

School and District Leadership

Damion Pechota and Deven Scott

What Is the Issue, and Why Does It Matter?

Research demonstrates that strong leadership has a positive impact on school quality. School and district leadership is second to classroom instruction, in terms of [its influence on student learning](#). In addition, effective leaders are [an important factor](#) in the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. Because of this, states are developing policies to support district and school leaders throughout their careers.

Legislative activity in 2019 shows a consistent increase in support for new school and district leaders and for their continued growth. School leadership policy changes are centered on the stages of the career continuum — preparation, certification and licensure; induction, mentoring and professional development; evaluation; and compensation, incentives and contracts. States also adopted legislation to curb principal shortages by targeting qualified and experienced education leaders for principal pathway initiatives.

Specifically, 2019 legislation shows state policymakers adopting:

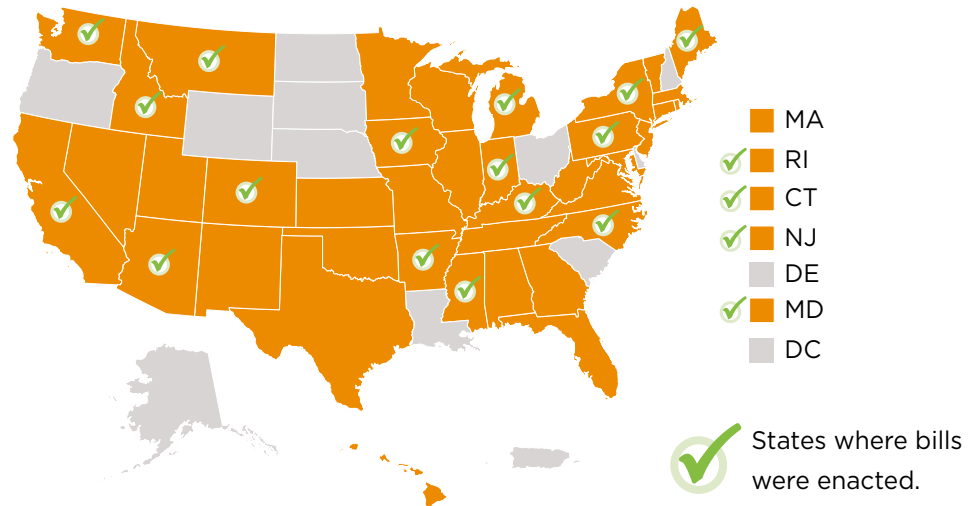
- **Alternative forms of licensure for school leaders.**
- **Professional development opportunities through state-run programs.**
- **Changes to the performance measures for school leadership.**
- **Requirements for compensation and terms of service.**

School and district leadership policy in the 2019 legislative sessions followed trends established in the 2017 and 2018 legislative sessions, demonstrating a continued interest in supporting these leaders.

How Many States Considered Legislation in 2019?

Based on a review of 2019 legislative activity concerning school and district leadership:

At least **175** bills were **INTRODUCED** in 39 states.

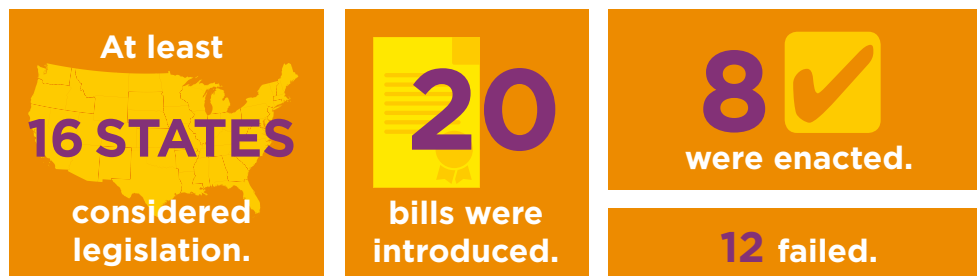


At least **26** bills were **ENACTED** in 20 states.


Enacted Legislation


Arizona	S.B. 1071	Maryland	H.B. 238
Arkansas	H.B. 1320 , S.B. 358	Michigan	S.B. 202
California	S.B. 75	Mississippi	H.B. 1247
Colorado	H.B. 19-1002 , S.B. 19-069	Montana	S.B. 139
Connecticut	H.B. 7113	New Jersey	S. 692
Idaho	S. 1058	New York	A. 783 , A. 2000
Indiana	S.B. 281	North Carolina	H.B. 377
Iowa	H.F. 637	Pennsylvania	H.B. 1615
Kentucky	S.B. 250	Rhode Island	H.B. 6084 , H.B. 6085
Maine	H.P. 78 , H.P. 315 , H.P. 969	Washington	S.B. 5082


Preparation, Certification and Licensure



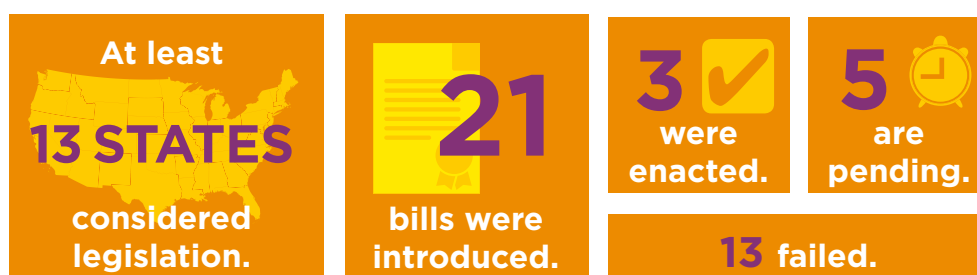
Examples of Enacted Legislation

 [S.B. 19-069](#) permits schools to operate induction programs for teachers, special services providers, principals and administrators; and alternative licensure programs for teachers and principals who do not hold professional licenses. Any person who participates in an individualized alternative principal program is required to receive coaching and mentoring from one or more principals and administrators who have three or more years of experience.


 [S. 1058](#) creates a new charter school administrator certificate as an alternative to a traditional administrator certificate. To be eligible, a candidate must have a bachelor's degree, pass a criminal background check, receive training on teacher evaluation, demonstrate that a charter school board of directors intends to hire them and meet professional experience requirements.

 [H.B. 6085](#) establishes a fast-track principal certification program operated by the department of elementary and secondary education for teachers. The program requires participants to take courses on school finance, school law, and program evaluation and analysis. In addition, participants must shadow a district principal for one year, lead a district or schoolwide initiative and pass all principal certification assessment requirements.

Induction, Mentoring and Professional Development



Examples of Enacted Legislation

 [S.B. 75](#) creates the 21st Century California School Leadership Academy to train and coach school leaders to improve outcomes for students. The academy provides school leadership training in areas of need identified by the state, which include supporting standards-aligned instruction,

implementing effective language acquisition programs for English learners, addressing performance gaps among student groups and leveraging wraparound services to support student development.

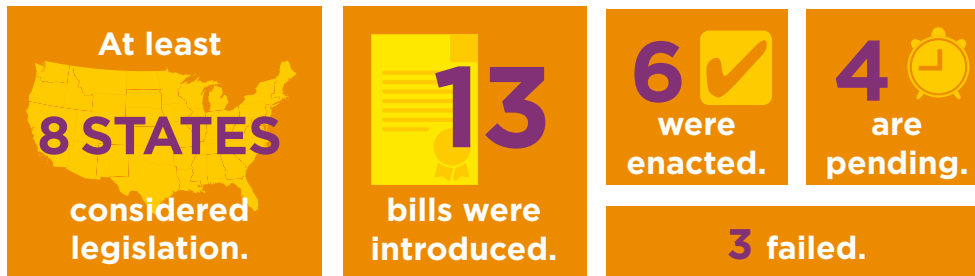


[H.B. 19-1002](#) creates the School Leadership Pilot Program to provide professional development for principals. The state department of education is charged with identifying a cohort of high-quality principals to learn from one another and support the learning and professional growth of school leaders who are not in the cohort.



[H.P. 315](#) supports the induction, mentoring and retention of principals and other school leaders by establishing regional leadership academies. The goal of the academies is to enhance the preservice and in-service school leadership training to improve the distribution, supply and quality of school leadership personnel in underserved school administrative units.

Evaluation



Examples of Enacted Legislation



[H.B. 238](#) authorizes a local board of education to remove a local superintendent for misconduct for the same reasons that the state superintendent may remove a local superintendent under current law. The local board must provide the local superintendent with the reason for removal, documentation supporting the case for removal and opportunity to request a hearing within 10 days before the state superintendent or local board. The local superintendent may appeal the decision of the state superintendent or local board to the state board of education. The bill does not apply to Baltimore City.

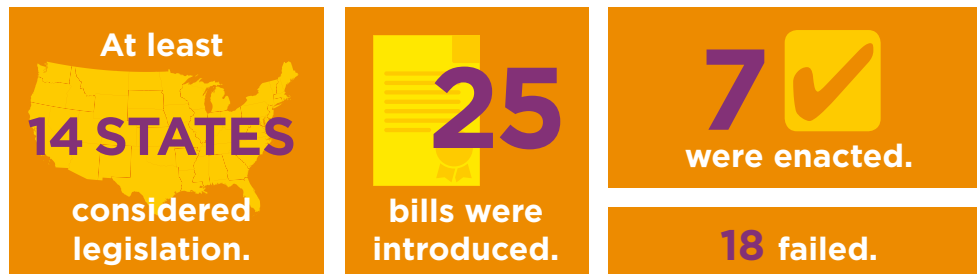


[S.B. 202](#) establishes requirements for the performance evaluation system of school and district administrators who are regularly involved in instructional matters. The annual evaluation must be 40% based on student growth and assessment data and 60% on the results of an evaluation tool established by the district.





[A. 783](#) amends the annual teacher and principal evaluation system to eliminate the mandatory use of state assessments to determine a teacher or principal's effectiveness. It also eliminates the mandatory use of student growth models as a measurement for teacher and principal evaluations.

Compensation, Incentives and Contracts



Examples of Enacted Legislation

 [S.B. 281](#) requires principal and assistant principal contracts to be a term of one to three years. In addition, the bill limits the amount of money to pay or buy out a contract for principals, assistant principals or assistant superintendents.

 [S. 692](#) prohibits the department of education from regulating the maximum salary amounts for superintendents. The bill also mandates that the executive county superintendent conducts the review and approval process of employment contracts for superintendents, assistant superintendents and school business administrators.

Policy Trends

Since 2017, Education Commission of the States has been tracking and reporting on school and district leadership legislation and identifying common trends across states. The following trends have been consistent across the past three legislative sessions:

- **Adoption of alternative licensure options and flexibility for preparation requirements.**
- **Creation or funding of leadership training and professional development for school leaders.**
- **Adoption of changes to principal evaluation systems.**

Alternative Licensure and Preparation

To increase the pool of school leaders, states have adopted alternative pathways for school leadership, including licensure programs like those established by [Colorado S.B. 19-069](#) and certificate programs like those established by [Idaho S. 1058](#) and [Rhode Island H.B. 6085](#). In 2017, **Florida** adopted a [principal pathway](#) for individuals who served as a military officer for three years. Candidates must pass a required

leadership exam and work in a full-time position at a school that requires a Florida educators' certificate from an approved district-level principal preparation program. Also in 2017, **Arizona** [required](#) the state board of education to adopt new rules for alternative teacher and administrator preparation programs that are less restrictive than rules for traditional programs. It also allowed for nonprofit organizations and private entities to apply for program approval. The trends of alternative or reduced requirements for licensure apply to district leaders as well. In 2018, **Utah** [removed](#) the requirement that a district superintendent have a license at all.

Leadership Training and Professional Development

States have adopted leadership programs — similar to the pilot program established through **Colorado** [H.B. 19-1002](#) — to provide statewide professional training and development for school principals. In 2017, **Indiana** [established](#) the Indiana New Educator Induction Pilot Program to offer grants to districts to provide new teachers, principals and administrators with induction and mentoring support, among other programs. Since 2010, **Alabama** has appropriated funds to [support](#) the Alabama Principal Mentoring Program, a two-year program that supports and mentors new school leaders.

Evaluation Systems

Several states have made changes similar to **New York** [A. 783](#), which removes student growth indicators and performance measures from principal evaluations. In 2017, **Arkansas** [removed](#) student growth measures in administrator evaluations. Additionally, **Wyoming** [removed](#) student academic performance measure from evaluations and required the state board of education to adopt professional standards for principal evaluations. Legislation failed in 2017 regarding the use or discontinuation of student growth and performance measurements in principal evaluations in **Colorado**, **Nevada** and **New Mexico**.

Related Resources

[State Education Policy Tracking Resource](#)

[School and District Leadership](#) (2018 Policy Snapshot)

[2017 State Policy Review: School and District Leadership](#)

[School Leadership: A Primer for State Policymakers](#)

[50-State Comparison: School Leader Certification and Preparation Programs](#)





About the Authors

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As a policy analyst, Damion provides research and analysis on a diverse set of state-level education issues. Prior to joining Education Commission of the States, Damion worked as a senior policy analyst with Legislative Council at the Colorado General Assembly. Damion is dedicated to the idea that a nonpartisan perspective can enhance the discussion and understanding of state education issues from early learning to workforce development. Contact Damion at dpechota@ecs.org or **303.299.3632**.

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As a state relations strategist, Deven works to build relationships with all policymakers and seeks opportunities to support their education priorities. She is the liaison for Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Wyoming. She comes to Education Commission of the States with experience from both the state and national policy arenas, having held positions in a governor's office and the U.S. Senate. Deven earned both a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in public administration from the University of South Dakota — Go 'Yotes! Contact Deven at dscott@ecs.org or **303.299.3622**.

Acknowledgment

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