucial areas of knowledge that a principal should possess for licensure.

Assessments. Both the SLLA (ETS, 2014b) and the Praxis: Educational Leadership (ETS, 2014a) examinations assessed proficiencies based on the ISLLC Standards. One or the other of these examinations was required for initial licensure in 19

SEAs. However, the minimum scale scores mandated for passage varied widely across SEAs, with a 9-point difference between the lowest and highest required minimum–a salient example of the discrepant expectations for principal knowledge among SEAs. Notably, the number of SEAs that required no assessment of initial principal licensure candidates (n=18) exceeded the number that utilized any of the 16 assessments analyzed for this study. Moreover, the three SEAs that required both an assessment and reading knowledge did not employ an assessment that reflected such knowledge.

Teaching Experience

One possible explanation for the lack of reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure could be the SEA's reliance on the candidate's experience prior to administrative licensure. All but six SEAs required from two to seven years of experience for initial principal licensure. However, the nature of this experience differed greatly. Some SEAs required school experience that included positions such as school counseling, health services, and support personnel. Other SEAs specified that candidates have licensed classroom teaching experience but did not specify the content taught. No SEA required a specific subject area of classroom experience (reading or otherwise) for initial principal licensure. This lack of specificity, along with the absence of any school experience requirement for a handful of SEAs, is problematic. For example, an educator with teaching experience in secondary mathematics or driver's education would not have had the same background in literacy as an elementary school classroom teacher, yet in

most SEAs they were deemed to be equally qualified, in terms of reading knowledge, for licensure from Preschool through grade 12.

Limitations

It is important to recognize potential limitations of this study. First and foremost, SEA rules and regulations can quickly become outdated, as new requirements are constantly being written and adopted. In consequence, the results of this study are confined by the last date that data were collected. It is possible that some SEAs may be in the process of adopting explicit reading knowledge requirements for initial principal licensure.

Additionally, a handful of SEAs were in the process of developing new assessments for principal licensure at the time of data collection. For example, the examination mandated by California and that can in fact be used to test out of a principal preparation program will no longer be offered after June 30, 2014 (Pearson, 2014). According to the examination website, the SEA "expects to begin piloting new assessments for use as an expedited route … in 2015" (Pearson, 2014, para. 1). As SEA requirements for principals evolve and change, the assessments will likely follow suit in content and/or form.

The focus of this study was on the *explicit* reading knowledge for initial *principal* licensure. Many SEAs require varying types of reading knowledge for teaching licensure, in some or all content areas (Levine, 2006; Lovette, 2013; NCTQ, 2012; Salerno & Lovette, 2012), and also subsequently require licensed teaching experience, either within

that SEA or in another, for initial administrative licensure. However, these indirect requirements were beyond the scope of this study. Notably, the four SEAs that required explicit reading knowledge on the part of principals also required varying degrees of reading knowledge for teaching licensure. This is an important distinction, given that 46 SEAs grant reciprocity for teaching and principal licensure (National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Licensure, 2013). The explicit requirement of reading knowledge for administrative licensure ensures that prospective principal candidates from outside the SEA possess this knowledge, especially if they received their teaching licensure from an SEA that did not require reading knowledge.

Finally, only initial licensure requirements, or the first point at which a candidate can act in the capacity of an administrator, were investigated in this study. Reading knowledge may be explicitly required to renew an administrative license or to advance to the next tier of licensure, if applicable. Likewise, I considered only traditional routes to initial principal licensure. SEAs may require and/or assess reading knowledge for alternative principal licensure.

Policy Implications

As this dissertation is focused solely at the level of the SEA, namely on the explicit reading knowledge required for initial principal licensure, its implications are most germane to current licensure policies enacted by state departments of education. Cheney and Davis (2011) have described state policymakers as "the gatekeepers who determine who can become a principal" (p. 4) by determining the criteria for approving

principal preparation programs and setting licensure requirements for each SEA. They have asserted that

> policies in both areas are weak, lack alignment to standards of effectiveness and current best practices, and fail to require aspiring principals to demonstrate competencies. The result is that thousands of principals across the country are licensed each year under antiquated laws that are misaligned to the skills and dispositions research shows principals need to be effective. (p. 4)

The results of this dissertation highlight the disparate expectations concerning principals' knowledge of reading at the point of initial licensure. Whether we gauge their knowledge in terms of explicit requirements or mandated assessments, nearly all of the 51 SEAs studied are licensing principals to lead all levels of schools without ensuring that they possess the reading knowledge necessary to effectively act as an instructional leader in literacy.

Reading Knowledge Requirements for Initial Principal Licensure

Several states offer important lessons (both positive and negative) concerning how the goal of increasing principals' knowledge of reading can be achieved. Before Florida revised its regulations regarding initial principal licensure, it was the only SEA that both required and assessed comprehensive reading knowledge for initial licensure as an educational administrator. Ironically, it is now one of the 47 SEAs that neither explicitly require nor assess a principal candidate's knowledge of reading for initial licensure. However, its previous regulations and assessment can still serve as a model for SEAs that choose to explicitly require and assess this knowledge. Florida developed its own examination for initial principal licensure instead of relying on the ISLLC–based

(CCSSO, 2008) SLLA (ETS, 2014b) or Praxis: Educational Leadership (ETS, 2014a) examinations.

Just as Florida has moved away from requiring reading knowledge, Illinois has moved in the opposite direction. The new requirements in the Illinois education code leave little doubt that principal candidates must possess comprehensive reading knowledge for initial principal licensure. A problem, however, lies in the verification of such knowledge. One approach would be to assess it on the required licensure examination – a component that, at this writing, is lacking in the required SEA-developed examination in Illinois.

As Robinson (2006) asserted, "educational leadership is deeply embedded in subject specific knowledge, and leaders who have such knowledge will be more confident in and capable of leading instructional improvement" (p. 70). Educational code is constantly being updated and revised by policymakers, and there are consequently many opportunities for SEAs to begin the process of ensuring that principal licensure candidates possess the subject matter knowledge necessary for leadership content knowledge in literacy (Stein & Nelson, 2003).

Just as Illinois and Florida can serve as examples of what to do and not to do to assure comprehensive reading knowledge for initial principal licensure, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Missouri have laid important groundwork of their own by requiring general reading knowledge of candidates; however, more specificity would limit the

potential for varying interpretations of the requirements by principal preparation programs and other stakeholders.

Finally, a handful of SEAs have begun to require comprehensive reading knowledge for all teachers–both practicing and preservice–through the completion of SEA-developed courses, but they have not enacted similar requirements for administrators. For example, Idaho now requires the completion of both the *Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Course* and the corresponding assessment for all initial teaching licenses (Idaho Statutes, Title 33, Chapter 12, 33-1207A.1, 2010). Expanding these existing mandates in some SEAs to include principal licensure candidates would be a logical next step.

Common Core State Standards. Despite the almost universal adoption of the CCSS (CCSSI, 2012), as shown in Figure 7, and the calls for principals at all levels to be prepared to lead the widespread literacy initiatives required to effectively implement the ELA standards (NAESP, 2013a; NASSP, 2013a, b), virtually all of the SEAs that have adopted the Common Core do not require principals to possess reading knowledge for licensure. Not surprisingly, a national survey of 1,000 principals revealed that the vast majority reported feeling "underprepared" (NAESP, 2013b) to lead the curricular changes required by the CCSS. Although one of the goals of the CCSS is to provide SEAs with a common set of standards for the instruction of students, if all principals do not possess the leadership content knowledge in literacy necessary to act as effective

instructional leaders through the necessary and significant curricular changes, the success of the ELA CCSS may be hindered.

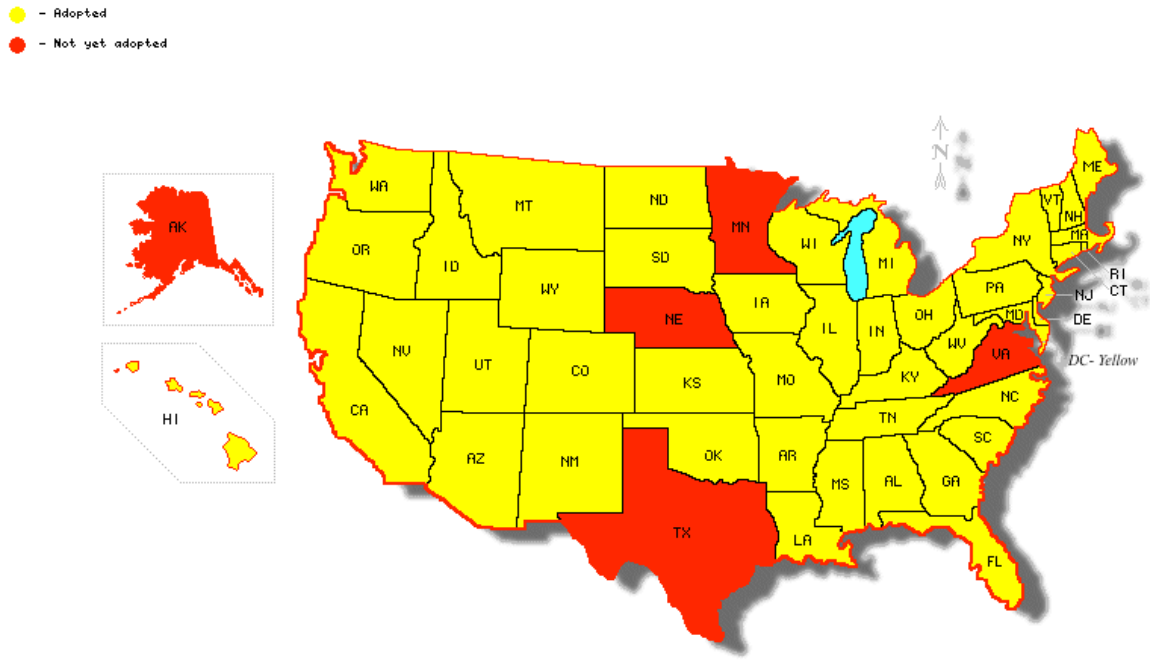

Figure 7. SEA Adoption of the CCSS (CCSSI, 2012)

Principal Preparation Programs

Although beyond the scope of this study, principal preparation programs have considerable potential as a means of ensuring that candidates for licensure possess the knowledge of reading they need to be effective leaders. To be sure, there are principal preparation programs that use SEA requirements for initial licensure as a minimum, offering experiences that go well beyond the requirements (e.g., Orr & Orphanos, 2011), so it is entirely possible that some programs may mandate reading knowledge of principal candidates even if it is not a licensure requirement by the SEA. In general, however,

principal preparation programs have been slow to change to meet the increasing instructional leadership demands placed on principals (Levine, 2005; Murphy et al., 2008), and the quality of both the candidates accepted into these programs and the coursework provided to them have repeatedly been criticized (e.g., Levine, 2005). Murphy, Moorman, and McCarthy (2008) found that many principal preparation programs had not updated their coursework requirements and content in several decades despite the fact that a "large number of universities stated that teaching and learning were at the core of their programs, but few of them had a course on 'student learning' or an offering on 'quality instructional practices'" (p. 2193). As SEAs set the criteria for approving principal preparation programs (Cheney & Davis, 2011), the impetus, then, is on the SEA to require that such programs provide coursework in reading knowledge to principal candidates.

Future Research

The research demonstrating a correlation between the principal's reading knowledge and students' reading achievement is scarce and outdated. Further research is necessary to update our understanding of this relationship in order to clearly establish the need for principals to possess and demonstrate reading knowledge.

Examining the connection between knowledge and achievement could involve an ambitious agenda employing a variety of methodologies. A quantitative approach, using a process-product design, could begin with the problem of instrumentation by (1) developing a valid and reliable knowledge survey reflecting current understandings of

reading development and instruction; (2) administering the survey to practicing principals and determining the relationship of their scores to achievement, when key factors (such as poverty, teacher experience, and so forth) are controlled. Next, targeted professional development in reading development, assessment, instruction, and remediation would be provided to principals whose knowledge is judged to be questionable. Thereafter, achievement could be monitored to determine the extent to which it is impacted (again, while accounting for other factors).

Connecticut is carrying out an agenda somewhat similar to this but with practicing teachers. Effective July 1, 2014, all active K-3 teachers in the state are required to complete the SEA-developed Foundations of Reading examination. The results will not be used for licensure purposes; rather the SEA will be using the results to

> identify strengths and weaknesses in knowledge of reading instruction based on the reading objectives surveyed, and provide disaggregate and aggregate data at the individual educator, school and district level. The results shall be used to develop student learning objectives (SLOs) and teacher practice goals and will inform professional learning. (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2013, para. 4)

Expanding this program to include principals at all levels would help to target professional development in reading.

A qualitative approach would entail an examination of how high-scoring principals (determined through the first study) make use of their knowledge. By identifying the actions they take, the correlation between principal knowledge and student

achievement could be elaborated in useful ways. The content of professional learning and principal preparation programs could be modified accordingly.

Final Thought

Sobering statistics have repeatedly shown that more than half of U.S. students are struggling to master basic reading skills (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; NCES, 2013b). At the same time, literacy demands on students are increasing to unprecedented levels (CCSSI, 2012). Effective instructional leadership in reading, at all levels, has never been so important. Therefore, it is imperative that, as a condition for licensure, *all* principals possess leadership content knowledge in reading that spans the grade levels for which they are to be licensed. As one practicing elementary school principal reported to the Harold K. L. Castle Foundation in 2010, "learning to be an instructional leader once you're a principal is really hard. You don't have time and you might not have the credibility you need to have an impact on curriculum from the very beginning" (p. 4).

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