

School Principals

Principals supervise school buildings

A principal supervises a public school building at the assignment of a school board based on the district superintendent's recommendation. A school board is not required to assign a principal to a school, but most schools have a principal, and depending on the size of the school, may have one or more assistant principals.

A principal leads a school's educational program under the supervision of the district superintendent. Assistant principals' duties are not specified in statute. An assistant principal may carry out multiple functions within a school, including overseeing activities or curriculum.

A school district principal must hold a valid principal's license

A principal or assistant principal in a school district must hold a principal's license issued by the Board of School Administrators (BOSA). BOSA issues administrative licenses to principals, superintendents, and other school administrators, and adopts rules establishing licensure requirements, including rules relating to principal preparation programs, and continuing education requirements.

BOSA also adopts a code of ethics covering standards of professional practice for licensees. The board reviews complaints that a licensee has violated the code of ethics and may impose penalties, including suspending or revoking the license, issuing a letter of censure, and placing the licensee on probationary license status.

A charter school administrator who performs administrative, supervisory, or instructional leadership duties is not required to hold an administrative license. Instead, the charter school board of directors establishes qualifications for persons who hold administrative, supervisory, or instructional leadership roles. A person in any of these roles without an administrative license must develop a professional development plan, which must be documented in the school's annual report.

Principals may unionize

Principals and assistant principals have the right to bargain collectively with a school board under the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA). For purposes of PELRA, a "principal" or "assistant principal" is a person with a principal's license who devotes more than 50 percent of his or her time to administrative or supervisory duties.

Unlike other school employees, principals and assistant principals are "essential employees," meaning they do not have the right to go on strike when the parties reach impasse in the course of bargaining. Instead, principals and assistant principals may resolve an impasse through interest arbitration. The arbitrator must select between the final offers of the parties on each impasse item.

Principals may acquire tenure or continuing contract status

Principals and assistant principals may acquire tenure or continuing contract status under the same statutes that govern teacher tenure and continuing contracts. The tenure statute ([Minn. Stat. § 122A.41](#)) applies to districts in the four cities of the first class, and the continuing contract statute ([Minn. Stat. § 122A.40](#)) applies to all other districts. The statutes establish probationary periods of employment, and procedural requirements and substantive grounds for terminating a principal's employment.

In cities of the first class, a school board and principals' union may negotiate a plan for a probationary period of up to two school years for a teacher in the district who is later hired as a principal or assistant principal, and an additional probationary period of up to two years for an assistant principal later hired as a principal.

A school district must evaluate principals annually

A district must develop and implement a performance-based system for annually evaluating school principals. The superintendent must evaluate the district's principals. The evaluation must be designed to improve teaching and learning by supporting the principal in shaping the school's professional environment and developing teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness. The evaluation must, among other things:

- support and improve a principal's instructional leadership;
- include formative and summative evaluations;
- be consistent with a principal's job description and a district's long-term plans and goals;
- use longitudinal data on student academic growth as 35 percent of the evaluation; and
- implement a plan to improve the performance of principals not meeting standards of professional practice or other criteria, and specify the procedure and consequence if a principal's performance does not improve.

The evaluation data generated through the evaluation process is personnel data under [Minnesota Statutes, section 13.43](#), and therefore, not public.

The 2011 Legislature directed the commissioner of education and school principal associations to convene a group to develop a performance-based principal evaluation model. Since then, the Department of Education has revised the model based on stakeholder input. The model is available on the department's website at <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/prev/>.

Districts are not required to use the state model or to submit their evaluation systems to the commissioner of education for approval. The requirements of the principal evaluation system do not apply to assistant principal evaluations.

For more information: Contact legislative analyst Cristina Parra at cristina.parra@house.mn. Also see the House Research publication *School District Collective Bargaining*.

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