



Expanding Mentorship and Retention of Beginning Educators *2023–25 Biennial Operating Budget Decision Package*

Recommendation Summary

In the 2021–22 school year, Washington school districts hired an unprecedented number of novice educators with nearly 7,000 first-year teachers and Educational Staff Associates (ESAs), an increase of over 65% from the previous year. Our state’s Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST), which provides mentoring and induction supports to beginning educators, is a proven strategy for reducing educator turnover. Currently, 25% of new teachers and 100% of new ESAs do not receive these critical supports. This request is for an increase of \$16 million for the 2023–25 biennium to support full implementation of the BEST program statewide.

Fiscal Details (Funding, FTEs, Revenue, Objects)

Operating Expenditures	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund 001	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000
Total Expenditures	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000
Biennial Totals	\$16,000,000		\$16,000,000	
Staffing	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
FTEs	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Average Annual	1.5		1.5	
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. A	\$114,000	\$114,000	\$114,000	\$114,000
Obj. B	\$49,000	\$49,000	\$49,000	\$49,000
Obj. C	\$310,000	\$318,000	\$318,000	\$318,000
Obj. E	\$244,000	\$244,000	\$244,000	\$244,000
Obj. G	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Obj. J	\$8,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. N	\$7,250,000	\$7,250,000	\$7,250,000	\$7,250,000

Package Description

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

A highly qualified educator workforce is the single greatest leverage point for ensuring all students in Washington achieve at their highest level. All students deserve high-quality, effective educators, and it is especially important for students of color and others furthest from educational justice to have access to educators who share their identity markers, foster culturally responsive learning environments, and deliver high-quality instruction. Educators who are well-supported in their first years in the profession are better equipped to support students.

The BEST program currently provides support to just over half of Washington's novice educators through grant funding to school districts. Districts who fully engage in the BEST program retain educators at a 4% higher rate than non-BEST districts; all novices need these supports to feel the sense of belonging and efficacy that influences their retention in the profession.

In Washington state, over half of the student population enrolled at the beginning of the 2021–22 school year identified as students of color or of two or more races, while 87.6% of classroom teachers are white. BEST does not have the capacity within current resources to fully coach and support districts as they work to dismantle inequitable hiring and retention practices and create opportunities to recruit and retain educators of color. Similarly, BEST is not currently able to provide adequate funding for the support of new Educational Staff Associates (ESAs include school counselors, nurses, and social workers), nor is the program able to provide differentiated support of novice educators in especially challenging placements, including teachers of special education and teachers on limited certificates. These areas need more robust support to ensure educator – and thus student – success.

What is your proposed solution?

If we close support gaps for novice educators, they are more likely to close opportunity gaps for their students. This request would expand the BEST program to support all districts statewide in providing comprehensive induction supports for all novice teachers and Educational Staff Associates (ESAs), including providing enhanced support for teachers of special education, teachers with limited certificates, and educators of color. BEST is well-poised to support these key areas. The BEST program provides grants, ongoing professional learning, and coaching to district leaders and mentors to support them in serving their novice educators with comprehensive induction: hiring, orientation, mentoring, professional learning, and feedback/formative assessment.

BEST leads with educational equity at the center of our work, striving to support systems in dismantling inequitable policies and practices that prevent high-quality educators from entering and staying in the profession. BEST provides induction coaches who engage districts in coaching cycles as they work toward more equitable practices. Part of ensuring access for students to a

quality educational experience is addressing the need for a racially diverse educator workforce that more accurately reflects the students they serve, and for all educators to be able to teach effectively in classrooms that are racially and linguistically diverse. We need to create spaces that nurture and affirm novice educators of color, while helping all novice educators form equitable habits of practice in their classrooms.

The BEST program is working toward this end with its training series for mentors, “Mentor Academy 101” and “Mentor Academy 201,” focused on understanding identity, equitable practices in mentoring and teaching, and building relationships centered on transforming beliefs, behaviors, and ways of being in schools. BEST also serves novice mentors of color through Nakia Academy, a foundational mentor academy specifically created by, for, and with educator leaders of color across the state. Nakia Academy is a transformational opportunity to uplift the next generation of educational leaders of color. BEST offers several other mentor training opportunities throughout each year. In 2021–22, BEST trained over 3,200 mentors across all offerings.

With increased funding, BEST will be equipped to provide comprehensive induction supports to all of Washington’s novice educators, as well as expand the district-focused coaching that transforms systems.

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

This request is for an increase of \$8 million per year to BEST’s existing \$10.5 million proviso for full funding for novice educator induction for all first-year teachers and ESAs in all Washington school districts. The program can prepare and support districts who are not currently part of the BEST program to develop and sustain an effective system of induction for their novice educators. This includes districts with schools identified for comprehensive supports through the Washington School Improvement Framework, which would receive top priority.

The vast majority of this increase in program funding would directly support educators through grants to school districts statewide. BEST generally funds novice educators at \$2,500 for each first-year teacher or ESA in each district. This amount goes to support the time of mentors and others who support the novice educator’s growth and development, as well as the other wraparound aspects of induction (hiring, orientation, and feedback/formative assessment.) BEST believes in creating a collective sense of responsibility for the success of beginning educators, and BEST grants are used to support that effort.

Based on a 5-year average of first-year educator counts, we estimate 5,000 first-year teachers and 1,300 first-year ESAs to be supported through BEST annually.

To expand support to these educators, BEST will need an increase of \$4,000,000 per year for novice teachers and \$3,250,000 per year for novice ESAs. The total annual grant amount

included in this request is \$7,250,000 to fund induction supports for first-year teachers and ESAs.

These grants also include enhanced support for educators in especially challenging roles and situations, including:

- Special education teachers: More robust and specialized support for teachers who have complex responsibilities (such as Individualized Education Program [IEP] preparation, collaboration with teams of other educators and ESAs, and instruction) and serve some of our most vulnerable students. About 15% of new teachers teach special education.
- Teachers with Limited Certificates: Teachers who have not yet completed a full teacher preparation program before beginning their teaching roles need extra years of intensive support. About 30% of novice teachers in the 2021–22 school year held limited certificates.
- Educators of color working in predominantly white systems: Higher proportions of beginning teachers of color are in schools where the student population is 75% students of color or more. Educators of color benefit from affirming school cultures and intentional affinity spaces to feel valued in the school community.

This request also includes an increase of \$500,000 for program costs for BEST. BEST utilizes a team of contractors to carry out its extensive professional learning program, including all Mentor Academies, Induction Coaching services, and the annual BEST Symposium event, which brings together all district induction teams statewide for a reflective, growth-focused event.

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

If this request is not funded, about a quarter of Washington’s novice teachers will not receive induction support, which includes many who teach students with disabilities and multilingual learners, and a number who have had limited pre-service preparation and would actually benefit from support even beyond what BEST currently provides. This will impact both the retention of these teachers, at a time when many districts in the state are facing teacher shortages in specific areas, as well as their effectiveness in the classroom. New ESAs, including school counselors, nurses, and social workers, will not receive formal mentoring or induction services at all.

The BEST program is already operating at maximum efficiency, distributing 90% of funds in grants to districts and consortia and using almost 75% of the remainder for costs associated with delivering mentor and district leader professional learning.

Performance Measures

Performance outcomes:

High-quality mentoring and induction supports are a proven strategy to increase the retention of novice teachers in Washington state. This request would bring a program with proven results to more educators and will ultimately impact student success. A 2017 study by the University of Washington's Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy showed that only 6% of first-year teachers in districts implementing the BEST program with fidelity are expected to exit the state and/or teaching profession annually, compared with 10% in all other districts in the state. With full implementation of the BEST program for all novice educators statewide, we expect higher retention numbers over time. Additionally, with an increased focus and enhanced support for novice educators of color, OSPI expects to see a shift in educator racial diversity toward a more diverse educator workforce.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:

This request would build upon the current statewide investment for BEST. BEST has had a \$10.5 million appropriation since fiscal year 2018.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

- First-year educator counts are based upon a 5-year statewide average from school year 2017 through school year 2022. New teacher numbers for BEST districts were low in 2019–20 due to budget cuts, low again in 2020–21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and very high in 2021–22 after the full return to fully in-person classes. Whether or not this increase will persist is unknown.
- BEST applies a standard \$2,500 per novice educator to provide comprehensive induction and mentoring services. Depending on district size, capacity, and programming, BEST differentiates this per-educator amount. For example, a district with a high number of novice teachers of special education that provides specialized support for these teachers may receive a higher funding amount per educator, while a district with no novice teachers of special education or without any systems of support in place may receive a lower funding amount per educator. This differentiation is determined year by year in collaboration with district leaders and BEST induction coaches.
- BEST currently operates very efficiently with 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) program lead supervisor, 1.0 FTE program supervisor, and 0.5 FTE administrative assistant. In order to support the increased capacity in this proposal, an additional 1.0 program supervisor and 0.5 administrative assistant (totaling 1.5 FTE) is needed.
- BEST's greatest operating cost is contracts with professional learning facilitators who lead all BEST events and training opportunities. To increase these services to all districts in Washington, BEST needs \$500,000 in additional funding.

Workforce assumptions:

This request includes additional OSPI staffing to effectively support the increase to the BEST program: 1.0 FTE program supervisor and 0.5 FTE administrative assistant.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

The Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) equitably supports novice educators in Washington through comprehensive induction and mentoring services. The goal of the program is to support and retain beginning educators to ensure equitable access to high-quality education for every student in Washington. When novice teachers are set up for success, their students are set up for success. Supporting novice educators is an equitable practice as it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for students furthest from educational justice. BEST also supports systems to engage educators, communities, and families in decision-making as they work to dismantle inequitable policies and practices. BEST centers equity in all program aspects.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic framework:

This proposal aligns directly to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's strategic goal #3: A Diverse, Inclusive, and Highly Skilled Workforce. The purpose of the BEST program includes recruiting, supporting, and retaining educators that reflect the diversity of the students they serve, as well as providing opportunities and access to high-quality professional learning for in-service educators. This proposal also aligns with the Governor's first key goal area: world-class education.

Other Collateral Connections

Intergovernmental:

State-tribal education compact (STEC) schools are invited to be part of the BEST program. Currently, two STEC schools participate in BEST.

Stakeholder response:

The Association of Washington School Principals, the Washington Education Association, the Washington Association of School Administrators, and the School Nurse Corps all support increased funding for BEST.

Legal or administrative mandates:

N/A

Changes from current law:

N/A

State workforce impacts:

Districts receiving funding may have or develop collective bargaining agreements that direct some uses of resources.

State facilities impacts:

N/A

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A

Other Documents

Reference documents:

Elfers, A., Plecki, M., Bei, N., & Kim, Y. (2020, June). *Examining the Beginning Teacher Workforce in Washington State: An Update with a Special Focus on Teachers of Color*. Retrieved July 6, 2022, from

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