



HOT TOPIC

Teacher and Substitute Shortage

How bad is the problem?

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) conducted a school principal survey during the fall of 2015 to get data on an increasing shortage of teachers and substitutes. Of those who responded:

- **More than 90 percent** stated that they were “in crisis” or “struggling” to find qualified teachers and substitutes for their classrooms.
- **80 percent** had employed individuals with emergency teaching certificates as classroom teachers, or individuals with emergency substitute certificates as long-term substitutes.
- **74 percent** reported that, in the past week, they had been required to cover a classroom because a substitute was not available.
- **29 percent** reported that they had teacher positions that were not filled.

There is a projected **five-fold increase** this school year in the number of “emergency substitute certificates” being requested compared with 2011–12. The only requirement for an emergency certificate is a clean fingerprint check.

Why is this happening?

As more teachers retire, fewer younger people are interested in becoming teachers. The in-state production of new teachers is significantly less than a decade ago. In the fall of 2015, although school districts hired 2,860 beginning teachers, our colleges and universities produced only 2,485 certificated teachers the prior year—and not all of them chose to become teachers.

Not only that, but those who do enter the profession are more likely to quit than in the past.

Is the shortage expected to continue?

We expect to continue to have teacher shortages in special education, mathematics, science, elementary education, and early childhood. The problem will increase as we expand access to state-funded full-day kindergarten and reduce K–3 class sizes.

What can we do *right now*?

In the short-term, we must:

- Increase the starting salary of beginning teachers.
- Allow recently retired teachers to substitute.
- Recruit teachers from in-state and nationwide.
- Streamline the process for experienced out-of-state teachers to work in Washington.
- Make it easier for teachers to apply for jobs.

How can we fix the problem in the future?

In the long-term, we need to:

- Expand our in-state production of new teachers.
- Increase “alternative routes” to certification.
- Train high school teachers in the new “Careers in Education” course to help communities get more students in their area to become teachers.

Superintendent Randy Dorn has proposed legislation (House Bill 2573 and Senate Bill 6332) in the 2016 Session that will, if enacted, implement these actions.

For more information

Teacher and Substitute Shortage in Washington State <http://bit.ly/WA-TeacherShortage>

HB 2573 <http://bit.ly/waHB2573>

SB 6332 <http://bit.ly/waSB6332>

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is the primary agency charged with overseeing K–12 education in Washington. Led by State School Superintendent **Randy Dorn**, OSPI works with the state’s 295 school districts to administer basic education programs and implement education reform on behalf of more than one million public school students. www.k12.wa.us

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