Comprehensive Final Exam for School Administration: A Study Guide

Prepared by the Graduate Faculty
Department of Education: School Administration
Comprehensive Final Exam for School Administration
Study Guide

This guide is offered to you by the faculty of School Administration to help you prepare for the written Comprehensive Exam which you must pass in order to be eligible to graduate with a Master’s degree.

Format of the Examination
The comprehensive examination is a written examination covering the courses you have taken to complete your Master’s degree in School Administration. The test is given each semester and once in the summer. Students usually take the examination in the semester in which they expect to graduate.

For the exam, students will be given the examination questions, which will be composed of three sections—one for each of the faculty members. Students will choose the questions they will answer for the exam, but at least one question from each section must be answered. Once questions are selected students will have four hours to complete the examination. Students will be allowed to write their examination on word processors, which we hope will facilitate the ease of composing and writing answers. The examinations will then graded by faculty according to the question. In other words, each faculty member will grade your response to the question(s) the faculty member authored. Responses will be rated as “acceptable” or “not acceptable”. You must achieve an “acceptable” rating from each faculty member in order to pass the examination.

To be successful on the examination, your responses questions should be of sufficient depth and quality (1) to indicate your understanding of the subject and (2) to indicate your ability to communicate your understanding in a cogent and intelligent manner.

Students who receive a “not acceptable” rating for the examination will not be allowed to retake the examination until the next semester.

Preparing for the Examination
Since successful completion of the examination is a prerequisite for graduation, it is understandably important that you prepare adequately for the examination. The examination is difficult, but it is not an impossible undertaking provided you have prepared in advance. Therefore, it is advisable to prepare well in advance by reviewing the content of each of your courses. By studying and reviewing in a systematic and timely way, you can offset any anxiety you might experience during the testing situation and optimize your chances of success.

This guide has been prepared by the faculty to assist your preparation, review, and study for the examination. The courses listed below (by faculty member) will be considered in the preparation of the comprehensive examination. Obviously, not every course nor every point listed in the study guide will be on your comprehensive examination. But, given this constraint, your job is to be prepared to answer any
question your faculty member might ask. Think about the classes you had, think about the faculty member who taught the class, and think about the materials covered. As you think about these things and review the materials listed, you might come into some inspiration about what could be potential questions on the exam.

In preparing for the exam, it is suggested that you script potential answers. This activity will force you to conceptualize your answers in a meaningful way. Doing so will also allow you to evaluate the quality of your answer, to revise it as necessary, and to assist you in remembering the material as you are completing your exam. Additionally, writing out answers will help you get a sense of the time it might take you to complete your exam. Since the exam is time-sensitive, you will need to pace your writing and to approximate time allotments for each question so that you can complete the entire exam.

Good luck to you as you prepare for this challenging task!
The following is a list of the courses that could be present on your Comprehensive Final Exam. Each faculty member has identified the courses they teach and the main points of each course. Bulleted points are offered to assist your study, but may or may not be included in the examination’s final form.

ED 5302  The Principalship
• Be able to list and explain in detail the nine Principal competencies.
• Be able to read and analyze the Academic Excellence Indicator System Campus Performance report
• Know the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators. Be able to list and explain the Enforceable Standards.

ED 5318  Human Resources Administration in Education
• What is human resources (HR) administration? What are the component parts of HR?
• How do we get the personnel we need?
• What does “highly qualified” mean and how does it impact HR administration?
• How do we support teachers/administrator’s continued professional development?
• How do we evaluate the professionals on our staff?

ED 5319  School Law
• Know and be able to discuss the sources of school law.
• Be able to explain the first, fourth, fifth, and fourteenth amendments as they relate to school law. Know and understand the key terms associated with each amendment such as expression and association, illegal discrimination, property rights, search and seizure, due process, and academic freedom.
• Know the Lemon Test
• Know the statutory and assumed authority of school boards.
• Be familiar with civil liability of school personnel.
• Understand due process and its ramifications in applying discipline to students and in removing employees
• Know the types of sexual harassment and standards of liability
• Know who have exposure to liability in the school system for sexual harassment: ‘student on student,’ and ‘employee on student.’

ED 5330 Intro to School Administration
• Identify major historical events, court cases, and societal issues that have shaped public education in the U.S. and in Texas
• Understand and discuss the role played by the State Board of Education, Texas Education Agency, Regional Education Service Centers, and School Boards in Texas
• Explain the concept of accountability and its applicability to expected outcomes of public education
• Explain the legal responsibility and constraints imposed on school districts regarding student conduct and discipline

ED 5336 Leadership and Evaluation of Instruction
• What is the Framework for Continuous Improvement and how does it promote student success?
• What is the role of the principal as supervisor in the evaluation of instructional personnel?
• What is necessary for culture and ethics and integrity for a learner-centered school?
• What are the Four Critical Elements of the CIA section and how does a principal utilize the Four Critical Elements in facilitating instruction?
• What are the four approaches in Carl Glickman’s Supervisory Behavior Continuum and how does a principal effectively use the approaches as an instructional leader?

ED 5338 Professional Development Appraisal System
• How does a principal effectively function as a certified appraiser of educators?
• What is the Professional Development and Appraisal System and how is it designed to assist educators?
• How does the mission statement of PDAS drive all of the instructional considerations of educators?
• What are the 4 Critical Components of PDAS and how does a principal use each of the components in instructional development and enhancements?

ED 6304 Organization & Theory in Education
• What is organizational theory? What is Systems Theory?
• What are the fundamental principles and concepts of organizational theory?
• What are the administrative processes in organizational theory?
• What are the major eras of organizational theory? What are some important theories and theorists in each of the major eras?

ED 6307 Public School Relations
• What is “public relations” and how does it differ from “publicity”?
• What is “communication” and why is it important to understand the process of communication?
• What are the elements of publicity?
• What is crisis communication?
• Describe effective ways to deal with angry parents.

ED 6315 Design & Implementation of the Curriculum
• What is curriculum?
• What does curriculum look like?
  o How does philosophy, psychology, and historical precedents impact curriculum?
  o Explain the process for creating curriculum.
• What is curriculum alignment and auditing?
  o Explain the alignment and alignment process.
• What is curriculum implementation?
• What are the major steps to effectively establishing a new curriculum?
  o What are the risks encountered in curriculum implementation?

ED 7304 Leadership in Educational Administration
• How does an administrator function as an effective leader and empowering manager?
• What are the differences between the concept of leadership and the concept of management?
• How do beliefs, skills, behaviors, attributes, and attitudes impact leadership and management styles?

ED 7306 School Finance
• Understand and be able to explain the basic funding structure of the public school system in Texas; where does it come from and where does it go.
• Understand and be able to explain the legal history of the school funding process in Texas using court cases and legislation as defining points.
• Understand revenue, expenditure, accountability, and professionalism as they apply to school finance.
• Be able to explain Incremental, Line-Item, Program, Zero-Based, and School-Site budgets.
• Be able to discuss the complex connection between school funding and academic achievement.

ED7309: State and Federal Programs

• Name 3 important federal statutes that focus on Special Education
• Outline the significant statutory provisions of the important federal statutes relating to Special Education
• What types of annual reviews do Special Education laws require, if any?
• Describe the origin, meaning, and significance of –
  • RtI
  • LRE
  • AYP
• Explain Child Find
• Explain the types of tests that Special Education students must take to comply with NCLB and state accountability laws
• Explain the difference between “supplement” and “supplant” as it relates to federal funding in special programs.
• For funding, districts are entitled to an annual allotment equal to the district’s adjusted basic allotment multiplied by what amount for each of the following programs –
  • Gifted and talented
  • Special education
  • CTE
  • Bilingual/ESL
• What does the Texas State Plan require to achieve the level of Exemplary for the following elements of the plan:
  • Assessment
  • Program Design
  • Curriculum & Instruction
  • Family-Community Involvement
• What does the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act do for GT students?
• Is identification and service of GT students required at all grade levels by the Texas Legislature? If so, what must a district do in order to comply with this directive?
• What is the definition of “homeless?”
• What is the definition of “migrant?”
• Explain the holding and significance of Lau v. Nichols?
• Outline the important provisions of the Texas Education Code that relate to Bilingual and ESL education (TEC, Section 29)
• Describe the steps required for identifying bilingual and ELL students.
• Describe the steps required for placement and removal of Bilingual/ELL students.
• Describe the process, if any is required, for annual review of Bilingual/ELL students.
• Explain the significance and major provisions of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act
• Describe the Vision and Goals of the State Plan for Career and Technical Education in Texas.