



# Following the Leaders

FACT SHEET

"Seeing is believing, and this project will show our whole nation what is possible when the essential elements of reform are put in place."

— Dr. Rod Paige, *U.S. Secretary of Education*

With the enactment of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), President Bush and the U.S. Congress sent a clear message that education reform is a critical national priority.

Recognizing that states are in various stages of compliance with the law — and that each has unique and varying needs — *Education Leaders Council* joined forces with *Project Achieve*, *AccountabilityWorks*, *Milken Family Foundation* and *Thomas B. Fordham Foundation* to launch **Following the Leaders** (FTL).

Funded by an initial \$3.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, FTL is designed to make immediate use of new tools, resources and expertise to demonstrate to the nation that the requirements of NCLB are within reach — all that is needed is proactive leadership.

## Where?

In July 2002, **Following the Leaders** received applications from an overwhelming 28 states. From this group, 12 states were interviewed in early August with six states selected as part of a first group of leaders — additional states to be added based on future appropriations.

Alaska, Illinois, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and West Virginia represent a broad cross-section of the U.S. education landscape. They are small and large, spread across the geographic, economic and political spectrum. With such diverse demographics, these states allow FTL to offer examples that resonate in all classrooms and districts nationwide.

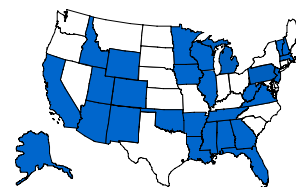
## What?

**Following the Leaders** is a school-based program that recognizes the critical connection between parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers to impact individual student performance.

- **Parents** receive regular updates about their child's academic performance.
- **Teachers** view student testing analysis and access tools that track individual student performance, determine academic need, linking curriculum planning and assessment with state standards.
- **Administrators** utilize information management systems to efficiently collect, analyze and report student performance data as required by NCLB.
- **Policymakers** review data to make better-informed decisions and to develop more effective state standards.

"Alaska has been collecting much of the data required under NCLB for several years and we are eager to have the expertise of FTL help us better understand how to use this data to make better-informed decisions about curriculum, student learning and how to improve our teacher training. While our state has never required disaggregation of the data to the level required of the new law, we will look to FTL to help guide us through the process of learning to disaggregate this data. We will also rely on FTL to help us learn how to use this data meaningfully to improve our schools and the achievement of students."

Dr. Shirley Holloway, Alaska  
Commissioner of Education



**28 states submitted FTL  
applications covering 61% of  
the US student population**

"Mississippi's selection to participate in this program is evidence of the progress we've made in recent years. Test scores are up, teacher pay is up, and we are taking a leadership stance that is being recognized nationwide."

Dr. Henry Johnson, Superintendent  
Mississippi Department of Education

"As part of the FTL initiative, West Virginia looks forward to refining its data collection process and the use of this data for policymaking, public reporting, and trouble-shooting purposes. Working with FTL, West Virginia will ensure that its revised content standards and new assessment system are in proper alignment with each other and with federal requirements."

Bob Wise, Governor  
West Virginia



To learn more about **Following the Leaders**, please call (202) 261-2600 or visit our website at [www.followingtheleaders.org](http://www.followingtheleaders.org). **Following the Leaders** is a project of Education Leaders Council.