

**MASTER'S DEGREE**

**In**

**EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

**STUDY SYLLABUS**

**The following questions are designed to facilitate the work of students preparing for the comprehensive examination in Educational Administration and Supervision in the Master's Degree Program. Questions for the actual examination may or may not be similar to those appearing in the Study Syllabus.**

## ***Educational Leadership and Policy Studies***

### **HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

***The original work on this guide was done as part of an Independent Study project by ELPS graduate, Wendy L. Yost, M.A.***

**In revising this document, we have tried to honor Wendy's style and keep as much of her original ideas and "advice" as possible ... one student talking to another!**

***ELPS Department***

#### **CONGRATULATIONS!!!**

If you are reading this, chances are you have finished your coursework and are preparing to take the ELPS Comprehensive Exam. *That is quite an accomplishment!* Take a minute to pat yourself on the back and reflect on all that you have done and the things that you have sacrificed in order to get to this day.

So, here they are... ***"The Keys to Studying for the ELPS Comprehensive Exam."*** Good luck to you! And again, remember that the most critical factor to your passing this exam is already in your head.

**1. Get Organized!**

Go through all of your textbooks, your notes and handouts and establish a "need-to-study" pile. Also, if you have flashcards or old exams from any of your classes (especially Law or Finance), be sure to put them in the need-to-study pile. You may want to organize your notes and books from the courses you have taken by the areas of the Comp Exam itself.

**2. Establish a Study Group**

Although you may prefer to study alone some of the time, having a study group really does help. You can exchange sample essays, go through the questions listed in this guide together and quiz each other with the flashcards that members made for the School Law and Finance portions of the exam.

**3. Ask Questions**

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Taking an exam like this can be a scary thing and a great way to lessen your fears is to ask a lot of questions. Ask your group members for help if you don't understand something.

**5. Write Sample Essays**

Set aside time each week to write a sample essay. Take this process seriously--set up a workspace, set a timer and pick a question out of this guide at random. Keep in mind that writing a good essay requires that you brainstorm, write the essay and then review it. Doing a good essay in 50 minutes (which is all you'll have on the day of the exam) can be challenging. You may ask one of your favorite professors to critique and give you feedback on a sample-- limit of one per professor, please! Here are some other

suggestions that professors will usually make to help students:

- Be sure to read the questions carefully and answer all parts of them completely. You can write a fantastic essay, but if it does not address the question, it will not pass.
- Don't try to cover too many points in your essays. If the question says, "list three..." only list three. Trying to list any more than asked will work against you, due to the time constraint.

**6. Attend the ELPS Comps Study Seminar**

This is a scheduled session where the professors review concepts and will answer your questions about the comps. This session covers all the subjects and will provide important information in advance about the day of the exam. The seminar is usually scheduled in the beginning of the semester and everyone registered for the Comps Exam will be notified. At this seminar you will also have the opportunity to sign up for how you want to take the exam, whether using a computer in a lab or handwriting your essays. For school law and finance you will be using *Scantron* answer sheets, since these are objective-type exams (the other sections are essay type). It is important that you attend this seminar.

**7. Take Care of Yourself!**

Do what you need to do to stay healthy. Eat well, drink lots of water and get plenty of sleep in the week before the exam.

We hope that you find these points helpful. They will be reviewed by the professors at the Comps Seminar, but you can study them at your leisure both before and after the seminar. They are now on the ELPS website ([www.csun.edu/education/elps](http://www.csun.edu/education/elps)).

Best of luck to you with the exam and all your future endeavors! You will be proud to put those two little letters after your name and you certainly will have earned it!

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAM STUDY SYLLABUS--SECTION I:

### GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

1. A supervisor can facilitate effective communication. Discuss three (3) of the skills necessary to facilitate effective communication.
2. Katz, and several other writers in the field, have suggested that the school administrator should possess considerable skills in each of three general categories--human skills, technical skills, and conceptual skills. For each of these categories, discuss briefly three tasks of the principal that demand expertise in the specific skill (i.e., three human, three technical, and three conceptual).
3. List and describe three sources of conflict in an organization and tell what the supervisor can do to reduce each.
4. Administrators are continuously faced with the task of making decisions with regard to issues, personnel problems, operational procedures, etc. Discuss the dynamics of the decision-making process.
5. Alternative schools are developing in many districts across the country. Give a definition of alternative school tell why they have come into existence, how they are evaluated and speculate upon their future development either within or outside of the prevailing school system.
6. It is a commonly expressed opinion that the "image" of the public school has become "tarnished" in recent years. (a) List what you consider to be the three greatest causes of this decline in public esteem, and (b) briefly discuss what you, as a principal, would propose to reverse this trend and enhance the prestige of your community's schools.
7. Identify and discuss in some detail six principles of an effective school community relations program.
8. List and discuss (a) what you consider to be the three most cogent arguments in favor of district-wide testing for "minimum competencies and (b) why it's important.
9. Briefly discuss several of the most prominent arguments advanced (a) in support of collective bargaining for public employees and (b) in opposition to such bargaining.
10. Arguments are frequently advanced that teacher tenure should be abolished now that teachers are protected by strong unions and collective bargaining agreements. Choose one side of this issue and draft a statement supporting your point of view.
11. The current public clamor for "higher standards" has led numerous boards of education to consider mandating a "C" average for graduation from high school. The superintendent has asked his principals to provide a report with the "pros" and "cons" of such a move. Discuss the points you will present to the superintendent.
12. A recent change in many school programs involve the use of a number of instructional aides and other non-certificated personnel working with students. Discuss several concerns a principal might have regarding the use of aides and steps that could be taken to alleviate these concerns.
13. With the shortage of funds, some districts have started educational foundations where citizens of the community can donate tax-exempt gifts to the schools. State the arguments for or against such a foundation being started in the school district where you are the principal.
14. School-based Management has been implemented by some major school districts and is being considered for implementation by other school districts. List three (3) disadvantages of school-based management.
15. Legislation has recently been introduced in the California Legislature that would make a fine and/or imprisonment mandatory for any student assault on a teacher. Discuss the

pros and cons of such a law.

16. Recently there have been indications of gang activity developing in your previously gang-free district. Fights, graffiti, gang symbols, etc. have been noted by staff and the police. Discuss what steps you, as the principal, might take to address this problem.
17. As a site administrator you are asked by the superintendent to present the advantages and disadvantages of the School of Choice Proposal at a future Board of Education meeting. Provide the process you would follow to prepare and the report as requested by the superintendent.
18. The Board of Education has asked that the district revise and update the Student Discipline Policy. Discuss steps you, as the staff person in charge of this rewriting project, would take in the completion of this change.
19. Vandalism has become a significant problem in the district with several instances of damaged classrooms and significant financial losses sustained. Indicate some steps you, as the principal of the district, might take in response to this problem.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION STUDY SYLLABUS--SECTION II:

### **PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND SUPERVISION**

1. A major question in curriculum is: "Who determines what we teach in the schools?" Identify and discuss what persons or groups determine the curriculum content in the schools today and from whom do they derive their authority?
2. Outline the procedures you would follow in conducting an action research program to improve student learning in school: (a) list the specific steps to be accomplished and (b) briefly explain its implementation.
3. Many schools face sanctions from No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Discuss two components of this program and how an administrator might respond in affecting change.
4. The increase in required courses mandated by changes in the state law and college entrance requirements have seriously decreased the opportunity for students to enroll in elective courses. Cite several arguments for and several arguments against the increase in required courses.
5. Name and discuss three forces/agencies, external to the local schools, that are currently contributing to the initiation of curriculum change in California.
6. Discuss the role of the building principal in bringing about curriculum improvement.
7. What do you consider the three most critical curriculum issues facing educational leaders today? Discuss your number one issue and indicate how you believe the schools should respond to it.
8. Discuss the arguments for and against national/federal standards.
9. A small group of parents and citizens has attacked two textbooks being used in a science course. Discuss the steps you would take to respond to this attack.
10. Evaluation and self-evaluation are playing a major part in the improvement of the instructional program in the modern-day school. Describe the techniques the supervisor might employ in evaluating the following: (a) Himself/herself; (b) the supervisors role; and (c) the school program.
11. Outline a procedure to be followed by a school supervisor in (a) planning a classroom visitation with a teacher; (b) making the visit; and (c) the conference, which follows the visitation.
12. You have been asked to be in charge of the professional development program for a school district. What are some key elements you would consider in planning for the year ahead?
13. List several rather specific practices or activities of classroom teachers that tend to contribute to their teaching effectiveness. Discuss in detail any two of these practices, and explain why they are so effective.
14. Indicate three reasons teachers fail to achieve maximum effectiveness in the classroom and the actions a supervisor may take to help teachers increase effectiveness in these areas.
15. One of the major roles of a principal is "instructional leadership." Describe three (3) important aspects of this leadership.
16. Discuss in detail two specific practices or activities of classroom teachers that contribute significantly to their teaching effectiveness and explain why they are so effective.
17. As a school principal you want to establish a peer coaching program at your school. Describe what the program might involve and how you would implement it.
18. What are the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and how might a principal use them to improve instruction among teachers?

19. Developmental Supervision of teachers calls for the use of different supervisory approaches by the supervisor. Describe three different approaches that might be used and the rationale for each.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAM STUDY SYLLABUS--SECTION III:

### ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. Discuss briefly what you would consider to be the five most critical “areas of competence” needed by today’s school principal and explain the reasons why each area is important.
2. You recently have been appointed principal in a new district. Describe the steps you would take to establish a school climate that encourages change and innovation on the part of the faculty and explain why each step is important.
3. For many years many educators have advocated the elimination of small school districts and amalgamation, unification, etc. to form increasingly larger administrative units. More recently the trend appears to have reversed, with the talk now largely in terms of decentralization. Discuss the factors which tend to operate in favor of large districts and those which appear to make decentralization desirable.
4. What are steps necessary to establish a full inclusion program for special needs students in your school?
5. Discuss several major issues that should be considered in determining whether or not to move from a (K-6)-(7-9)-(10-12)-school configuration to a (K-5)-(6-8)-(9-12) organizational plan.
6. The percentage of students at a given age level who continue in school to high school graduation rose very markedly from the early part of the century (20th) for a considerable period of time. More recently it has declined quite substantially. Cite and discuss what you believe to be the three most compelling reasons for this decline and some means that a district might employ to reverse the trend in each of the three areas.
7. The board has requested that several of the school principals in the district prepare position papers dealing with the duties and responsibilities of a principal. You have been given the topic, “The Role of the Principal in Enhancing the Instructional Process.” Prepare a paper responding to this topic.
8. One of the signs of a good leader is his/her willingness to delegate administrative authority and responsibility. Describe four criteria that you, as a school principal, would employ in determining what should and what should not be delegated.
9. Describe how you, as a principal, would promote maximum participation of the school staff in the decision making process within your school.
10. Articulation between the elementary and junior high school is of great concern to parents, students, both staffs and the board. Since both you and the junior high principal are new to the district, the superintendent feels that now would be a good time for a change. He has requested that both principals individually submit a plan for articulation and then later both will meet to form and agree on the plan to be implemented. Prepare your plan.
11. IDEA (Previously Public Law 94-142) continues to have a tremendous impact on public education. Discuss four of the major features of this bill.
12. Assume that you have been recently appointed principal of a new school. Describe how you would proceed in establishing an effective school-community relations program in your school.
13. One of the recognized responsibilities of a school principal is that of providing an orientation program for new teachers to his/her school. Discuss what components go into the development of a quality orientation program.
14. Much has been written about mission statements of organizations, and you have learned



the importance of a “shared vision” for your school. As the new principal of your school, present how you would develop such a statement and what you would need to do to ensure that it relates to the shared vision.

15. In current contract negotiations, the Teachers’ union has expressed its desire that teachers have a greater role in the decision making at their individual schools. The school board is split on this issue and has requested input from the principals in the district. As a principal, describe four guidelines that you feel should be included in any policy that the board might submit for negotiation.
16. You have been appointed principal of a new school in the district. At least half of the staff will be new to the district. Describe what steps you would take to insure a climate that would permit and encourage innovation on the part of the staff as individuals and as a staff
17. The editor of the local paper has called and requested that you prepare an article on the Role and Purpose of Alternative Schools at the Secondary Level. Prepare such an article.
18. The high school of which you are principal will soon be visited by an accrediting team of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The local newspaper editor has called and indicated that she feels that the community knows very little about this undertaking and has requested that you prepare an article for publication, which would explain the purposes and procedures of the accreditation. Prepare such an article.

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAM STUDY SYLLABUS--SECTION IV:

### HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Discuss briefly what you would consider to be the five most critical “areas of competence” needed by today’s college or university president.
2. One of the signs of a good leader is his/her willingness to delegate administrative authority and responsibility. Describe four criteria that you, as a college or university division head, would employ in determining what should and what should not be delegated.
3. As a person in a leadership position on a college or university campus, what four procedures would you employ to establish and maintain lines of communication with your staff?
4. As a college or university administrator, you have been given the responsibility by the president for the annual commencement exercises. Describe four major areas that you would have to consider in planning this undertaking.
5. The president of your college or university has decided that each major division should have an “Advisory Committee” made up of faculty, students, alumni, and community members. Describe four precautions that you, as a division head, would take with the establishment of this committee.
6. You have recently been appointed to the position of Dean (indicate the area). Describe the steps you would take to insure maximum participation of your staff in the decision making process.
7. Discuss briefly what you consider to be the five most critical “areas of competence” (or skills) needed by today’s college president.
8. One of the main responsibilities of a college administrator is to obtain maximum results from group effort. Describe several of the most significant requirements for effective group participation.
9. Describe the methods and procedures you would employ, as a college administrator, to assess the quality of leadership within the school.
10. Discuss the problems involved in the delegation of administrative responsibilities. Describe the criteria which would be most useful in determining what should and what should not be delegated.
11. Identify and explain the major “forces” within a community that have potential influence on a college or university.