



# Investing in Effective School Leadership: How States Are Taking Advantage of Opportunities Under ESSA

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## Abstract

Principals are essential to improving student achievement and narrowing persistent achievement gaps between students in underserved communities and their economically advantaged peers. The Every Student Succeeds Act provides opportunities for states to invest in developing and supporting effective school leaders. One such opportunity includes using federal funds to support the recruitment, preparation, and training of high-quality leaders using the optional state set-aside under Title II.

To inform state investments, we summarize the evidence about the importance of principals and describe research-based practices in leadership development. Then we outline promising, evidence-based investments in school leadership from submitted and draft ESSA state plans, including states taking advantage of the optional leadership set-aside. Ensuring that all students are in a school with a quality principal requires states to adopt research-based investments that are implemented with fidelity.

This brief can be found online at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-school-leadership>.

## External Reviewers

The report upon which this brief is based benefited from the external review of Kenneth Leithwood, Professor of Education Leadership and Policy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto; and Kelly Pollitt, Chief Strategist for Policy and Alliances at the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

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## Why Leadership Matters

With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a majority of states are in the process of developing, refining, and submitting consolidated state plans that communicate their aspirations for their students and how they hope to reach them. As part of the process, those states are re-envisioning and redesigning their education systems by establishing ambitious student achievement goals; improving the quality of their assessments; and crafting school accountability and improvement systems that support all schools, especially those with the greatest needs. Parents and other stakeholders are also voicing their views and concerns regarding how to best meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students, particularly historically underserved students, including students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families.

School leaders are vital to this transformative work, yet investing in principals and school leaders is one of the most overlooked courses of action for raising student achievement. Principals are essential to improving student achievement and narrowing persistent achievement gaps between students in underserved communities and their economically advantaged peers. What's more, principals have been found to be the second most important school-level factor associated with student achievement—right after teachers.<sup>1</sup> As one study notes, “there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader.”<sup>2</sup> This conclusion has been bolstered in recent years by numerous studies that associate increased principal quality with gains in student achievement.<sup>3</sup>

For example, one study found that one standard deviation of improvement in principal quality was associated with increased student achievement equivalent to more than 4 weeks of additional learning in reading and over 6 weeks in mathematics.<sup>4</sup> Research has also found that high-quality principals are associated with increased high school graduation rates.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, committed and effective principals who remain in their schools are associated with improved schoolwide student achievement. As a corollary, principal turnover is associated with lower gains in student achievement.<sup>6</sup> Principal turnover has a more significant negative effect in high-poverty, low-achieving schools—the very schools in which students most rely on their education for future success.<sup>7</sup> The negative effect of principal turnover suggests that principals need time to make meaningful improvements in their

schools. One study found that it takes, on average, 5 years of a new principal leading a school for the school's performance to rebound to the pre-turnover level.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond student achievement, principals also play a critical role in attracting and retaining talented teachers. Teachers cite principal support as one of the most important factors in their decisions to stay in a school or in the profession.<sup>9</sup> Research demonstrates that a principal's ability to create positive working conditions and collaborative, supportive learning environments plays a critical role in attracting and retaining qualified teachers.<sup>10</sup> At a time when many schools throughout the nation, particularly those serving a high number of students from low-income families and students of color, are struggling to find and keep teachers, the leadership of a strong principal takes on added import for student success.

As with principal turnover, high-need schools can benefit most from effective principals who can better find and keep talented teachers. For example, a large national study found that a principal's teacher-reported effectiveness was strongly related to teacher attrition and that this impact was much larger in high-need schools.<sup>11</sup> Multiple studies of teacher attrition in high-poverty schools have found that teachers' perceptions of their school's leader is a dominant factor in their decision to remain at the school.<sup>12</sup>

As states seek to close achievement gaps and improve low-performing schools under ESSA, the role of principals should not be overlooked. Given the importance of school leaders to improving schools, closing student achievement gaps, and attracting and retaining effective teachers, states should consider leveraging the number of opportunities available within ESSA to invest in school leadership (see text box that follows). One such opportunity is the optional 3% set-aside for leadership development provided in Title II, Part A.<sup>13</sup> This spending flexibility allows state educational agencies to reserve funding for principals or other school leaders to implement evidence-based strategies for leadership development and support, such as school leader residency programs in which candidates prepare to become principals by working in authentic school settings alongside mentor principals.

## Federal Funding for Principal Preparation and Training in ESSA

Under ESSA, states have multiple opportunities to invest in high-quality school leadership, especially in high-need schools and communities.

1. **Title II, Part A.** States may allocate up to 5% of their Title II, Part A allocation to teacher and leader development and an additional 3% exclusively for leadership investments.<sup>14</sup> These investments can be used to prepare aspiring school leaders, to develop current principals, or even to fund coaches or mentors who directly support principal learning.
2. **Title I, Part A School Improvement.** States are required to set aside 7% of their Title I, Part A funds to improve low-performing schools by using evidence-based strategies that increase student learning.<sup>15</sup> States and districts have flexibility to select the mix of evidence-based strategies that best meet their contexts.<sup>16</sup> For example, states and districts may focus on improving student outcomes by implementing research-based interventions to strengthen school leadership. Multiple school leader interventions demonstrate strong, moderate, and promising levels of evidence under ESSA's evidence-based requirements.<sup>17</sup>
3. **Competitive Federal Grants.** States, districts, and nonprofit organizations can further strengthen school leadership capacity by applying for a competitive federal grant that can be used for a range of activities that support and develop high-quality school leaders. These grants include:
  - a. *School Leader Recruitment and Support Program:* for states and districts to recruit, prepare, place, support, and retain leaders in high-need schools.<sup>18</sup>
  - b. *Supporting Effective Educator Development:* for nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education to support educator recruitment, preparation, certification, and professional learning.<sup>19</sup>
  - c. *Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program:* formerly the Teacher Incentive Fund, this program supports state and district investments in performance-based compensation and human capital management systems for principals, other school leaders, and teachers.<sup>20</sup>

## Research-Based Practices in Leadership Development

States should ensure that investments in leadership preparation and development are evidence based, as required by ESSA, and tailored to address the context of their educational systems. The Learning Policy Institute recently conducted a review of the research on school leader preparation and professional development to determine what features enable successful programs to produce leaders who can improve school outcomes.<sup>21</sup> The review identifies four key practices that support principal learning.

1. **Organizational partnerships between programs and districts.** Effective partnerships between principal development programs and districts typically involve coordination on curriculum, active recruitment of promising teacher leaders, and the provision of authentic learning opportunities, such as residencies in which principal candidates work alongside mentor principals in a low-stakes, in-depth, and reflective environment.
2. **Programs structured to support learning in cohorts or networks.** Effective preparation programs frequently structure learning opportunities to be carried out in collaboration among a small group of peers. As part of a cohort, candidates take courses together, engage in internships concurrently, and continuously reflect on their learning individually and collectively. Analogously, effective in-service learning utilizes professional learning communities or other network structures to enable school leaders to learn on the job together.
3. **Meaningful and authentic learning opportunities.** High-quality programs use problem-based, context-specific learning opportunities to connect coursework and practice to enrich candidates' skill development. These programs also support principals' development through internships and on-the-job coaching by strong and supportive leaders during the preparation program and continuing into at least their first few years as principals (this is sometimes referred to as induction).
4. **Learning opportunities focused on what matters.** The curriculum in high-quality programs focuses on supporting principals in learning how to (1) improve schoolwide instruction; (2) support collegial teaching and learning environments; and (3) analyze and act on data.

These key evidence-based practices can guide strategic investments of federal and state funding in principal preparation, development, and support that yield substantial benefits in student achievement, as well as teacher quality and retention. In fact, several states—Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Tennessee, to name a few—have already committed to implementing many of these evidence-based practices in the sections of their ESSA state plans detailing school leader investments.

## Examples of Leadership Development Investments Under ESSA

To inform state investments, below are examples of how a number of states that have already committed to using ESSA's optional 3% set-aside for school leadership are planning to utilize that and other ESSA funding to support leadership preparation, development, and support through promising, evidence-based investments. Additional examples of state leadership efforts from states using other ESSA funds are also described.

### States using the Title II optional 3% leadership set-aside

#### Maryland<sup>22</sup>

Maryland plans to use the set-aside to scale up the Promising Principal's Academy, launched in 2014, to include additional candidates and expand supports for assistant principals—who are often overlooked for professional development—through an Assistant Principal Academy. In this program, superintendents from every school district nominate two promising assistant principals to the program, who are then groomed to

take over as school principals. As highlighted in an EdWeek article, participants attend multiday retreats in July, September, December, and March.<sup>23</sup> The Academy, reflecting evidence-based practices around effective program structure, makes use of cohorts and networks to support assistant principal learning. For example, each cohort of aspiring principals is paired with a coach, a former principal who serves as a mentor, and in between sessions, the groups gather online to complete exercises and network under the guidance of their mentors. The state kicked off the program with \$440,000 to serve a cohort of 48 candidates, or about \$9,000 per candidate.

Maryland will also provide online courses for administrators, which allow for differentiated content-specific professional learning, such as just-in-time learning (i.e., learning that allows participants to access on-demand, relevant content specific to their needs at any time). Further, Maryland intends to expand professional development programs to aspiring principals and principal mentors with the goal of building the capacity for principals to become strong instructional leaders.

### **Massachusetts<sup>24</sup>**

Reflecting the research base on the principal's role in raising schoolwide achievement, Massachusetts is investing in the development of principals' instructional leadership skills, including deepening their understanding of curriculum and standards. Massachusetts aims to strengthen the quality of school leadership across the state by strengthening principals' skills in three areas: observing classroom practice, analyzing measures of student learning and teacher effectiveness, and providing timely and high-impact feedback to their faculty.

Massachusetts also plans to expand the pipeline of principals able to transform high-need schools. To accomplish this, they will increase the state's capacity for effective intervention and sustainable improvement in their lowest-performing schools and districts by working to build a cadre of experienced principals prepared to serve in turnaround schools.

Funding from the 3% set-aside will support this and other work, such as increasing the number of principal ambassador fellowships. These fellowships are designed to strengthen the principal pipeline and build principals' effectiveness in supporting implementation of curriculum standards and supporting administrators' efficacy in the educator evaluation standards of effective administrative leadership. This includes detailed rubrics used to assess principal effectiveness and to identify ways in which the state and district can support the development of these school leaders.

### **Michigan<sup>25</sup>**

Michigan will leverage the Title II school leader set-aside funds to support strategies that reflect the evidence base regarding the importance of program-district partnerships and authentic learning opportunities. Specifically, the state will support the co-construction and implementation of context-specific, residency-based preparation programs for principals in high-need districts (partnership districts). This commitment to clinical training is in response to certain districts, particularly those serving large populations of students of color and students from low-income families, experiencing significant challenges in recruiting and retaining a stable cadre of leaders.

This funding may be used for a variety of partnership-related activities, including identifying and training mentor leaders, paying mentor stipends, aligning and improving coursework with district needs, continuously improving programs, and/or providing full-year residencies to preservice educators.

To support this work, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will:

- Provide seed funding to support the cultivation and evaluation of partnerships between education preparation programs (EPPs) and high-needs districts, including rigorous program evaluation;
- Provide individualized, activity-based guidance and technical assistance, based in part on the evaluation of seed funding, to assist additional local educational agencies (LEAs) and EPPs in forging strong partnerships to support the development of a strong local educator workforce; and
- Evaluate and respond to potential policy barriers.

For further details on how MDE will support this work, see Section D of the Michigan State Plan.

In addition to the Title II school leader set-aside, Michigan will utilize Title II, Part A funds to support two additional strategies related to principal effectiveness: principal professional development and principal mentor networks. First, the state will develop principal professional learning opportunities focused on implementing teacher evaluations with an emphasis on providing high-quality feedback that improves classroom instruction, as well as developing, implementing, and sustaining distributed leadership models. The goal of distributed leadership models is to create schools with collaborative learning environments, which are associated with increased student achievement<sup>26</sup> and reduced teacher turnover.<sup>27</sup>

Second, MDE will work closely with Michigan's professional organizations to develop guidance for LEAs in identifying and cultivating the skills and dispositions of effective principal mentors and provide professional learning opportunities, including communities of practice, for high-potential principals to become mentors. Principal mentors play a critical role in many high-quality principal preparation and in-service programs found to produce principals capable of raising student achievement.<sup>28</sup>

### North Dakota<sup>29</sup>

North Dakota is creating a multitiered leadership academy to develop principals as effective leaders. One way the state is doing this is by implementing a **Leadership Academy** to ensure that North Dakota principals have the resources and support they need to be effective leaders. The Leadership Academy will provide professional support, professional development, career ladder opportunities, assistance with administrator shortages, and support to address administrator retention in an effort to ultimately raise student achievement. Training will be provided that is unique to the principal and focused on higher-level perspectives of leadership. The academy will also serve as a resource for comprehensive and targeted support schools in an effort to promote and build capacity in specific aspects of leadership.

This work also includes implementing/expanding a first-year principal mentorship program with the goal of providing a mentor to all new administrators. The program has two main objectives: to increase the rate of effectiveness of new administrators and to decrease turnover among rural and struggling schools. Mentors are trained and assigned to new principals and conduct, at a minimum, two site visits during the school year along with weekly meetings. The mentorship program is tied to ongoing professional development directly related to the knowledge necessary to be an effective leader. This professional development is a series of ongoing skill development for principals in a series of modules provided at the regional level.

## Ohio<sup>30</sup>

Over the next 2 years, Ohio will use the Title II 3% set-aside to design and pilot programs focused on training, induction, mentoring, coaching, and professional development of principals and teacher leaders. Although Ohio has yet to define the exact scope of these pilots, part of this work will focus on supporting the state's ongoing efforts to keep highly effective teachers in the classroom while maximizing the impact of their talents through various leadership roles at LEAs. Ohio is prioritizing set-aside funds to develop a teacher leader framework that prepares, recruits, and selects teacher leaders, enhances teacher leadership during the later years of induction, and recognizes and rewards the contributions of teacher leaders.

## Tennessee<sup>31</sup>

Tennessee's ESSA state plan contains many evidence-based examples of leadership investment. These investments were informed by the work of the Tennessee Transformational Leadership Advisory Council, which in 2016 developed the Tennessee Transformational Leadership Alliance (TTLA) to serve as an incubator for leader development programs in all CORE regions. TTLA issued a report with a series of recommendations for leadership development in the state.<sup>32</sup>

Tennessee will utilize the leadership set-aside to support **leader residency programs in high-need districts**. Tennessee plans to offer competitive opportunities to eligible districts for implementation of teacher and/or principal residency programs. These programs—now explicitly allowed and encouraged under ESSA—underwrite the costs of training under the wing of expert teachers/leaders for a full year, while candidates complete coursework that is tightly integrated with their residency placement. In exchange, candidates typically commit to serving in the district for a set period and receive ongoing support once placed. Tennessee will pursue and support districts with an interest in applying for additional grant dollars through ESSA's Title II, Part B Teacher and School Leader Incentive Fund Grant to establish such residency programs for both teachers and leaders in high-need schools.

Tennessee will also use the set-aside funds for leader development to create statewide and regional leadership pipeline programs, aligned with effective research-based program components that produce transformational school leaders in order to increase the supply of high-quality school leaders across the state. Specifically, the department will provide support to 4-year leader development models that create or continuously improve innovative and high-impact pipeline programs that identify and develop school leaders and are led by a partnership. A partnership must include a Tennessee school district and represent two or more entities of the following types: (1) Tennessee school districts and/or charter management organizations; (2) Tennessee-based institutions of higher education; (3) foundations; and/or (4) businesses and/or nonprofit organizations that work to advance k-12 academic achievement in Tennessee. Partnerships must articulate a 4-year plan for either a new model or an existing model to improve and must apply for funding. The 4-year plan requires three program elements:

1. Principal residency training content
2. Bridge support for candidates between program completion and placement
3. An induction program for these newly placed leaders

Partnership models will receive ongoing support and assistance from a select group of leadership experts and must align with Tennessee Succeeds,<sup>33</sup> the eight components of effective programs, and ESSA Title II, Part A. For selected applicants, the department will fund development and continuous improvement programs up to 90% of the per-fellow cost with a maximum per-fellow grant of \$9,000. Grants may total a maximum of \$125,000 per year. Grant applications are currently being accepted, and implementation will begin in July 2017.

These **principal pipeline partnership programs, operated by area partnerships**, will identify and develop more effective leaders to improve outcomes for all Tennessee students.

Other leadership efforts supported by Title II, Part A funds in Tennessee include the following:

- To support improved leadership practices, Tennessee developed the **Principal Peer Partnership (P3)** to provide a system of collaboration and support for instructional leaders and to engage administrators in reflective peer dialogue. The guiding principles of these partnerships include visible and reciprocal building-level practices, actionable ideas to develop shared leadership capacity, and measurable outcomes aligned with the educator evaluation rubric. Examples of activities include collaboration around individual action plans for evaluation refinement and observation of school leaders engaged in some component of teacher evaluation.
- The **Tennessee Academy for School Leaders** provides high-quality professional learning opportunities for principals, assistant principals, and instructional supervisors that are aligned with the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards. Tennessee sets high standards for effective leadership based on research and best practices, supports leaders to reach those standards, and empowers districts to build a network of exceptional instructional leaders who get results. This program includes **induction academies** for new leaders, multiple learning opportunities throughout the year, and **university partnership** opportunities to advance licensure. School leaders meet in cohorts (20–40 leaders per cohort, with separate cohorts for principals, assistant principals, and principal supervisors) eight times over a 2-year period in order to learn collaboratively and network. The department also launched a virtual hybrid academy pilot for 2016–17 that includes personalized online learning with three face-to-face meetings over a 2-year period.
- In partnership with the Tennessee governor’s office, Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College, and districts, the **Governor’s Academy for School Leadership (GASL)** is an opportunity for assistant principals to participate in a 1-year leadership development experience aimed at increasing school leadership capacity and supporting individual growth. The state-funded program is anchored in multiple evidence-based practices, such as practice-based mentorship, in-depth feedback cycles, and tailored training sessions. The mission of the program is to prepare a cohort of transformational school leaders who will improve school effectiveness/performance and unlock educational opportunities for all students. By focusing on three strands—Visionary Leadership, Instructional Leadership, and Collaborative Leadership—the curriculum of this highly selective program further emphasizes research-supported best practices. This program includes a stipend for each fellow and meets 1 weekend per month from January through December with an additional weeklong summer institute at Vanderbilt University. Fellows also complete an ongoing internship during this time, which includes 3 days per month working alongside a mentor principal, a practice supported by the research. The first GASL cohort of 23 academy fellows was selected in November 2015 and completed the program in December 2016. A second cohort of 25 academy fellows was selected in November 2016 and began the yearlong academy in January 2017.
- The **Integrated Leadership Courses** are state-funded, professional learning opportunities for school and district leaders. Across the four courses, early grade literacy, as well as other elementary and secondary topics, is addressed. The first course focuses on early grade literacy, specifically the following: identifying best practices in early learning classrooms; identifying ways to give actionable feedback in early learning classrooms; developing post-conference skills to support early learning using coaching practices through Tennessee’s educator evaluation process; and identifying connections to the administrator evaluation model. Over 600 school and district leaders across the state attended the first course, and 96% of survey respondents reported a better understanding of best practices in early learning classrooms as a result of attending the course.

## Vermont<sup>34</sup>

Vermont is leveraging the Title II 3% leadership set-aside to create and implement the **Vermont Leader's Professional Learning Academy/Institute**, targeted to leaders in schools identified for improvement. The Vermont Agency of Education will use robust and actionable data to build statewide communities of practice to engage in high-quality professional learning for principals and other school leaders.

The Academy will focus on improving student outcomes in low-performing schools. The professional learning the Academy will offer also draws on the research base regarding the impact of highly effective school leaders and seeks to increase the capacity of school leaders to recruit, retain, and support effective educators. Specifically, the Academy will:

- Concentrate on improving the capacity of school leaders, primarily those leading schools identified for Comprehensive or Targeted Intervention and Supports.
- Employ a curriculum informed by input from stakeholders (state accountability data and evidence collected from the Education Quality Review process) and aligned with standards, including Vermont's Professional Learning Standards, Education Quality Standards, and the Core Teaching and Leadership Standards for Vermont Educators.
- Develop outcome-oriented performance metrics that will be utilized to measure the impact of the professional learning in areas such as standards-based, data-driven, and differentiated instruction, equitable access to high-quality instruction, cultural competence, subject- and content-specific issues, and the effective leveraging of resources to address equity and excellence.
- Utilize the VT-AOE Leadership Team model as the foundational forum for ongoing conversation and review of the initiative to support evidence gathering.
- Minimize duplication of effort by collaborating with other professional learning providers in the development and implementation stages of the professional learning.

## Washington<sup>35</sup>

Washington, similar to Massachusetts, will use set-aside funds and additional Title II, Part A dollars to develop, improve, or provide assistance to support the design and implementation of **teacher and principal evaluation and support systems** that are based on multiple measures of educator performance. This work will involve three distinct activities. First, Washington will develop and disseminate high-quality evaluation tools, such as classroom observation rubrics, and methods for ensuring inter-rater reliability of evaluation results, such as training and auditing. Second, the state will develop and provide training to principals, other school leaders, coaches, mentors, and evaluators on how to accurately differentiate performance, provide useful and timely feedback, and use evaluation results to inform decision making about professional development, improvement strategies, and personnel decisions. Third, Washington will develop a system for auditing the quality of this evaluation and its corresponding support systems.

Part of this investment will specifically focus on strengthening principals' instructional leadership capacity to serve students with different learning needs by enhancing the evaluation process and feedback mechanisms that principals give to teachers on differentiation, pedagogy, and content. This commitment reflects the importance of instructional leadership, as identified by various studies,<sup>36</sup> and the value of providing principals with the tools and resources needed to support teachers and staff in continually learning and improving upon their practice.



## States using other ESSA funds to invest in school leadership

### Idaho<sup>37</sup>

The **Idaho Principal Mentoring Project** is designed for early career principals in Idaho. This project is voluntary and will provide new-to-position principals multiple levels of support. The program hires highly distinguished principals and/or superintendents trained by the state to mentor school leaders, a practice supported by research. Principal mentors are assigned to principal mentees based on need and experience. Mentors coach leaders through the tasks of improvement with bimonthly visits and biweekly high-performance phone calls. Principal mentors are provided a toolkit of mentoring resources and work with mentees to create a customized mentoring plan that focuses on developing the skills and dispositions in four critical areas of school-level leadership: interpersonal and facilitation skills, teacher observation and feedback, effective school-level practices and classroom-level practices, and using data to improve instruction.

The **Idaho Principals Network (IPN)** was developed by the state to support the work of principals in improving outcomes for all students by focusing on the quality of instruction. IPN is a professional learning community that provides building-level administrators with a learning environment focused on increasing the effectiveness of the instructional core. As such, both this program's structure and focus are supported by the research on effective principal learning. Principals participate in a balance of content-focused meetings, professional conversations, and instructional rounds related directly to instructional leadership, managing change, and improving the overall effectiveness of the instructional core. IPN will serve as a resource for principals in schools with comprehensive and targeted status in an effort to support and build their capacity in specific aspects of leadership.

### Illinois<sup>38</sup>

Reflecting the importance of authentic learning experiences, Illinois will invest part of its Title II funds in the state's teacher leaders through 30-60-90-day **action research projects**. Through a competitive grant program, these projects will ask schools and districts to identify questions important to teacher leadership that they would like answered. Questions typically address school climate and culture or a specific instructional practice. Schools and districts that are awarded grants will develop a plan to investigate their identified problems, monitor outcomes, and report findings to a group of peers, using such forums as the Ed Leaders Network.

Illinois will also create resources emphasizing the role of principals as instructional leaders, particularly for teachers in early grades. In particular, the state will support principals to acquire knowledge of child development, pedagogical content knowledge, differentiation of instruction, and knowledge of pedagogical practice and high-impact teacher-child interactions for young children.

Finally, the Illinois State Board of Education is in the process of determining the feasibility of a principal residency pilot program supported with Title II investments.

### Louisiana<sup>39</sup>

Louisiana plans to use its ESSA Title II funding to support and develop its school leaders by providing opportunities for principals to participate in a fellowship program designed by the **National Institute for School Leadership**, a program highlighted for its evidence-based practices.<sup>40</sup> This is an example of intensive professional development for school leaders throughout the state who engage in learning twice each month for 16 months, focusing on topics such as being a driver of change, a strategic thinker, a coach and mentor, and a visionary leader. The first cohort included 130 administrators from 26 districts, with the second cohort including 112 administrators from 27 districts.

Another example of leadership development provided to school leaders is the ability for districts to implement **TAP, the System for Teacher and Student Advancement**. This system's structures for creating multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation are proven to produce results. Currently, 40 schools representing 11 LEAs participate in the TAP system.

## Conclusion

The implementation of ESSA provides states with an opportunity to support and strengthen the capacity of school leaders by utilizing the Title II, Part A 3% school leader set-aside, as well as other ESSA funds. States taking advantage of this opportunity should ensure investments reflect research-based practices and are implemented with fidelity. Principals and other school leaders play a critical role in supporting the growth and learning of teachers and students, particularly in underserved communities. Therefore, any effort to improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes should include a comparable focus on leadership development.

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## About the Learning Policy Institute

The Learning Policy Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, the Institute seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the Institute connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness.