

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5459

As of February 15, 2017

Title: An act relating to the beginning educator support team program.

Brief Description: Concerning the beginning educator support team program.

Sponsors: Senators Rolfes, Zeiger, Billig and Frockt; by request of Office of the Governor.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/09/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the Beginning Educator Support Team program to beginning principals.
- Prioritizes grant funds to school districts that demonstrate an understanding of the research-based standards for beginning educator induction.
- Adds program requirements.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Alia Kennedy (786-7405)

Background: Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) Program. The BEST program provides professional development and mentor support for beginning educators, candidates in the alternate route to teacher certification programs, and educators on probation. The BEST program must include the following components:

- a paid orientation or individualized assistance before the start of the school year for the beginning educator;
- assignment of a trained and qualified mentor for the first three years for beginning educators, with intensive support in the first year and decreasing support over the following years, depending on the needs of the beginning educator;
- a goal to provide beginning educators from underrepresented populations with a mentor who has strong ties to underrepresented populations;

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- professional development for beginning educators that is designed to meet their unique needs for supplemental training and skill development;
- professional development for mentors;
- release time for mentors and their designated educators to work together, as well as time for educators to observe accomplished peers; and
- a program evaluation using a standard evaluation tool provided from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) that measures increased knowledge, skills, and positive impact on student learning for program participants.

Grant funding for the BEST program is administered by OSPI. The grant funds are provided on a competitive basis to individual school districts or consortia of districts. In allocating funds, OSPI must give priority to:

- school districts with low-performing schools identified as being challenged schools in need of improvement; and
- school districts with a large influx of beginning classroom teachers.

In the 2016 supplemental operating budget, an additional \$3.5 million was provided to the BEST program, bringing the annual funding to \$9 million; the program had more applications in 2016 than funds available to distribute.

For the purposes of the BEST program, a mentor is an educator who has achieved appropriate training in assisting, coaching, and advising beginning teachers or student teaching residents as defined by OSPI.

Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction. In 2005, OSPI developed standards for high quality beginning teacher induction programs in Washington. In 2014, OSPI convened a group of educators and updated these standards to align them with the expectations for teacher performance in the state's teacher evaluation system. There are standards and key elements described for hiring, orientation, mentoring, professional learning, formative assessment for teacher growth, and induction program impact. OSPI developed a tool for program reflection, evaluation, and improvement by those with varying roles and connections to induction for beginning teachers.

Standards for Mentors Training. Legislation adopted in 2016 directed OSPI to collaborate with the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and PESB-approved teacher preparation programs to develop mentor training program goals. OSPI must make the mentor training goals available on its website by the end of June 2017. The legislation encouraged OSPI to use the mentorship training goals to develop professional development curricula.

Summary of Bill: The BEST program is expanded to beginning principals.

In addition to the other categories of districts, OSPI must prioritize grant funds to school districts that demonstrate an understanding of the research-based standards for beginning educator induction developed by OSPI.

The program must assign a mentor to program participants for up to three years, rather than for the first three years. It is specified that the professional development for program

participants be ongoing, and that the professional development for mentors be initial and ongoing.

In addition to other requirements, the BEST program must include the following components:

- when possible, an assignment for beginning principals and teachers that is less challenging than that of more experienced colleagues;
- non-evaluative observations with written feedback for program participants;
- support in understanding and participating in the state and district evaluation process and using the instructional or leadership framework, or both, to promote growth; and
- adherence to research-based standards for beginning educator induction developed by OSPI.

The required program evaluation must include a measure of identified areas of program development, for example, increased retention of beginning principals and teachers.

A mentor, for the purposes of the BEST program, must be selected using mentor standards developed by OSPI and participate in ongoing mentor skills professional development.

Technical changes are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Teacher mentoring is a presumed part of the *McCleary* solution and a key component of the state's goal to recruit and retain beginning teachers. The bill includes best practices in training, mentoring, and recruiting teachers and, if funded, would allow schools to retain high quality teachers. Research supports that teacher quality is the most important school-based factor in student achievement, and staff stability is a strong contributing factor. Mentoring for new teachers by experienced colleagues improves both teacher quality and staff stability, particularly in high poverty schools. Leadership research indicates that well-prepared principals are more likely to remain in the same building for many years, contributing to staff stability and student success. There is a waiting list of school districts wanting to participate in the BEST program. The Governor wants all new teachers and principals to have a mentor for the first three years. Supporting teachers during their first year of teaching helps build better skills, which leads to greater satisfaction in their work and improved student learning. Studies indicate that 21 percent of teachers leave the state or the profession in the first five years, and that experienced teachers are retiring. There is an increase in beginning teachers. On average, compared to all beginning teachers statewide, a significantly higher proportions of teachers in BEST programs work in schools with poverty rates and students of color rates at fifty percent or higher. Districts with BEST funding show that teachers are more likely to stay in their schools, less likely to move out of their districts, and are less likely to exit Washington or the profession. After the

teacher, the building principal is the second most important factor in student achievement and is the primary driver behind teacher performance. There is a high turnover for principals, especially in high poverty and urban schools. When a principal leaves the building, test scores decline and take an average of three years to recover. The BEST program should be expanded further to include mentorship for beginning educational staff associates.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Christine Rolfes, Prime Sponsor; Deb Merle, Office of the Governor; Ron Sission, Association of Washington School Principals; Sue Anderson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Marie Sullivan, Richland School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.