

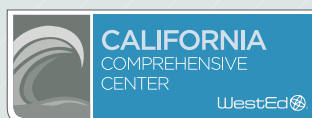


Initial Impact of the California Administrator Performance Assessment (CalAPA) Policy on Preparation Programs

Executive Summary

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WestEd is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency that works with education and other communities throughout the United States and abroad to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has more than a dozen offices nationwide, from Massachusetts, Vermont, Georgia, and Washington, DC, to Arizona and California, with headquarters in San Francisco.

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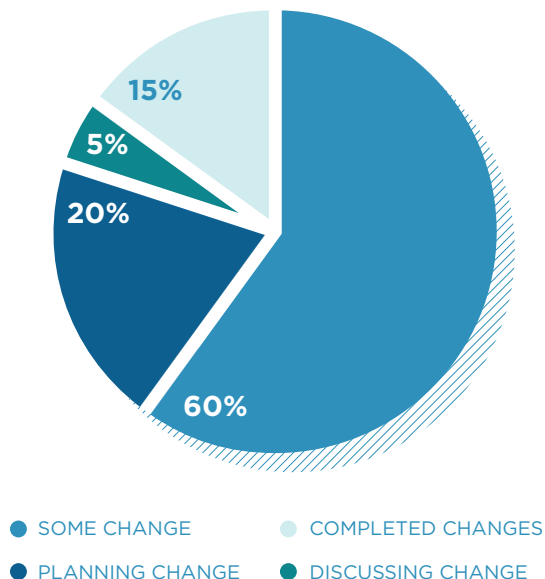
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Executive Summary

For the past six years, California has been revising its preparation system for school and district administrators, including developing the California Administrator Performance Assessment (CalAPA), the first required performance assessment for preliminary administrator certification. In this study, researchers from the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd, the Principal Leadership Institute at the University of California at Berkeley, and the Regional Educational Laboratory West at WestEd sought to examine the initial impact of the CalAPA policy by identifying early changes (i.e., changes made through March 30, 2018) in administrator preparation programs' practices.

Figure 1. By March 2018, three quarters of respondents reported completing all or some of the changes to their Preliminary Administrative Services Credential Programs in preparation for the administration of the CalAPA



Summary of Findings

In March 2018, researchers conducted individual phone interviews with lead staff from 20 sampled administrator preparation programs to discuss the most significant impacts of the CalAPA policy to date in the areas of coursework, fieldwork, resources, and support. Some highlights of the findings from these interviews are listed below.

Coursework

- **Curriculum: Program content.** Respondents indicated that changes, ranging from minor to major, have been made to their program's curriculum as a result of the CalAPA, including making curriculum shifts and ensuring stronger alignment to the tasks in the CalAPA.
- **Instruction.** Leaders described various current and anticipated instructional changes, which are tightly interwoven with performance expectations embedded in the CalAPA.
- **Course-based assignments and formative assessments.** Respondents reported that program assignments and formative feedback were changing in order to better guide and support candidates in passing the CalAPA and meeting the other Preliminary Administrative Services Credential (PASC) expectations. These changes include altering the order of assignments, deepening existing tasks, and creating new projects.

Fieldwork

- Program approaches to fieldwork generally centered on aligning fieldwork to the CalAPA policy, needing

to provide additional professional learning for fieldwork supervisors, and linking fieldwork more tightly to curriculum and instructional practices.

Resources

- **Human resources.** Programs reported the need to add staff, shift assignments, and create new positions; they described varied approaches to funding these additional human resources needed to implement the CalAPA policy.
- **Material and equipment.** Respondents' comments about changes in material and equipment resources due to the implementation of CalAPA policy varied greatly, but generally centered on textbooks and technology.
- **Time allocations.** Program respondents all described an increase in staff time devoted to understanding and implementing the CalAPA policy.

Support

- **CTC informational activities.** Many respondents attended a variety of CalAPA orientation activities offered by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and reported that the activities provided a foundational understanding of the CalAPA policy and what was required of them.
- **Increased CTC communication and consultation.** While programs recognized helpful early support, respondents also indicated a desire for increased and timely communications from CTC about policy.

- **Collaboration across programs.** Many asked for opportunities to connect with colleagues across programs as they make changes and implement new approaches.

Issues for Further Discussion

In addition to the study's findings, the report also provides commentary about key issues in the field of education that could affect administrator preparation programs and CalAPA implementation.

Questions About the Assessment

- **Feedback process.** Many leaders expressed an interest in candidates receiving formative and timely feedback on their CalAPA results and wondered how remediation will be handled for students who do not pass the CalAPA.
- **Scope.** Leaders expressed concern about the scope of the CalAPA. Some respondents worried that the CalAPA is more like a summative assessment for experienced administrators than a preliminary assessment for candidates at the start of their administrative careers.
- **Leadership cycles.** Respondents expressed specific concerns about the CalAPA leadership cycles and the lack of flexibility, with some suggesting merging cycles 1 and 2 or eliminating cycle 2 altogether.

Program-Level Constraints

- **Series of changes.** Respondents indicated that implementing the CalAPA policy required significant

changes in practice, which followed quickly on a series of other comprehensive revisions to the new statewide administrator credential system.

- **Staffing structures.** Respondents reported that their administrator preparation programs were constrained by having limited full-time faculty and being reliant on adjunct instructors and staff with limited availability for program development or research.
- **Limited professional opportunities.** Preliminary preparation programs operate in an underresourced professional culture with few professional networking and support options that specifically target administrator preparation programs and staff.
- **Lack of research funding.** The ability of the education field to prioritize a robust research agenda to study and guide administrator preparation is constrained by limited leadership development funds.

Candidate-Level Constraints

- **Competing commitments.** All but one of the respondents described their programs as customized for full-time working professionals, who are mostly classroom teachers; this can create competing commitments between teachers' professional responsibilities and their pursuit of administrator licensure.
- **Assessment concerns.** Many respondents expressed that the CalAPA's cycles represent an overwhelming set of expectations

and a very steep learning curve for candidates. In addition, some requirements of the assessment could create tension for the candidates with colleagues and supervisors.

The Role of State Agencies in Policy Implementation

- **Compliance and technical assistance.** The CTC's regulatory and disciplinary functions might inhibit preparation program leaders from revealing significant issues they have in implementing new policies such as the CalAPA.
- **Organizational capacity.** Respondents recognized that CTC staff have been responsive to the field and have prioritized direct support for preliminary preparation programs to the best of their organizational capacity. However, more and varied support is needed as the CalAPA, and other policy changes, roll out.

Concerns About Increased Accountability

- **Use of accountability measure.** Respondents assumed that programs will be compared against each other and that CalAPA results will be used as a high-stakes accountability measure by the CTC, employers, and potential applicants to their programs.
- **Narrowing of scope.** Program leaders reported concerns that they would need to design preparation programs overly focused on the CalAPA's expectations in order to ensure that candidates would be able to successfully complete the assessment.

Potential Challenges to the Ongoing Viability of Programs

- A program's finances could be thrown off if its enrollment numbers decline because its candidates cannot pass the CalAPA, or because candidates choose another program with a better pass rate or pursue a different preliminary credential pathway.

Considerations for Next Steps

Based on the study's findings and the Issues for Further Discussion section, the report offers the following short-term and longer-term actions for consideration:

Short-Term Considerations

- Continue to provide administrator preparation programs with clear and timely communications in various forms about policy requirements, timelines, changes, and emerging practices related to the CalAPA.
- Address initial questions and concerns about the assessment design.
- Increase efforts to educate K-12 schools and district leadership about the expectations of the assessment.
- Collaborate with K-12 schools and district leadership to develop local options for meeting the demands of other aspects of the CalAPA policy.
- Initiate more substantive and collaborative support that assists programs in providing a variety of help to candidates to successfully complete the preparation and

assessment process for the preliminary administrator credential.

- Clarify the parameters of the agency's leadership capacity in convening and sustaining preliminary program networks, and support program leaders in forming ad hoc cohorts or encouraging others — professional organizations, foundations, or fee-for-service providers — to sponsor them.

Longer-Term Considerations

- Resolve potential policy conflicts between the CalAPA and the California Preliminary Administrative Credential Examination exam pathways.
- Form a collaboration of agencies, institutions, and stakeholders to advocate for funding and resources to strengthen the field of education leader preparation that now includes the CalAPA.
- Invest in a broader and more robust research agenda to inform the ongoing implementation of the CalAPA policy.
- Determine how much funding to allocate to support research in the field of leadership preparation during this period of intense policy revision and implementation.

Overall, the study's findings can be used by administrator preparation programs, policymakers, and the education field at large to inform possible refinements to the CalAPA policy; inform ways that preparation programs integrate and implement the CalAPA; and help determine how best to support administrator candidates through the preparation and assessment process.

To access the full report, go to <https://www.wested.org/resources/california-administrator-performance-assessment-calapa-policy/>