



Strengthening the Pipeline for Effective School Principals

2023–25 Biennial Operating Budget Decision Package

Recommendation Summary

School principals have a direct impact on students’ learning. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction requests \$28.27 million in the 2023–25 biennium and \$30.48 million in the 2025–27 biennium to create a robust system of supports for the preparation, recruitment, and retention of highly effective, diverse school principals. First, this proposal would provide new principals with an experienced mentor for professional support during their first year. Second, this proposal bolsters principal retention in high-poverty schools—schools that are often most susceptible to changes in leadership—by providing salary incentives to school leaders who serve them. Finally, this proposal addresses recruiting and retaining highly qualified educators in the principal role by ensuring those who hold National Board certification do not lose their bonus when transitioning to the principalship.

Fiscal Details (Funding, FTEs, Revenue, Objects)

Operating Expenditures	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund 001	\$13,340,000	\$14,931,000	\$15,157,000	\$15,325,000
Total Expenditures	\$13,340,000	\$14,931,000	\$15,157,000	\$15,325,000
Biennial Totals	\$28,271,000		\$30,482,000	
Staffing	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
FTEs	0	0	0	0
Average Annual	0		0	
Revenue	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
	0	0	0	0
Total Revenue	0	0	0	0
Biennial Totals	0		0	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Obj. C	\$493,000	\$493,000	\$493,000	\$493,000
Obj. N	\$12,847,000	\$14,438,000	\$14,664,000	\$14,832,000

Package Description

What is the problem, opportunity, or priority you are addressing with the request?

The work of a principal has become increasingly challenging over the past few years. Some school districts that added assistant principals nearly a decade ago to assist with teacher evaluations following the enactment of the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) have, with recent budget challenges, reduced or removed those positions, increasing the workload in the remaining positions. In some districts, increases in teacher compensation were not matched with comparable increases in principals' salaries, leading to principals who make less on a per diem basis than veteran teachers they supervise. The work of managing schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, which largely centered on the logistics of safety protocols and staffing shortages, did not allow the time for principals to focus on what many see as a key priority – instructional leadership.

Witnessing these challenges, teachers who might have considered pursuing school leadership are less likely to put themselves on that path. Along with general concerns about the lack of increased compensation for more contract days and greater responsibility, educators who have earned National Board certification are disincentivized to become school leaders, as they would lose their eligibility for the National Board bonus. Due to a combination of inadequate funding of the [Leadership Internship Grant](#) and, in some districts, a shortage of substitute teachers, principal interns are unable to be released from their classrooms for the hours required to work alongside and learn from their mentor principals. School districts are finding ever-shallower pools of applicants for their principal positions, and these applicants have fewer days of practical experience.

Once school leaders are serving in the role, the challenge becomes one of supporting and retaining them. Whether a principal leaves a school for another school or leaves the role entirely, the impact on the school community is the same. During the five-year period from 2011–12 to 2015–16, only 42% of Washington's principals stayed in the same school. The school-level retention rate was lower for principals serving in high-poverty schools (Plecki, M., Elfers, A., & Wills, K., 2017). The circumstances that caused principals to leave their roles in these years have only been exacerbated by the stresses and strains of leading a school during the pandemic. It's important to note that this principal "churn" has a negative impact on student success (Kearney, Valadez, & Garcia, 2012).

Recognizing that the quality of the teacher has the greatest impact on students' learning, Washington policymakers have supported policy levers to recruit, prepare, and retain effective teachers. It is time to bring that same level of support to the second most important factor in students' learning: the quality of the principal.

What is your proposed solution?

This proposal would address principal recruitment, preparation, and retention in the following ways:

Principal Recruitment and Retention

- This proposal would provide retention incentive payments through the school apportionment system to principals and assistant principals serving in designated high-poverty schools. This would incentivize hiring and retaining school leaders in schools that are especially vulnerable to the impacts of changes in leadership.
- This proposal would restore bonus payments to principals and assistant principals who hold National Board certification, encouraging those NBCTs (National Board Certified Teachers) who are already leading schools to stay in the role. NBCTs currently serving as classroom teachers would not be in danger of losing their bonus if they choose to seek a principal or assistant principal position, removing a current disincentive to taking on this leadership opportunity.

Principal Preparation Practicum Support

The Legislature currently provides \$477,000 per fiscal year for grants to principal interns to cover the cost of substitute teachers so interns can be released from their classrooms to work alongside the principal. While this funding is helpful, it provides only about 11 days of release time in most districts, far fewer than required for program completion. Some funds go unexpended because of substitute shortages, and interns finish their programs without adequate opportunities for hands-on experiences of school leadership. On the days when a substitute covers the intern's classes, students are experiencing instruction from a teacher who may well not have a residency teacher certificate.

This proposal would begin to phase in funding for a half-time certificated instructional staff position when a school has a qualifying principal intern, so that the intern can participate in a robust half-time practicum experience, and the intern's students have a fully certificated teacher when the principal intern is working in the office. For interns who do not yet benefit from this new program, it backfills the Leadership Internship Grant proviso to ensure that there is funding for a minimum of 30 days of release time per intern. It also includes funds for intern professional learning, which will be revised in collaboration with Washington principal preparation program faculty, and part-time administrative staff within the state's professional association currently serving principals.

Principal Mentoring

What we do for our new principals, we do for the teachers and students in their schools. To retain a diverse pool of early career principals and help them to grow their skills quickly, this proposal provides a mentor for every first-year principal. Principal mentors will offer 40 hours of leadership support and coaching in all aspects of the immense and very diverse responsibilities of a school leader.

The proposal also ensures Washington has a cadre of skillful principal mentors by providing mentor professional learning based on the “Standards for New Principal Induction” as well as facilitation of virtual affinity groups for new principals of color.

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

Principal Recruitment and Retention

This portion of the proposal provides for annual retention incentive payments to principals and assistant/vice principals who are certified through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and to all principals working in designated high-poverty schools. OSPI will apportion these incentive payments to school districts by July 1 each year. This purchase will incentivize principal retention in Washington’s schools, and more specifically, in high-poverty schools where students with the greatest need are served. It will also incentivize accomplished teachers with National Board certification to pursue the principalship, increasing the pool of accomplished instructional leaders as school leaders.

Principal Preparation Practicum Support

This funding would purchase 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) Certificated Instructional Staff for a school with a qualifying principal intern, so the intern can work shoulder to shoulder with the principal for the required 540 hours of practicum experience, confident their students are with a fully certificated teacher who knows them and their curriculum. In the first year of the biennium, funding would be provided to support a practicum for 25 principal interns; that would be doubled to 50 in the second year. The proposal also includes funding for release time for the principal interns who would not be part of this model. This funding, combined with the current Leadership Internship Grant proviso (\$477,000), would continue to support release models for interns who are not part of the practicum support model.

The proposal also includes funds for a contract to support a 0.5 FTE administrative staff person within a Washington state professional association serving principals, who would support administration of this program. It also requests funding for four 4-day professional learning sessions for principal interns, developed in collaboration with faculty from principal preparation programs operating in Washington.

Principal Mentoring

This proposal provides grants to school districts for a \$3,000 mentor stipend for 400 novice principals. Each mentor would provide a minimum of 40 hours of support to their assigned new principal. This proposal would also support costs for hosting 18 mentor professional learning sessions, two at each of Washington’s nine regional educational service districts (ESD). Sessions will develop mentors’ coaching skills and their understanding of beginning principal induction systems. To best support and retain new principals of color and mentors of color, funds are provided to host a series of six affinity sessions to serve them. This research-based practice has had a positive impact for both mentors and novice educators in programs where it is being practiced.

This proposal includes funds for a contract with Washington’s professional association serving principals to support a 1.0 FTE Associate Director (AD) who would recruit school systems by region to serve as principal induction sites. The AD would lead cohorts in a development process, support implementation rubrics, and hold site visits to support sites in implementing the “Standards for Beginning Principal Induction” and to collect data about programs. The AD would assist in recruiting and training principal mentors. A part-time administrative position to support the work of the Associate Director is also included in this proposal.

What alternatives did you explore and why was this option chosen?

If this proposal is not funded, schools will continue to lose principals to other roles or to other schools or districts. Funding it through the state’s apportionment system ensures these incentives become part of the salary “fabric” of the K–12 system and gives potential recipients confidence that they can count on them as they make decisions about where and which leadership roles they pursue.

Principal interns have been receiving grant funds to pay for a few days of substitutes so they can work in the office, but it is not sufficient in terms of time, nor does it allow for the best experience for the principal intern’s students. This proposal begins to ensure that qualified interns have a consistent certificated teacher with whom to share their job, so they can spend the time necessary working with their principal to gain the experience they need to be ready to lead a school and know their students are being taught by a fully certificated teacher.

Frequent and ongoing support from an experienced and trusted colleague affords the most consistent opportunities for the novice leader to explore their leadership capacity, engage in reflective practice, and experience daily actionable items and systems supports. When the mentor has received robust training for the role, they afford the novice principal with a thought partner in all aspects of leadership through an equity lens.

Performance Measures

Performance outcomes:

- Increased enrollment in principal preparation programs.
- Increased enrollment of NBCTs in principal preparation programs.
- More principal supervisors reporting greater degree of readiness of principal/assistant principal candidates when they begin their positions.
- Increase in principal/assistant principal retention among both NBCT principals and those serving in high-poverty schools.
- Increase of principals/assistant principals into National Board candidacy.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal is related to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards annual bonus program as of 2001 and the High Poverty Schools designation and bonus payment beginning in 2008. These programs were appropriated:

- \$62,674,000 in fiscal year 2018 (FY18) and \$82,778,000 in FY19 for bonus payments during the 2017–19 biennium, and
- \$69,237,000 in FY20 and \$73,797,000 in FY21 for bonus payments during the 2019–21 biennium.

Total bonus payments, including districts' percentage of mandatory benefits, totaled a cost of:

- \$54,368,911 in FY2018
- \$60,519,472 in FY2019
- \$66,719,565 in FY2020
- \$71,090,586 in FY2021

Of total bonus payments, High Poverty Schools bonuses accounted for:

- \$10,419,260 in FY2018
- \$11,890,810 in FY2019
- \$11,464,215 in FY2020
- \$12,626,269 in FY2021

The funding for the Principal Preparation Practicum would expand the current Leadership Internship Grant program. The funding for the Principal Mentoring program would replace and expand principal mentoring work that is currently being funded by the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

Principal Recruitment and Retention (NBCT and High Poverty Schools Bonuses)

- This proposal calculated trends for growth of principals, NBCT principals, and principals in High Poverty Schools over time in order to determine what bonus costs might look like in the next four years. These calculations were based on historical counts of principals and NBCTs.
- For NBCT principal bonus payments, this proposal looks at the change in total number of principals in Washington schools. Of those principals, the 8-year average percentage of NBCT principals to total principals was 8.12%. OSPI assumes bonus amounts will continue to be at least the \$6,019 paid to each eligible NBCT in 2022–23 through the next four fiscal years; and the agency also assumes that 8.12% of principals during these years will be NBCTs. The total cost of NBCT principal bonus payments is then the number of projected NBCT principals multiplied by \$6,019 plus percentage of employer's mandatory benefits (22.07%).
- For principals serving in Washington's high-poverty schools, this proposal was calculated using an 8-year trend to predict how this number will grow. High-poverty schools bonus payments are prorated by FTE, where 1.0 FTE = \$5,000. Assuming all principals are 1.0 FTE,

the total cost is then the number of projected principals in high-poverty schools multiplied by \$5,000 plus percentage of employer's mandatory benefits (22.07%).

- The "base" bonus amount changes with inflationary adjustments and mandatory benefits changes annually.

Principal Preparation Practicum Support

- Year 1: Serve 25 principal interns by replacing them half-time with a certificated instructional staff (CIS); CIS at \$65,000 per; Year 2: serve 50 principal interns with a practicum.
- Ensure remaining interns (year 1: 175; year 2: 150) have access to funding for 30 days of substitute release time at \$200 per day; current Leadership Internship Grant funding (\$477,000) subtracted from this total.
- Contract for administration of professional learning: 16 full-day in-person sessions at \$5,000 per session, inclusive of room rental, presenter fees, and lunch.

Principal Mentoring

- \$3,000 per mentor for 40 hours per new principal x 400 new principals.
- Contract for administration of professional learning: 18 full-day in-person sessions at \$5,000 per session, inclusive of room rental, presenter fees, and lunch

Workforce assumptions:

No additional staffing at OSPI is necessary.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

Effective preparation and retention of effective school leaders allows for equitable access to high-quality learning environment for all students. Consistent leadership has a direct positive impact on high need schools. This bonus would incentivize principal retention in Washington's high need schools and reduce disparate outcomes for students. The practicum funding would allow districts with fewer resources to provide the same robust experience that wealthier districts can provide. Principal mentoring will support all novice principals, as well as provide an affinity space so principals of color have a supportive opportunity to share common experiences.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic framework:

This proposal aligns with the Governor's Results Washington Goal #1: World Class Education, as effective and consistent school leadership has a direct and positive impact on lifelong learning. In addition, this proposal aligns with OSPI's Strategic Goal #3: A Diverse, Inclusive, and Highly Skilled Workforce.

Other Collateral Connections

Intergovernmental:

State-tribal education compact (STEC) schools and tribal schools qualify for proposed bonus structures.

Stakeholder response:

The Association of Washington School Principals and the Washington Association of School Administrators are both in support of this proposal.

Legal or administrative mandates:

N/A

Changes from current law:

WAC 392-140-972 and WAC 392-140-973 would need to be expanded to be able to allocate bonuses to principals serving in high poverty schools and principals who are National Board certified. In addition, budget language regarding the Principal Internship and mentoring opportunities would need to be expanded.

State workforce impacts:

N/A

State facilities impacts:

N/A

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A

Other Documents

Reference documents:

Gates, S., Baird, M., Master, B., Chavez-Herrerias, E. (2019). Principal Pipelines: A Feasible, Affordable, and Effective Way for Districts to Improve Schools.

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Kearney, A., Valadez, A., Garcia, L., (2012). Leadership for the Long-haul: The Impact of Administrator Longevity on Student Achievement.

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