

## Pathways and Pipelines – Model Policy

Several states have strong components to their policies regarding school leadership pathways and pipelines. Because preparation policies tend to be extensive, highly state-specific, and found in both statute and regulation, it is difficult to point to a single generic model policy. Instead, what follows are two resources that state advocates can use as the basis for model language for statutory, regulatory, or administrative policy changes. It should be noted that most states do not yet have the capacity to implement rigorous evaluation and renewal policies detailed below—thus, the model policy language is aspirational and reflects the ideal elements toward which states should move.

Models developed by the Tennessee State Board of Education and New Leaders, a national leadership development nonprofit organization, were selected because both reflect key elements of specific state policy actions that can improve leadership preparation:

- A rigorous approval and renewal process that is open to non-university-based providers and is based on outcome measures for program and graduate performance, as well as the ability of the state to decertify programs that do not meet standards.
- Requirements that programs are standards-based, establish a high bar for candidate entry and exit, and include a clinical component through which participants can demonstrate actual leadership practice.
- A focus on using outcomes-based data to inform decision making. Additionally, New Leaders recommendations emphasized using data transparency and public reporting as an additional tool for districts making hiring decisions and aspiring principals seeking strong preparation programs.

### Tennessee

Tennessee’s [“Learning-Centered Leadership Policy”](#) provides perhaps the best state example of a model comprehensive policy.

### New Leaders Model Policy Recommendations

New Leaders developed a set of [state policy recommendations](#) that informed the model language below.

#### Sample Language

##### Section 1. Approval and renewal processes.

- a) It is the intent of the legislature to remove barriers to innovative programs and to ensure accountability for performance outcomes throughout the approval and review process.
- b) The (state department of education, board of licensing and credentials, etc.—henceforth referred to as the “state”) shall be the sole entity responsible for approval and renewal of school principal preparation programs.
- c) Initial approval of a principal preparation program shall be based on an assessment of the capacity of the organization or institution to operate a high-performing program and the rigor of its plans for candidate selection, curriculum, clinical practice, and participant assessment.
- d) Approval and renewal of principal preparation programs shall not be limited to those programs operated by institutions of higher education. Nonprofit organizations and local school districts shall be permitted to apply for approval, and the state shall ensure that there are no barriers to their application based on requirements that are relevant to institutions of higher education.

- e) The state shall establish a separate renewal process that includes the evaluation of the following:
  - 1) Outcome measures such as placement rates, retention rates, districts’ perceptions of graduate quality, and measures of graduate performance where possible and appropriate; and
  - 2) Implementation of research-based best practices in leadership development.
- f) The program renewal process shall also include an expedited program review and renewal process for high-performing programs whose graduates have high placement and retention rates and demonstrate evidence of effectiveness once they are placed as principals and have been leading the same school for 3 years.
- g) The state shall require under-performing programs to demonstrate significant improvement according to a performance improvement plan developed by the state within one year in order to renew their license.
- h) The state shall revoke the licenses of principal preparation programs that persistently under-perform or do not meet the improvement goals established pursuant to this section.

## **Section 2. Program content and standards for entry and exit.**

The state shall:

- a) Ensure all principal preparation programs are designed based on the best research and practice regarding rigorous selection of candidates, robust in-school clinical experiences, and strong processes to assess candidates’ capabilities to lead a school successfully. Specifically, the state shall require programs to:
  - 1) Utilize rigorous selection criteria to identify candidates who plan to become school leaders.
  - 2) Demonstrate that programmatic content aligns with state standards for leadership effectiveness.
  - 3) Require all candidates to complete a practice-rich clinical component in an authentic school leadership setting where candidates can be evaluated on the accomplishment of important leadership practices, including demonstration of substantial leadership responsibilities for other adults and improvement of instructional quality.
- b) Evaluate the programs’ participant assessment processes to ensure that graduates demonstrate their capabilities and skills in order to complete the program.
- c) Offer incentives to existing or new programs that address specific school leadership priorities identified by the state.

## **Section 3. Program outcomes.**

In order to ensure transparency and accountability, the state shall:

- a) Track program characteristics and performance outcomes using data collected by programs regarding participants.
- b) Require all programs to collect data regarding graduate placement and employer feedback.
- c) Develop data systems that have the capability to capture program-graduate tenure data and link that data with the state’s human capital and student-level data system to determine program graduates’ effectiveness.
- d) Publicly report data on program outcomes and use it to hold programs accountable for program improvements.
- e) Promote data transparency as a tool for districts seeking to make better hiring decisions and for aspiring principals choosing the best programs.
- f) Use data as part of a continuous learning agenda to refine and improve state policies on principal preparation, evaluation, and certification.