



# Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

## **Beginning Educator Support Program**

### 1. **Purpose:**

The purpose of the Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) program is to:

- Attract, train, and retain skillful novice teachers in Washington's public schools who promote educational equity to positively impact student learning;
- Support novice educators to promote equitable learning in the classrooms and schools;
- Develop mentors who can foster student-centered, equitable classroom practices;
- Build systems of support within school districts to hold a collective sense of responsibility for the success of beginning educators and the students they serve.

### 2. **Description of services provided:**

BEST supports and promotes strategies for improving districts' efforts to attract, train, and retain highly skilled novice educators who promote equitable learning that positively impacts their student learning.

In 2020-2021, BEST funded 190 districts serving approximately 1,573 Year 1 teachers and 1,771 Year 2 teachers. Grantees included 8 ESD consortia and 2 district consortia. These districts and regional consortia were tasked with implementing the following research-based program components to support each novice educator:

- Assignment of a carefully selected, well-trained mentor;
- Instructional orientation prior to the start of teaching;
- Professional development designed specifically for beginning teachers;
- Opportunities for beginning teachers to be observed and receive non-evaluative feedback on instruction;
- Support with the teacher evaluation system and use of the district's instructional framework;
- Special attention to the needs of novice teachers in under-performing schools; and
- Formation of a stakeholders' team.

In addition, BEST asked districts to attend to specific areas that impact student learning when neglected by providing:

- Enhanced, coordinated support for teachers of special education that

addressed their complex role as teacher, case manager for students, and lead for other adults in their buildings.

- Intensive support for teachers with limited certificates who had not yet completed a teacher preparation program.
- Mitigation of the impact of extra-challenging placements on first-year teachers and their students.

Grantees were allowed to extend support to beginning school counselors, nurses, and librarians if they had enough funds.

**Mentor Academies** provided high quality professional development for instructional mentors, coaches, and other teacher leaders focused on the specific knowledge and skills necessary to accelerate new teachers' instructional effectiveness in their classrooms. Approximately 1,700 educators participated in 48 academies during the year in at least one of the following areas:

- Mentor Academy 101 – Foundations for Mentoring
- Mentor Academy 201 – Mentoring for Equity
- Mentoring Teachers of Special Education
- Mentoring English Language Development Teachers

**NAKIA Academy** offered two cohorts of mentors identifying as educators of color to learn Mentor Academy 101 content together, facilitated by BEST Mentor Faculty who also identify as educators of color. This is a unique model in the state and possibly the nation. There were 70 participants with a wait list of 50.

**Regional Mentor Roundtables** continued monthly support of mentors and instructional coaches with opportunities to learn, practice their skills, explore problems of practice, and network with other mentors. The 21 roundtables offered on different days and at different times online allowed for increased participation and flexibility for participants.

**Induction Coaching** for each BEST grantee provided technical assistance and personalized support for districts to continue refining their comprehensive induction programs and address the unique needs presented by the on-going pandemic. Coaches use the [Standards for Induction](#) and BETS Grantee Assurances as guides to support problem solving, push practices, and assess on-going needs and gaps.

**Monthly Induction Leader Collaborations**, open to all districts to build understanding of comprehensive induction, provided opportunities for collaboration, sharing induction practices, and networking. Offering these online increased accessibility and participation.

**Annual BEST Grantee Convening** engaged 430 grant team members in sharing practices, learning together, and planning for the coming year. Cancelled in 2020 because of the pandemic, grantees were pleased to have this key learning opportunity back in place.

**Annual BEST Mentor-Coach *Equity in Action* Conference** provided space for 565 educational leaders to develop their skills and knowledge for promoting more equitable learning in schools across the state.

3. **Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:**

The competitive BEST Grants are awarded to districts and consortia who demonstrate a need, particularly in under-performing schools; on-going commitment to developing comprehensive induction; and leadership to accomplish the work. To qualify for continuing with BEST grant funding, districts and regional consortia committed to providing the following:

- **A well-trained, carefully selected mentor** who will provide an average of 1-2 hours per week for Year 1 teachers for planning and reflection conferences, observations, and feedback;
- **An instructional orientation** with compensation for time prior to the start of school to acquaint them with district and school expectations and culture; orient them to preferred instructional practices and curriculum; and help them plan for their first day, weeks, and month with students;
- **A classroom set-up visit** prior to the start of school or the start of the new educator's assignment in which a mentor meets with the new educator to assist with classroom set-up and plans for the first days with students;
- **On-going professional learning for beginning educators** designed to meet their unique needs throughout the first year. Professional learning is aligned to the Washington State 8 Teacher Evaluation Criteria (or other professional standards when relevant) and the districts adopted instructional framework.
- **Formative observations with feedback** for mentees provided at least monthly by released mentors and a minimum of four times per year by colleague mentors;
- **Release time for new teachers to observe** accomplished teaching while accompanied by their mentor or other instructional leader;
- **Job description and compensation for mentors** of early career educators for required activities that fall outside the mentor's regular job responsibilities such as attending mentor roundtables, after-school meetings, and summer trainings;
- **Initial professional learning for mentors**, including completion of the 3-day OSPI Mentor Academy 101 (preferably before the initial year of

- mentoring and no later than December of that year);
- **Ongoing professional learning for mentors** to build capacity in components of the [WA State Standards for Mentoring](#). Mentors should participate regularly in roundtables which may be hosted by OSPI, regional ESDs, regional consortia, and/or school districts. OSPI will provide Mentor Roundtable facilitator training and will coordinate a statewide communications network to support the work of roundtables and their membership;
- **Special attention to the needs of early-career educators in comprehensive schools** and/or working with students facing the greatest challenges;
- **Stakeholders' Team** to meet at least 3 times per year to examine the current state of comprehensive new educator induction, gather and review data, problem-solve, and set goals. In order to build a sense of collective responsibility, members should represent multiple groups across the school district;
- **BEST Grantee Convening** attendance; and
- **ESD Consortium Leads** committed to build the capacity of individual districts to create comprehensive induction programs.

**Beneficiaries in 2020-21 School Year:**

<b>Number of School Districts:</b>	190
<b>Number of Schools:</b>	<i>Enter total number of schools</i>
<b>Number of Students:</b>	<i>Enter total number of students</i>
<b>Number of Educators:</b>	1,573 Year 1 and 1,771 Year 2 teachers
<b>Other:</b> ESD and District Consortia	10

**Number of OSPI staff associated with this funding (FTEs):** 2.6 FTE

**Number of contractors/other staff associated with this funding:** 53

Contractors

**FY21 Funding: State Appropriation:** \$10.5 million

**Federal Appropriation:** \$0

**Other fund sources:** \$0

**TOTAL (FY21)** \$10.5 million

4. **Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?**

No

Yes, please explain.

*If state funds are not available, the state will not be eligible...*

5. **State funding history:**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Amount Funded</b>	<b>Actual Expenditures</b>
FY21	\$10,500,000	\$9,719,162
FY20	\$10,500,000	\$10,163,330
FY19	\$10,500,000	\$10,288,704
FY18	\$10,500,000	\$10,383,282
FY17	\$9,000,000	\$8,883,245
FY16	\$5,500,000	\$5,327,162
FY15	\$3,000,000	\$2,915,211
FY14	\$1,000,000	\$957,888
FY13	\$1,000,000	\$986,846
FY12	\$1,000,000	\$961,240
FY11	\$1,800,000	\$987,700
FY10	\$2,348,000	\$2,266,227

6. **Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Districts Funded within Consortia</b>	<b>Total Districts Funded</b>
FY21	123	190
FY20	126	191
FY19	115	182
FY18	94	162
FY17	73	131
FY16	33	69
FY15	26	39
FY14	0	7
FY13	17	19
FY12	26	28
FY11	11	14
FY10	27	30

7. **Programmatic changes since inception (if any):**

New teacher induction in Washington school districts is an issue of equity of access for students. OSPI's "Washington State's Ensuring Equitable Access of Excellent Educator Initiative State Plan" provides significant data showing that many of our underserved students are inequitably taught by less-experienced teachers. Funding comprehensive induction is part of the way to close the opportunity gap for students.

BEST continued to move toward that OSPI's equity goals. Mentor Academy 101 content was significantly revised to equip mentors with the necessary skills to promote equitable learning opportunities for all students. The NAKIA Academy, created to increase access to leadership for educators of color and create a pool of future mentors of color, received strong, positive feedback with numerous requests from grantees to offer it again with increased capacity to allow for more participants.

Yearly, BEST adapts and revises content of professional learning, support structures for grantees, and funding models to meet the changing needs of grantees. In Winter and Spring 2020, BSET held listening sessions with grantees to understand the challenges presented by the per-teacher funding model used for several decades to support induction. The uncertainty of how many first and second-year teachers would be hired each year and not knowing final counts and awards until October created an unstable system. With this in mind, a new award model was created for the 2021-2022 school year.

Historically, the number of new teachers in Washington increased steadily after 1987, The appropriation for their support remained constant, resulting in the amount allocated per new teacher declining. In 2008-09, the allocation was \$880 per new teacher, insufficient for districts to carry out the directives of the TAP legislation, let alone offer quality induction programs that include research-identified components for effectiveness. Magnified by the 20-year impact of the increased cost of living, the result was that some districts, unable to afford to meet the RCW criteria, did not even apply for funding. Many more districts were forced to supplement the state allocation from other unstable federal, state, and local funding sources (e.g. Title I, Title II, I-728, local levy funds, etc.) in order to provide effective programs. Still other districts cobbled together programs which fell short of the level of support that research indicates can make a difference in improving both teacher retention and student achievement (Strong, 2005; Villars and Strong, 2005 and 2007).

Recognizing these issues, the legislature provided funding for beginning educator support to develop and implement BEST in FY 2010. With the same level of previous TAP funding, OSPI's Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) program was directed to provide comprehensive induction and mentoring programs in "five to fifteen districts and/or regional consortia" (ESSB 6444) through a competitive grant process. Support for first, second, and third-year teachers and assistance to candidates for Professional Certification was initially funded in grantee districts. During the 2010 legislative session, BEST funding was reduced from \$2.348 million to \$2 million, which necessitated the elimination of district support for third-year teachers and assistance to ProTeach candidates. In October 2010, across-the-board state cuts further reduced BEST funding to \$1.88 million which impacted the ability of grantee districts to fully

address all required program components. With the piloting and implementation of the statewide Teacher/Principal Evaluation system in 2012, BEST funding continued to focus on first and second-year teachers and began focusing on provisional status teachers with a new teaching assignment. FY 2013 and 2014 funding continued at the reduced level of \$1 million.

In 2013-14, BEST provided two-year pilot grants to seven districts across Washington. Those districts served 220 first year teachers and enhanced the expertise of their mentors. The Legislature added \$2 million in additional funds for the 2014-15 school year, making possible support for 32 more districts and a total of 1347 early-career teachers. This represented less than 60% of the approximately 2300 first-year teachers hired in Washington annually.

The Legislature funded BEST at \$5.5 million for 2015-2016, which allowed expansion to additional districts as well as expanded funding of Year 2 teachers and a pilot project to provide mentor support for Year 1 ESAs in selected districts. In 2016-2017, Legislature added an additional \$3.5 million, making the support of an additional 62 districts and 1,315 first and second-year teachers possible.

The 2018 budget funded BEST at \$10.5 million, again allowing the program to expand. An additional 31 districts and 1,085 first and second-year teachers were added to the program. With each year participating in the program, districts further develop their systemic support for their novice teachers.

Although funding did not increase in FY19, the scope of BEST's work did. An additional 20 districts, 200 Year 1 teachers, and 500 Year 2 teachers received support through BEST funds. The number of contractors, academies, and other supports were also increased to meet demand. With the increase in number of teachers, BEST was unable to fully fund 21% of districts according to the per teacher rates set by BEST. Districts attempted to fill the short-fall with TPEP or other funds.

Significant increases in teacher salaries for FY20 resulted in tightening budgets in many districts and a decrease in the number of new teachers hired. With fewer Year 1 teachers, BEST closed the previous year's funding gap and provided much-needed enhanced funding to increase support for novice teachers of special education and novice teachers with limited certificates. The pandemic resulted in another decrease in the number of new teachers hired for FY21. Early reports of hiring for FY 22 show a significant rebound in numbers from the previous two years and a return to the short-fall experienced in FY19.

## 8. **Evaluations of program/major findings:**

June 2021 Interim Report from a study examining induction and mentoring in WA commissioned by BEST and completed  
By Elfers, Plecki, and Ungco, University of Washington

**Mentoring:** The authors report that “thus far, we have observed early career teachers look to their BEST Program mentors for accessible communication and specified instructional or professional foci.” They note that early career educators:

- Have wide ranging needs from curriculum and instructional support to navigating housing and finances.”
- Value time with mentors and colleagues that is frequent, specific, focused, and consistent.
- Recognize their mentors as a consistent source of support.
- Are well-served by mentors who are accessible for meetings, have a specific focus during each meeting, assist in understanding the evaluation process, and provide relevant opportunities for further professional development.
- Benefit from mentors who foster their connections with other educators in their school, content/grade level, and district.

**Teachers of Color:** For early career teachers of color, some districts have or are creating opportunities for these teachers to meet and collaborate with other teachers of color in the form of affinity spaces. “An overarching concern from the early career teachers of color in this study was the representation of district and school leadership.... When I think of our Mentor Program, they're trying to talk about systemic racism, but they're all white. All the mentors are white.” Researchers’ conversations with early career teachers of color shows that the work of supporting teachers of color is essential and complex, and needs to be sustained over time.

**Teacher Evaluation and Growth:** Researchers also report that “the embedded nature of the state’s instructional frameworks within the BEST program supports a coherent vision of high-quality instructional practice and a direct way to support new teachers’ professional growth. It also demonstrates ways in which new teacher induction can be coordinated and embedded within other school and district improvement strategies.”

**Feedback on BEST:** “School leaders interviewed for this study recognize the importance of the BEST program in helping new teachers thrive. An elementary principal explained, ‘My new teachers that have gone through the program, they love it. They feel like they're not by themselves, and that they have someone that they can just go to confidentially... I have to say, I've gotten a lot of great feedback on the difference that it has made...’”

Findings by BEST about induction in the state:

- The pilot NAKIA Academy facilitated by and for current and future mentors of color



supports educator growth and meets an important need. One of the 70 Spring 2021 participants said, "I often attend leadership academies where I'm the only brown face in the room. Now we get to truly have a seat at the table to make change and to show other educators of color that we do truly belong and that we have voices and serve a purpose."

- Grantees continued to use BEST funding to refine and extend their work to attract, train, and retain skillful practitioners. However, BEST cannot fully fund current induction work. Districts report using funds from TPEP 664 (81%), Title IIa (65%), and the general fund (62%) to supplement BEST funding.
- Grantees report needing to provide enhanced support for teachers of special education (87%), teachers of CTE (53%), and teachers with limited certificates (53%).
- Following several years of BEST initiating and guiding conversations about placements for novice teachers, 82% of districts report that this is now a topic of stakeholder team work and 41% report analyzing data on placements. This is a significant area for continued work to decrease the challenges on novice teachers and increase their capacity for attending to student needs.
- Educational Service District consortium leaders connect initiatives such as the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) and the Office of Systems and School Improvement (OSSI), increasing the impact and improving systemic thinking at the district level.

#### 9. **Major challenges faced by the program:**

- BEST funding generally has not been enough to fund induction for Educational Staff Associates (ESAs—counselors, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, etc.), roles that are essential to supporting vulnerable students and closing opportunity gaps. With the increase in school counselor staffing and the impact of the pandemic on retention and hiring, preliminary counts for FY 22 show this to be a significant and continuing area of concern.
- Districts consistently report challenges in providing robust Year 2 (Y2) support for teachers. Unstable and low funding (\$750 - \$1000/Y2 teacher) is a strong contributing factor.
- A year-to-year funding model creates uncertainty and teachers are often hesitant to risk giving up a guaranteed teaching position for a mentoring job that may go away after a year if funding is cut. Recruiting released mentors when positions cannot be guaranteed beyond a single year is difficult.
- Districts need solid funding guarantees in spring when committing to contracts for released mentors (e.g., by May 15).
- Agency compensation cannot compete with school district compensation, which makes recruiting and retaining program staff challenging. One of the two BEST program staff left BEST in September 2019 after being recruited by a school district that was able to offer an 80% increase in salary. Following the resignation of the program lead in Spring 2021, most applicants for the open position were not from districts in Washington and none were current leaders of BEST in districts.

- Small districts with just a few new teachers struggle to provide robust support for singleton teachers. Collaboration with and among ESD consortia is beginning to generate solutions such as mentors provided by the ESD and regional mentors.

10. **Future opportunities:**

- Continue to provide NAKIA academy for leadership and mentor development. (105 educators of color registered for Fall 2021 and plans for Spring 2022 cohorts in place.)
- Continue to build mentors' capacity to identify and address patterns of racial inequity in classrooms and to help novice teachers foster equitable classroom environments
- Continue to collaborate with partners focused on attracting, training, and retaining teachers of color. This includes partnering with other groups already engaged in this work.
- Extend support to teachers who often have students facing greater challenges by enhancing funding for teachers of special education, enhancing funding for teachers with limited certificates, and providing support for educational staff associates (ESAs)
- Provide 1-year Induction Development Grants to help districts learn about and begin to engage in comprehensive induction work for a year before scaling up work.
- Support districts to use newly-revised Student Growth Goal guidance to strengthen their support for Year 2 teachers.
- Continue to expand BEST support to all 295 districts in the state, from the 190 districts being served in FY 21.

11. **Statutory and/or budget language:**

**Budget Proviso:** ESSB 5092 Section 1511(2)(e) - \$10,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2020 and \$10,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2021 are provided solely for a beginning educator support program. The program shall prioritize first year educators in the mentoring program. School districts and/or regional consortia may apply for grant funding. The program provided by a district and/or regional consortia shall include: A paid orientation; assignment of a qualified mentor; development of a professional growth plan for each beginning teacher aligned with professional certification; release time for mentors and new educators to work together; and educator observation time with accomplished peers. Funding may be used to provide statewide professional development opportunities for mentors and beginning educators.

12. **Other relevant information:**

**Support from BEST available to all 295 school districts in Washington:**

- Mentor Academies and Mentor Roundtables for mentors, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and administrators;
- Annual Mentor-Coach *Equity in Action* conference;
- Induction Leader Collaborations provided monthly
- Assistance from the BEST Program staff in designing and improving district induction work.

13. **Schools/districts receiving assistance:**

See [OSPI's Grantee List](#)

14. **Program Contact Information:**

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