



Licensing, Educator Advancement and Development

Information Bulletin

LEAD 24-002

March 2024

Date: Monday, March 25, 2024

To: District Administrators, School Boards, Other Interested Parties

From: Jennifer Kammerud, Director
LEAD Team (Licensing, Educator Advancement, and Development)

Subject: Licensure Required to Lead a School District

This bulletin is meant to answer questions regarding what licensure is required to lead a school district. Specific topics covered include:

- [Does a school district have to hire a district administrator?](#)
- [What duties can a person perform who does not possess a district administrator license?](#)
- [If our district hired a business manager or principal as our district head, how can they get licensed as a district administrator?](#)
- [What does our district need to do if we are planning to hire someone to lead our district who does not hold the district administrator license?](#)
- [Where can I find additional information?](#)

1. Does a school district have to hire a school district administrator?

No. Under Wisconsin Statutes §118.24 (1) a school board may employ a district administrator. It is not required to do so, although it is important for the functioning of the district that an individual be serving in that capacity. A school district administrator is defined in Wisconsin Statutes §115.001(8) to mean the school district superintendent, supervising principal, or other person who acts as the administrative head of a school district.

At the same time, the school district must hire someone serving as the administrative head who possesses a license from the Department of Public Instruction. Under Wisconsin Statutes §121.02 (1)(a)1., school boards are required to ensure that every

teacher, supervisor, administrator, and professional staff member holds a certificate, license, or permit to teach issued by the department before entering on duties for such position.

2. What duties can a person perform who does not possess a district administrator license?

A person hired to act as the administrative head of a school district must possess a license from the Department of Public Instruction under Wisconsin Statutes §121.02 (1)(a)1. The license, or licenses, held by the individual determines the scope of work the individual is authorized to do in schools in addition to any statutory requirements placed on the district administrator.

For instance, a business manager hired to lead a district may manage facilities, budgeting, operations, and personnel management and evaluation under the scope of the license but cannot perform duties related to curriculum and instruction or special education. Those duties would need to be delegated to someone with the appropriate principal or curriculum and instruction license for the former and special education license for the latter.

Another example is a licensed principal hired as the supervising principal of the district. The principal can perform functions related to evaluation of teachers, curriculum and instruction, and administrative responsibilities related to special education, but would need someone else to manage the accounting functions, evaluate other administrators in the district, and manage capital projects.

3. If our district hired a business manager or principal as our district head, how can they get licensed as a district administrator?

A business manager would need to have three years of teaching experience and then enroll in a program leading to principal and district administrator licensure. Three years of teaching experience does not have to be done on a full-time basis and the acquisition of the license to teach can occur through completion of an educator preparation program or the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence ([ABCTE](#)). A Tier I, one-year administrator license can be applied for while pursuing principal and/or district administrator certification. Acquisition of this license removes restrictions that exist on performing the administrative functions for which this license is issued (e.g. principal or district administrator).

A principal would need to complete an approved educator preparation program leading to district administrator licensure. If desired, a principal can apply for a Tier I, one-year administrator license while completing the program. Acquisition of this license allows the individual to perform all district administrator functions.

4. What does our district need to do if we are planning to hire someone to lead our district who does not hold the district administrator license?

If a school board appoints an individual as the administrative head without the district administrator license, the school board must submit a letter to the director of the Department of Public Instruction's Licensing, Educator Advancement and Development (LEAD) Team that contains the following information:

- a. The name of who will be leading the district and the current license(s) the individual holds in Wisconsin.
- b. The names and current licenses of individuals who will be performing the work that lies outside the scope of the newly hired district head and the general functions they will be performing.

This information will need to be updated on an annual basis to ensure DPI records are current and to account for flags in WISEstaff audit.

5. Where can I find more information?

- Submitting licensing questions
<https://dpi.wi.gov/support/contact-us>
- PI 34 Administrative Code on licensure
https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/pi/34.pdf