
Education Committee

HB 2881

Brief Description: Responding to the educator shortage crisis by increasing training, recruitment, and retention, in order to enable Washington to lower class sizes.

Sponsors: Representatives Pollet, Reykdal, Stanford, Morris, S. Hunt, Ortiz-Self, Kilduff, Walkinshaw, Frame and Farrell.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Teacher Shortage Conditional Grant program for certain students completing teacher preparation programs who commit to obtaining an endorsement in a subject or geographic endorsement shortage area and teaching for five school years in a school that needs such a teacher.
- Establishes the Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help Project to cover the cost of basic skills and content test for low-income teachers obtaining teacher certifies with shortage area endorsements.
- Expands the Opportunity Scholarship program to educator preparation programs with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics endorsements.
- Requires public teacher preparation programs to have recruitment specialists that focus on recruitment of students from underrepresented groups.
- Requires development and implementation of a statewide campaign to encourage recruitment to small school districts.
- Requires development and implementation of a statewide central application depository accessible by small districts and a centralized hiring portal for districts hiring fewer than five new teachers per year.
- Requires development and implementation of a teacher preparation program curriculum on how to encourage careers in education.
- Provides the opportunity for certain retired teachers to receive their pensions while working as substitutes teacher or mentors, until August 1, 2019.
- Requires a public awareness campaign designed to increase recruitment into teacher preparation programs.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

- Requires public teacher preparation programs without alternate route teacher certification programs to submit proposals to offer alternate route programs.
- Encourages development of plans describing partnerships between teacher preparation programs and local school districts regarding placement of master's degree students into residencies.
- Expands the use of Beginning Educator Support Team program funds to candidates in alternate route programs, and to schools with a large influx of new teachers.
- Requires districts to create a plan for improvement if mentored teachers are not retained and evaluated higher than non-mentored teachers.
- Encourages the public teacher preparation programs to develop mentor training programs.
- Appropriates funds for the expansion of certain teacher preparation programs, financial aid to teacher candidates, mentoring programs, and recruitment tools.

Hearing Date: 2/1/16

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Teacher Certification and Endorsement.

Certifications. Washington has two levels of certificates for classroom teachers. The first tier is the Residency Certificate, which is achieved after completion of an approved preparation program and passage of basic skills and content knowledge tests. Teachers have up to seven years to obtain a second tier certificate, called the Professional Certificate. This certification process requires a minimum of two years of experience and either completion of an external, uniform assessment adopted by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB), called the ProTeach Portfolio, or completion of National Board Certification.

National Board Certification is a voluntary advanced teaching credential offered by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. A teacher can only apply for this rigorous certification after attaining three years of experience. Washington offers a monetary bonus to eligible K-12 public school teachers who become National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). In addition, teachers coming from out-of-state that are NBCTs are awarded the Professional Certification. With over 6,000 NBCTs, Washington has the fourth largest group of NBCTs in the nation.

Basic Skills and Content Tests. To obtain a teacher certificate, candidates must pass a basic skills test that includes at least reading, writing, and mathematics. Each teacher certificate must include at least one endorsement that identifies the subject matter and grade levels that the certificate holder is authorized to teach. Expertise in a subject can be established by the passage of a content knowledge test.

Washington State's 21 approved teacher preparation programs require candidates to pass a basic skills test prior to admittance, and a content knowledge test prior to applying for certification with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Basic skills tests fees range from \$155 to \$225, and content knowledge test fees range from \$95 to \$155. Test takers must also pay a \$35 registration fee.

Teacher Shortage Areas. The PESB, the 11-member board charged with establishing policies and requirements for the preparation and certification of educators, measures teacher shortages by looking at how quickly teachers find teaching positions in Washington's public schools. According to the PESB, teachers with multiple endorsements are more likely to be hired than teachers with a single endorsement. The PESB has also indicated that teachers with a special education endorsement or with science and math endorsements are generally hired more quickly than teachers with social studies, history, or English language arts endorsements.

Alternate Route Programs. Alternate Route Teacher Certification programs (alternate route programs) are designed to fill subject matter or geographic need shortage areas by allowing professionals with work and life experience to segue into teaching through performance-based alternative certification routes. School districts, or districts in cooperation with an educational service district, work in partnership with higher education programs to offer alternate route programs. These programs are designed for classified staff and paraprofessionals, staff who hold bachelor's degrees from accredited institutions, individuals from outside the school system who have subject-matter expertise, and individuals teaching with conditional certificates.

Beginning Educator Support Team Program.

The Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) program provides professional development and mentor support for beginning educators and educators on probation. Grant funding for the BEST program is administered by the OSPI. The BEST program includes professional development for beginning educators and mentors, release time for beginning educators and mentors to work together, orientation or individualized assistance before the start of the school year, and program evaluation.

Washington Student Achievement Council Conditional Scholarship Programs.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) was created by the Legislature in 2012 to provide strategic planning, oversight, advocacy, and programs to support increased student success and higher levels of educational attainment in Washington. The WSAC administers the majority of the state's student financial aid programs, including the State Need Grant (SNG), the College Bound Scholarship (CBS), and the Opportunity Scholarship.

Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program. Created in 1987, the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship Program is designed to encourage individuals into the teaching profession who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement, leadership ability, willingness to commit to providing teaching service in shortage areas, and who are likely to be good role models for students. Participants in the program incur an obligation to repay the conditional scholarship, with interest and an equalization fee, unless they teach for two years in an approved education program for each year of scholarship received. However, participants who teach in a designated teacher shortage area have one year of loan canceled for each year they teach in the shortage area. The program was last funded in fiscal year 2010 at \$1 million annually.

Postretirement Employment Options.

Washington retirement systems have various rules relating to the conditions under which a retiree may return to work for a retirement system-participating employer and continue to receive pension benefits. For members of the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), pension benefits will generally be suspended after a member works for more than 867 hours per year with a participating employer. The TRS Plans 2 and 3 have an unreduced retirement age of 65. An early retirement formula, or factor, (ERF) was established in 2000, to permit members with 30 years of service to receive a reduced pension as early as age 55. Members retiring under this provision are able to work for up to 867 hours per year without suspension of benefits, just like those retiring at age 65. Another ERF was established in 2008 that allows members to retire with unreduced pensions beginning at age 62, but members are unable to work for a state retirement system employer until age 65 without immediate suspension of benefits. In 2012 an ERF for certain members hired after May 1, 2013 was established that would also allow retired members to work for up to first 867 hours per year without suspension of benefits.

Summary of Bill:

Financial Aid Programs.

Teacher Shortage Conditional Grant. The Teacher Shortage Conditional Grant (conditional grant) program is established within the Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program. To be eligible, students must meet one of the following requirements:

- be seeking a bachelor's degree in a teacher preparation program approved by the PESB (teacher preparation program) and be classified as a junior or senior;
- be seeking a master's degree through a teacher preparation program while completing a student teaching residency (residency); or
- be seeking a master's degree through a teacher preparation program while working in a school district as a paraeducator, and commit to working in the employing district after obtaining teacher certification.

As part of their application, eligible students must meet the following conditions:

- complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) or the Washington application for state financial aid (WASFA);
- agree to obtain a Washington state residency teacher certificate;
- commit to obtaining an endorsement in a subject or geographic endorsement shortage area, as defined by the PESB; and
- commit to teach for five school years in an approved education program with a need for a teacher with such an endorsement at the time of hire.

The WSAC must prioritize the following applicants when awarding conditional grants:

- applicants who are eligible for, but did not receive, the SNG;
- applicants who have a family income below one hundred seventy-five percent of median family income, adjusted for family size, as documented by the FAFSA or the WASFA, and who:
 - can certify that neither parent or guardian completed a postsecondary degree or certificate; or
 - are from a traditionally underrepresented group among teachers in Washington.

If selected, juniors or seniors in public teacher preparation programs must receive conditional grants to cover the cost of resident undergraduate tuition fees for up to two academic years of full-time study at a public institution of higher education. If selected, juniors or seniors in private teacher preparation programs must receive conditional grants to cover the cost of resident undergraduate tuition fees for up to two academic years of full-time study at the most expensive regional university. In either case, students who are unable to earn their after two years of full-time study due to the unavailability of required courses, must receive a conditional grant for two additional quarters or semesters as long as they maintains satisfactory academic progress and successfully complete residencies.

If selected, students in master's degree-level public teacher preparation programs who are completing residencies must receive conditional grant to cover resident graduate tuition fees for up to two years of full-time study plus \$2,000 for each-six month period that they are in residencies.

If selected, students in master's degree-level public teacher preparation programs who are working as paraeducators must receive conditional grants to cover resident graduate tuition fees for up to two years of full-time study plus \$16,500 for each year that they are in residencies.

In order to receive their conditional grants, students must sign contracts that include the following conditions:

1. If the student does not (a) obtain a Washington State residency teaching certificate with an endorsement in a subject or geographic endorsement shortage area within six months of graduation and (b) sign a contract to teach in a school with a need for such a teacher within fifteen months of graduation, then the conditional grant will be converted into a loan with interest rates set by the WSAC.
2. If the student does not complete the contractual obligation of five school years of teaching in school with a need for a teacher with an endorsement in a subject or geographic endorsement shortage area, the conditional grant will be converted into a loan. The amount of the loan depends on how much of the contractual obligation the student completed, and includes interest and an equalization fee:
 - 85 percent of the conditional grant amount if less than one school year of teaching is completed;
 - 70 percent of the conditional grant amount if less than two school years of teaching are completed;
 - 55 percent of the conditional grant amount if less than three school years of teaching are completed; and
 - 40 percent of the conditional grant amount if less than four school years of teaching are completed.

The terms and conditions of such loan must follow the interest rate and repayment terms of the federal Direct Subsidized Loan program.

Students who receive conditional grants must not have their federal or state grant aid, including Pell grants, SNG, College Bound Scholarships, or Opportunity Scholarships, reduced.

Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help Project. The Teacher Endorsement and Certification Help (TEACH) pilot project is created to develop an expandable program that provides grants to teachers taking basic skills and content tests for teacher certification programs.

The creation of the program is dependent upon funds being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for its establishment.

The WSAC, after consultation with the PESB, is charged with developing and adopting rules to administer the TEACH pilot project. The rules must satisfy specified requirements including establishing grant application and financial need verification processes.

To qualify for financial assistance under the TEACH pilot project, an applicant must:

- be enrolled in, have applied to, or have completed a teacher preparation program approved by the PESB;
- show a financial need, as demonstrated by the student's eligibility to receive the SNG; and
- register for an endorsement competency test in endorsement shortage areas.

Grant funds awarded under the TEACH pilot project must cover the costs of basic skills and content tests required for teacher certification. In awarding funds, the WASC must prioritize grant awards first, to applicants registered for competency tests in endorsement shortage areas number of TEACH pilot grant awards to the amount of appropriated funds.

The WSAC, in collaboration with the PESB, must submit a preliminary report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 31, 2018 that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project. The preliminary report must comply with specific requirements, including comparing the numbers and demographic information of students taking and passing tests in the endorsement shortage areas before and after implementation of the TEACH pilot project. A final report that details the effectiveness and costs of the TEACH pilot project and includes a recommendation as to whether the pilot project should be modified, continued, or expanded is due to the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 31, 2020.

Opportunity Scholarship Program. Educator preparation programs with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) endorsements are added to the list of Opportunity Scholarship-eligible education programs. Beginning in the 2016-17 academic year, the Legislature intends that new appropriations to the Opportunity Scholarship program be provided to increase scholarships awarded to students enrolled in educator preparation programs with STEM endorsements. The Opportunity Scholarship Board must report the number and percent of scholarships awarded to students enrolled in educator preparation programs with STEM endorsements, in addition to other reporting requirements.

Recruitment Activities.

Recruitment Specialists. The public institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs approved by the PESB must employ, or contract, with recruitment specialists that focus on recruitment of individuals who are from a traditionally underrepresented group among teachers in Washington into the teacher preparation programs, and development and implementation of programs to encourage students to enroll in teacher preparation programs. This requirement is dependent upon up to \$600,000 being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for this purpose.

Recruitment to Small Districts. The OSPI must:

- develop and implement a statewide campaign to encourage qualified individuals to apply for teaching positions in small school districts; and
- implement a statewide central depository for the applications of individuals interested in applying for teaching positions that can be accessed by small school districts in the state.

This requirement is dependent upon up to \$400,000 being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for this purpose.

Centralized Hiring Portal. The OSPI must develop and implement a centralized hiring portal for school districts hiring fewer than five teachers per year on average over the prior five years. This requirement is dependent upon up to \$250,000 being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for this purpose.

Careers in Education Training. During fiscal year 2017 the Western Washington University's (WWU) Woodring School of Education must develop a model curriculum on how to encourage careers in education, and share it with the public and private schools of education in Washington. This requirement is dependent upon up to \$75,000 being specifically appropriated by the Legislature for this purpose.

Once the curriculum is shared, the public institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs approved by the PESB must include training for education degree candidates on how to encourage careers in education. The private institutions with PESB approved teacher preparation programs are encouraged to include the training.

Alternate Route Awareness Campaign. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTB) and the PESB must work with appropriate public agencies, school and educational service districts, and other parties to develop and implement a statewide public awareness campaign designed to increase recruitment into teacher preparation programs.

Training Programs.

Developing Alternate Route Programs. The PESB must convene meetings between school districts that do not have alternate route programs and the nearest institution of higher education with a teacher preparation program approved by the PESB in order to determine whether they can partner to apply to operate an alternate route program. By September 1, 2016, all public teacher preparation program approved by the PESB must submit a proposal to the PESB to offer an alternate route program if they not dot currently offer one. If approved, the institutions must offer alternate route programs.

Placement of Resident Teachers. Beginning January 1, 2017, public and private institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs approved by the PESB are encouraged to develop a plan describing how the institution will partner with school districts in the general geographic region of the school, or where its programs are offered, regarding placement of resident teachers who are obtaining master's degrees through PESB approved teacher preparation programs. The plans must be developed in collaboration with districts desiring to partner with institutions, and may include use of unexpended federal or state funds to support residencies and mentoring for students who are likely to continue teaching in the district in which they have a supervised student teaching residency. The plans must be updated at least biennially.

Beginning Educator Support Team Program. A mentor is defined as an educator who has achieved appropriate training as defined by the OSPI, such as National Board Certification or other specialized training. Candidates in alternate route programs are offered professional development and mentor support through the BEST program. The BEST program must have a goal to provide new teachers from underrepresented populations with a mentor who has strong ties to underrepresented populations. Funds are made available to school districts with a large influx of new teachers, up to one mentor per twelve new teachers expected to be hired for the next school year, up to a maximum of five per district. The OSPI must notify districts about the BEST program and encourage them to apply for program funds.

To aid in the distribution of funds under the BEST program, districts that project to hire at least twelve new teachers for the next school year must report the number of projected new teacher hires to the OSPI by June 15th of each year. If the retention rates and the evaluation performance ratings for mentored teachers are not significantly higher than for teachers without mentors, then the districts must submit an improvement plan that includes a plan to train mentors to the OSPI.

Mentor Training. In fiscal year 2017, the public institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs approved by the PESB are encouraged to submit proposals to develop and implement mentor training programs to the OSPI. The must review the proposals and may include them in its budget request.

Post Retirement Employment Options.

Teachers that retired under the 2008 early retirement reduction factors of the TRS Plans 2 or 3 and are less than 65 years of age may be employed for up to 630 hours per school year without suspension of their retirement benefits as:

- substitute teachers in an instructional capacity; or
- mentors, if the educator has achieved appropriate training.

School districts employing retired teachers under these provisions must have a documented shortage of certified substitute teachers. These provisions expire August 1, 2019.

Appropriation: *Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.* An appropriation in the amount of \$400,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to the OSPI for the statewide campaign and central depository.

An appropriation in the amount of \$250,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to the OSPI for the centralized hiring portal.

An appropriation in the amount of \$225,000,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to the OSPI for additional mentors in the BEST program.

Washington Student Achievement Council. An appropriation in the amount of \$380,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to the WSAC for additional SNGs to be awarded to eligible students enrolled in a teacher education program. An addition 50 grants must be provided to the WWU students enrolled in special education or elementary education teacher preparation programs at the Everett site.

An appropriation in the amount of \$10,500,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to the WSAC for the Teacher Shortage Conditional Scholarship program. Of this amount \$500,000 is provided to administer the program. Up to 700 conditional grants are for bachelor's degree applicants and up to 180 conditional grants are for master's degree applicants.

University of Washington. An appropriation in the amount of \$500,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to the University of Washington for the expansion of enrollments in the teacher preparation programs at the Bothell and Tacoma sites.

Washington State University. An appropriation in the amount of \$500,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to Washington State University for the expansion of enrollments in elementary education teacher preparation programs.

Western Washington University. An appropriation in the amount of \$1,089,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to WWU for the expansion of enrollments in teacher preparation programs with STEM endorsements.

An appropriation in the amount of \$355,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to WWU for the expansion of enrollments in special education, elementary education, and early childhood education teacher preparation programs: 24 in early childhood education, 25 in dual special education elementary education at the north Seattle site, and 25 in dual special education elementary education at Everett site.

An appropriation in the amount of \$158,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to WWU for diversity outreach and recruitment of 253 already admitted students into teacher preparation programs.

An appropriation in the amount of \$75,000, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, is made to WWU for the development of the model Careers in Education curriculum.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/26/16.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.