

School Principal

Run a school: the staff, the budget, the discipline, the buses and the blame. You teach first, then you lead.

TYPICAL PAY

\$105,870

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$76k to \$168k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

7 to 12 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Elementary, middle and high schools, public and private, distri...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Any strong academic track. Coaching, tutoring, student government and running anything with other people all count.
- 2 Bachelor's degree and teaching license** 4 to 5 years
A subject degree plus a teacher preparation program and your state's teaching exams.
- 3 Teach** 3 to 5 years
Three to five years in a classroom is the usual requirement, and the real education. Take on department head, grade lead or coaching roles.
- 4 Master's in educational leadership** 2 years
Usually 30 to 36 credits, done part time while teaching, with a supervised administrative internship inside a school.
- 5 Exam, certificate, then assistant principal** 2 to 5 years
Pass your state's school leadership test, get the principal certificate, then serve two to five years as an assistant principal.

Pros and cons

- + A real six figure salary inside public education
- + You set the culture of a whole building
- + Pension, health coverage and loan forgiveness all still apply
- You are on call for anything that happens on the property
- Long contract year, evenings and weekends at school events
- You stop teaching, which is why many people got into this

Good to know

The principals' association runs the National Honor Society

The National Principals Association, the professional body for principals and assistant principals, also runs the National Honor Society, the National Junior Honor Society and the National Student...

The federal outlook is one of the few that is negative

The government career profile rates this occupation as below average, expecting employment to decline. It reflects flat and falling school enrollment in much of the country, not falling demand for good leade...

Optional boosts

Special education knowledge. School finance. Bilingual certification. Dean, department head or athletic director.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary (11-9032.00)

National Principals Association

Texas Education Agency: educator certification

Praxis: educator and school leadership tests

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/school-principal>



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