Transforming School Leadership:
Preparing, Retaining, and Developing Tennessee's Principals

Successful organizations have great leaders at the top, and one of the most important things we can do to transform Tennessee's schools is ensure each one is led by a great principal. Principal leadership is second only to the quality of teaching when ranking in-school factors that impact student achievement, and the scale of the leadership challenge in Tennessee is quantifiable. Each year, Tennessee hires approximately 270 new principals in our 1,819 public schools. While we have made great strides in bringing awareness to the importance of the principal role and developed smaller scale pipeline programs, we have an opportunity to transform our statewide approach to school leadership and drive an agenda to ensure every teacher and child in Tennessee has a transformational principal.

The *Transforming School Leadership* initiative is a comprehensive approach to improve the preparation, retention, and development of Tennessee's principals. The plan leverages both state and private dollars to improve leader pipeline programs, reward and retain individuals effectively leading our state's lowest performing schools, and provide networking opportunities and support for principals in our rural communities. Governor Bill Haslam has dedicated more than $3.5 million in the FY19 budget to advance this work, and philanthropy has generously invested an additional $600,000. This initiative consists of three programs designed to address both the pipeline of new leaders as well as the development of existing leaders:

1. **Fellowships for Preparation of New School Leaders**
   The Tennessee Department of Education is revising policy to ensure that the 19 traditional preparation programs within many of the state's higher education institutions are held accountable for the performance of their graduates. As the state increases accountability and asks programs to meet specific training criteria, the state and its partners will provide funding to **incentivize school leader preparation and development programs to replicate best practices,** including mentoring, residency programs, and partnerships with districts. As part of this work, districts will have access to partnership grants to support residency positions.
   State Funding: $1.25 million on a recurring basis + Philanthropy: $600,000 on a non-recurring basis

2. **Retention and Recruitment Incentives for Turnaround School Leaders**
   In addition to training new leaders to fill the annual 270 school leader vacancies, we will leverage the talents of top principals by recruiting them to lead schools that need them most. The data in Tennessee indicate that our least-experienced principals are most often placed in our lowest-performing schools, and that principal turnover in these schools is higher than elsewhere. Using the Priority School Improvement Grant fund, specific dollars will be set aside to **incentivize effective principals to lead and stay in our lowest-performing schools**. This program would specifically serve to both incentivize strong principals to remain in their current schools and recruit new leader talent to Priority schools.
   State Funding: $1.92 million from Year 2 of the Priority School Improvement Grant fund

3. **Scholarships to Support Development and Networking of Rural School Leaders**
   The department and many districts have prioritized evaluation and professional learning for school leaders; however, opportunities for school leaders in rural communities are limited. Principals in rural schools are often unable to take advantage of key department trainings due to the cost of registration and travel. Additionally, networking opportunities to learn from other school leaders are scarce for rural principals in small districts. This program would **support development of rural school leaders**, including scholarships to participate in new networking and professional development opportunities and to attend important department trainings.
   State Funding: $500,000 on a non-recurring basis