

# ADDRESSING WASHINGTON'S EDUCATOR SHORTAGE

*A review of promising practices and systemwide approaches*  
May 2021



Participants of Seattle's Academy of Rising Educators



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

## **SHORTAGE AREAS**

### DEMOGRAPHIC SHORTAGES

### CONTENT AREA AND EDUCATOR ROLE SHORTAGES

### GEOGRAPHIC SHORTAGES

### PESB RESOURCES AND TOOLS

## **PANDEMIC IMPACT**

### PANDEMIC IMPACT ON EDUCATOR SHORTAGES

### STAFFING INSIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

## **PROMISING PRACTICES**

### INCREASING ACCESS INTO THE PROFESSION

"Grow your own" (GYO) programs

Recruiting Washington Teachers and Bilingual Educators Initiative

Alternative routes to teacher certification

Paraeducator workforce pathways and possibilities

### ADDRESSING BARRIERS AND ADVANCING EQUITY IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION

Advancing equity grants

Flexible assessment policy

Community colleges respond to local workforce needs

### PLACEMENT

### RETAINING EDUCATORS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Professional growth plans

## **SYSTEMWIDE APPROACHES**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSION

### REFERENCES

### APPENDICES

### GLOSSARY



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Educator shortage requires collective investments and action

The impact of teachers on student outcomes cannot be overstated. Teachers are the most influential in-school factor contributing to student success and are often the first role models that young people encounter outside of their home (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Given the magnitude of their influence, every student in Washington deserves to have excellent, effective, equity-minded teachers and an education system that fully supports their learning and growth. A persistent, statewide shortage of teachers, however, creates challenges to achieving this.

What can we do, collectively, to ensure that every student in every classroom has the teacher they deserve? This report will address that important question by examining teacher shortage indicators, current approaches to alleviate them, and introduces policy recommendations and investment opportunities for systemwide impact.

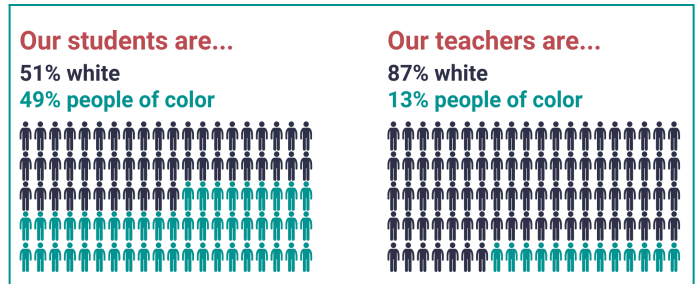
## Shortage areas

Steady progress has been made to reduce the educator shortage in Washington, yet demographic, content area, role, and geographic shortages persist.

### Demographic shortages

Across Washington State, there continues to be an extreme shortage of educators who reflect the diverse demographics of P-12 students.

The 2020-21 School Report Card shows teachers of Color made up 13 percent of the teacher workforce compared to 49 percent of students of Color.



The diversity gap is of particular importance given the outcomes experienced when students of Color can see themselves reflected in their teachers. For example, according to the Learning Policy Institute (2018), when students of Color are exposed to a greater diversity of teachers, they are more likely to have improved attendance, improved academic outcomes, increased graduation rates, and are more likely to attend and be successful in college.

Despite the extreme demographic difference between teachers and students, some progress is being made. Data from preparation programs confirms that currently enrolled teacher candidates are more diverse than ever before; a promising trend that will continue with strategic recruitment and retention efforts.

### Content area and educator role shortages

In Washington, shortage areas persist in classrooms serving some of the state’s most vulnerable students, such as special education, and English Language Learners (ELL).

Shortage areas also exist in classrooms targeting high-demand career fields, such as Careers and Technical Education (CTE), and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

And classroom teachers aren't the only educator role experiencing shortages. There is also a significant demand for school counselors, speech and language pathologists, and school psychologists.

## Geographic shortages

One indicator that is often overlooked in the context of shortage is the unique challenge faced by remote and rural school districts to create a robust educator workforce. It is not uncommon for many small towns and rural areas of Washington to encounter barriers in teacher recruitment and retention, often caused by a lack of human capital, financial resources, and economic opportunities.

Additionally, rural school districts have fewer partnership options with teacher preparation programs, leading to an often limited candidate hiring pool.

## Pandemic impact

The 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years have been unlike any other. Between the COVID-19 pandemic and what may have been the largest civil rights movement in this nation's history, educators were called upon to be more responsive and flexible to students' social, emotional, and learning needs.

Prior to the pandemic, Washington and states across the country were already confronting the influences and impact of widespread educator shortages. The pandemic has exasperated this problem by creating unprecedented shifts in learning environments and unthinkable realities for students, families, and educators.

Across the state, health concerns rose, schools and preparation programs closed their buildings, new online learning platforms were implemented, and educators faced alternative ways of navigating student and family engagement.

By August 2020, less than six months after the pandemic's emergence, public school enrollment declined by four percent, with kindergarten enrollment down by 14 percent. With limited in-person instruction continuing through spring 2021, it is difficult to predict if and when enrollment fluctuations will stabilize.

Despite the many new challenges, statewide agencies and organizations responded quickly to guide and address emerging needs for increased flexibility, particularly in the education system. PESB adopted emergency rules to streamline the certification process, and remove barriers to assessment and student teaching for educator candidates so that they could swiftly enter the workforce. These policy changes helped districts fill shortage gaps intensified by the pandemic.

**Overall, major disruptions in the teacher workforce can create persistent, long term consequences for the education system. Without immediate action, increased investments, and statewide system collaboration, the impacts of the pandemic and the growing educator shortage will only continue.**

## Promising practices

Progress is being made across the state with promising practices that support educators throughout the career continuum.

Washington is improving access to the educator profession by recruiting future teachers to explore careers in education through Grow Your Own programs like Recruiting Washington Teachers and the Bilingual Educator Initiative.

Through innovative partnerships between districts and alternative route programs, there are increasing opportunities to earn a teaching certificate for career changers and those already working in the school system. These partnerships establish strong recruitment networks within communities, respond to local workforce needs, and address critical educator shortages in rural and urban areas.

Additionally, alternative route programs are essential to supporting a more diverse educator workforce, removing financial barriers, and creating equitable pathways into the profession.

Beyond recruiting and preparing future educators, current efforts are also helping to retain existing educators. Several model programs, including Puget Sound ESD's Educators of Color and Leadership Community and the Kent Educators of Color Network, showcase HR and mentorship practices that better support educators of Color throughout the continuum of their career.

PESB's professional growth grants are also funding educator learning communities to support cultural responsiveness and social emotional learning. These opportunities can often inspire growth within the educator's existing role or within the education field; a strategy that is strongly tied to improved retention rates.

## Recommendations

The educator shortage is a complex issue requiring complex solutions.

Through decades of research, we know that teachers are critically important to the trajectory of student success. But it is only through system transformation and innovative investments in effective recruitment and retention strategies that we can begin to move the needle on reducing the educator shortage.

**PESB urges state and local policymakers to increase investments in research-based approaches, scale existing best practices, and incentivize strategies targeting recruitment and retention, including regional partnerships.**

These approaches are reflected in the following recommendations:

- Increase equitable pathways into the education profession
- Support incentives for candidates pursuing certification in shortage areas
- Remove policy and institutional barriers impacting paraeducators entering the teaching profession
- Incentivize collaborative community partnerships to address regional workforce needs.
- Increase collaborative learning between districts and preparation programs to improve educator placement in shortage areas.
- Increase incentives for professional learning that support persistence and retention.

# INTRODUCTION

Educator shortage impacts every aspect of the education system in Washington, spanning specific content areas, geographic regions, and disproportionate demographics between educators and their students. This report seeks to address the complexities of shortage indicators, and provides promising practices and policy recommendations to improve how educators are recruited, prepared, certified, and retained.

Finally, this report shares insights, stories, and qualitative data from interviews with teachers, paraeducators, and administrators on effective workforce development strategies that could be replicated in other communities across Washington. Interviews with human resources personnel and principals are also shared, covering additional learnings about the impact the pandemic has had on educator shortages.

Across the state, we have an opportunity to reimagine our education system by supporting diverse pathways into the workforce, making strategic investments in professional learning and leadership development, and prioritizing educator preparation, recruitment, and retention strategies.

## Acknowledgements

The Professional Educator Standards Board would like to thank and acknowledge the numerous individuals who have provided guidance, contributions, expertise, and research towards the development of this report. Your commitment and dedication is deeply appreciated and highly valued.

## Report guide

Our definition of an educator in this report is meant to include paraeducators, teachers, educational staff associates (ESAs), and administrators.

This report is organized by four primary sections: shortage areas, pandemic challenges, promising practices, and systemwide approaches.

Case studies, bright spots, personal stories, as well as learnings from the field are included in this report to share perspectives and recommendations for future action. Contributions from the field are labeled as:

Bright spot: a program that is being implemented with promising results.



Case study: programs that have demonstrated scalable results showing ability to recruit, prepare, and retain educators for specific shortage areas.



Tools: website tools to help inform, track, and collect data on the recruitment, preparation, and retention of educators.



# SHORTAGE AREAS

# DEMOGRAPHIC SHORTAGES

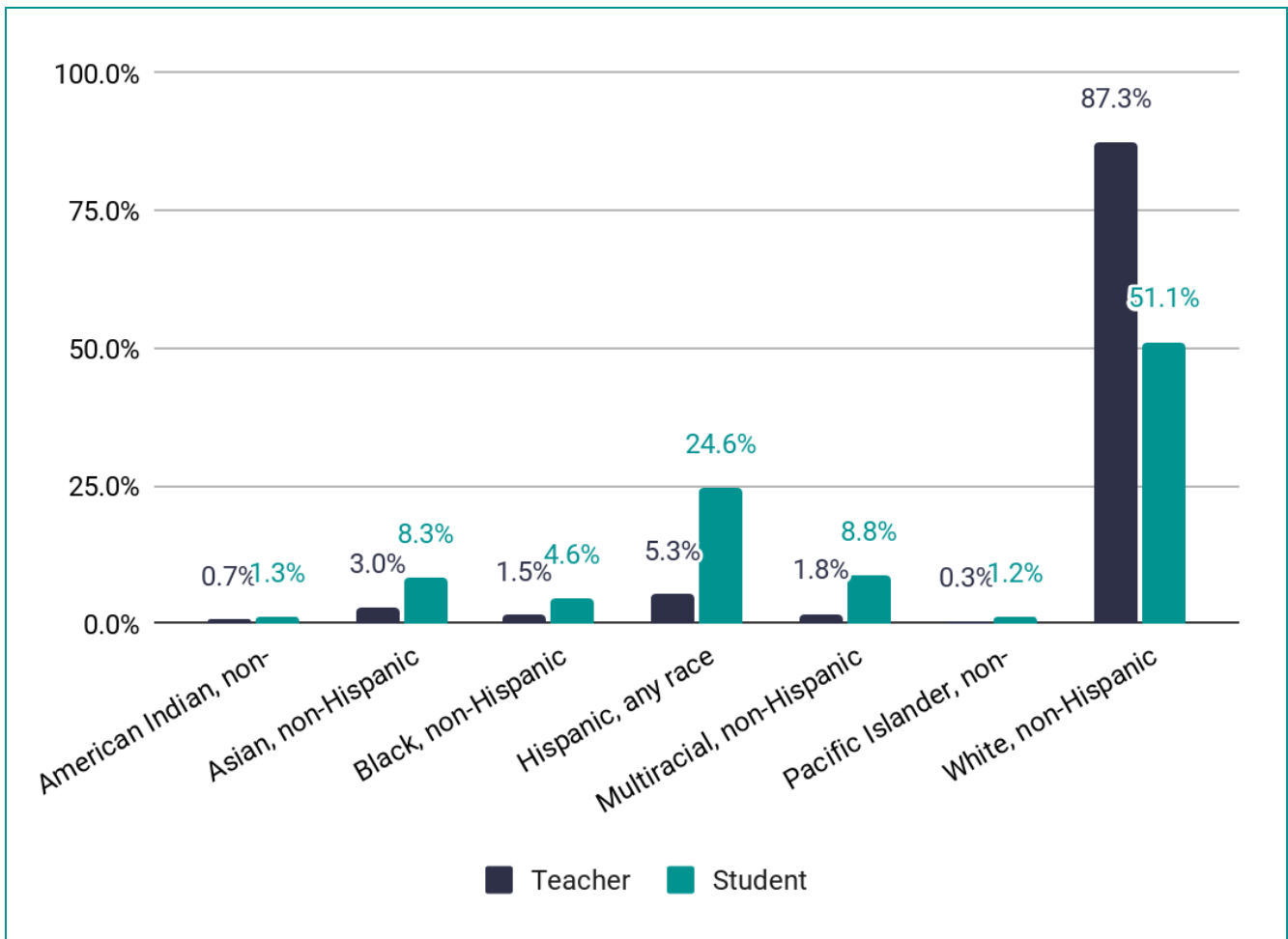
Across Washington State, as well as nationally, there continues to be an extreme shortage of educators who reflect the diverse demographics of P-12 students.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education reported that teachers of Color made up 21 percent of the national teacher workforce compared to 52 percent of students of Color.

The discrepancy in Washington is even more concerning. The 2020-21 School Report Card shows teachers of Color make up 13 percent of the teacher workforce compared to 49 percent of students of Color (figure A).

While student populations are becoming increasingly more diverse, the teacher workforce continues to remain largely White and female.

**Figure A: Demographic comparison between Washington State teachers and students, 2020-21**





## The imperative

The key to ensuring every student succeeds begins with equitable access to an excellent, culturally responsive education. This requires a complex, multifaceted approach that critically examines the entire educational landscape for factors that create barriers to student learning. One part of that approach includes recruiting, developing, supporting, and retaining a diverse educator workforce.

### Closing the opportunity gap

Research shows that establishing a diverse workforce is key to addressing the inequities that students experience when accessing resources and support. Known as the opportunity gap, this differential access to resources is determined by factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location rather than by a student’s academic ability.

Addressing the diversity gap between educators and students is one way we can work to close the opportunity gap. Many students of Color do not currently receive the same opportunity as their White peers to have teacher and leader role models that reflect their race, ethnicity, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

This is of particular importance given the outcomes experienced when students of Color can see themselves reflected in their teachers. For example, according to the Learning Policy Institute (2018), teachers of Color have higher performance and academic expectations for students of Color, resulting in reduced disciplinary action (key to eradicating the school-to-prison pipeline), improved attendance, test scores, graduation rates, and they are more likely to apply, attend, and succeed in college.

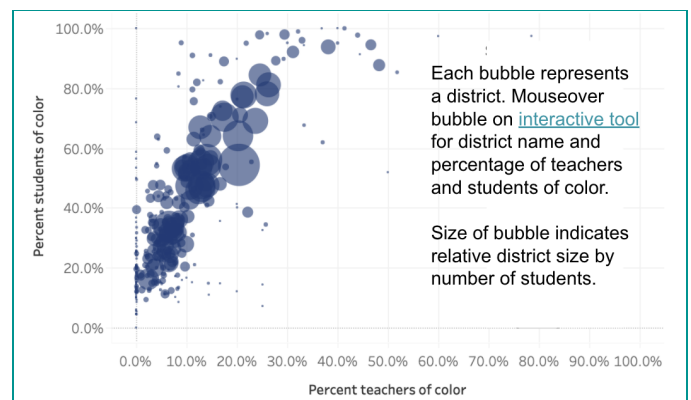
## All students benefit

The benefits of a diverse teacher workforce are not just limited to students of Color. Teachers of Color can serve as positive role models for all students, help dispel negative stereotypes, and prepare all students to live in a multiracial society. Students tend to give these teachers high survey ratings; noting that they feel both cared for and academically challenged (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Additionally, teachers of Color are especially suited to understand students’ cultural experiences and, therefore, are likely to introduce culturally responsive instructional practices that affirm the identity and strengths of every student (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

## Shortage indicators

Educator diversity varies greatly across the state. To share district-specific demographics, PESB has created an [interactive tool](#) (Figure B) showing the percentage of students of Color compared to the percentage of teachers of Color.

**Figure B: Percentage of students of Color versus percentage of teachers of Color by school district.**



## Policy approaches

### Expand high school pathways into the educator workforce

High school pathway models, such as the Recruiting Washington Teacher program, are designed to recruit underserved, multicultural, and multilingual students to explore cultural identity and educational opportunities through the lens of the teaching profession. Recognizing that educators of Color play a crucial role in providing an equitable education system, these programs provide an opportunity to reduce the teacher shortage and recruit diverse teachers into the profession.

**PESB urges the state to consider increased investments to expand the number of high school participants and teacher academy sites using the state curriculum.**

PESB also recommends funding the development of a middle school introductory course, as well as a second year of instruction for high school teacher academy students. Offering dual credit and common college course incentives to high school program graduates is an additional strategy to strengthen their transition into a preparation program and continue their journey towards becoming an educator.



### Bridge high school pathways to educator preparation programs

When high school graduates interested in education enter college, there is a two-year gap in which they have little or no communication with the campus' teacher preparation program.

PESB recommends piloting a program for students to participate in future teacher learning communities, similar to a freshman interest group focused on becoming educators. The pilot would offer college freshmen and sophomores support through mentoring, early engagement with the preparation program, and volunteer opportunities in local schools.

Connecting preparation programs with high school graduates interested in teaching will expand wraparound services to sustain enthusiasm for the profession.

# CONTENT AREA AND EDUCATOR ROLE SHORTAGES

Educator shortages are not experienced equally across classrooms, communities, and school systems. Rather, shortages can emerge for specific roles and content areas when there is a gap of qualified educators available to fill certain positions.

## The imperative

Research indicates that fully certified and experienced teachers are a critical component to student success, but persistent workforce shortages can prevent some students from accessing the qualified educators they deserve. When districts are faced with these gaps, they may experience long term vacancies or hire underqualified educators - options which often disproportionately impact students of Color and students affected by poverty (Cardichon et al., 2020).

## Shortage indicators

To determine shortage areas, PESB uses two primary indicators.

- **Limited certificates:** When a district wishes to hire an individual, but the individual has not completed an educator preparation program, districts may request a limited certificate for that individual if certain requirements are met.
- **Out-of-endorsement placements:** A district can place an educator with a teacher certificate, but without the matching endorsement, in an assignment with school board approval and a plan of support for the teacher.

PESB calculates shortages by adding the number of educators with a limited certificate in a specific content area to the number of individuals teaching out-of-endorsement in that same area.

The top areas of content and role shortages in Washington are:

1. Elementary education (inclusive of early childhood education)
2. Special education (inclusive of early childhood special education)
3. CTE – technology education
4. Health/fitness
5. School nurse
6. Mathematics (inclusive of middle level math)
7. English Language Arts
8. School speech language pathologist and audiologist
9. CTE – business and marketing education
10. School counselor
11. Science (inclusive of middle level science and designated sciences)
12. Social studies
13. Spanish
14. School psychologist
15. Music
16. Visual arts
17. CTE – family and consumer sciences
18. History
19. CTE – agricultural education
20. Reading
21. ELL and bilingual education
22. Computer science

## Data informs knowledge of shortages

Anecdotal evidence indicates shortages in some educator roles, such as educational interpreters, for which very little data is available. Improved state level data collection could better inform decisions on policy and programs in these areas.

### PESB tool: content area shortages across the state

PESB publishes an [interactive map](#) showing regional variations in content area shortages by ESD.

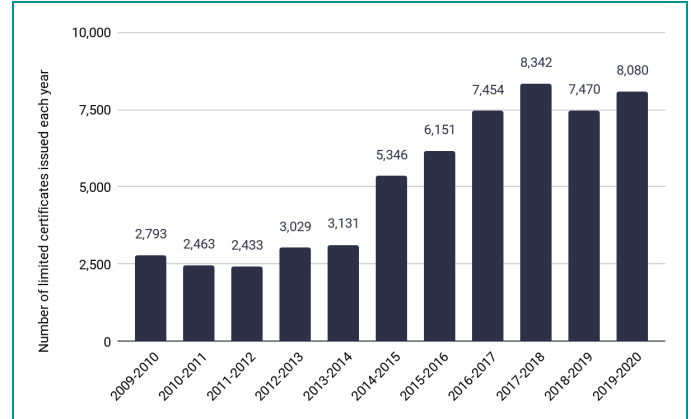
ESD regional shortage areas  
Data as of December 11, 2020

## Limited certificates

Limited certificates allow for hiring flexibility and can act as entry points into the profession. Districts can request a limited certificate for an individual who has not completed all the certificate requirements for that specific role.

The number of limited certificates sharply increased between 2011 and 2018. Since 2018, the number of limited certificates issued has leveled off (Figure C).

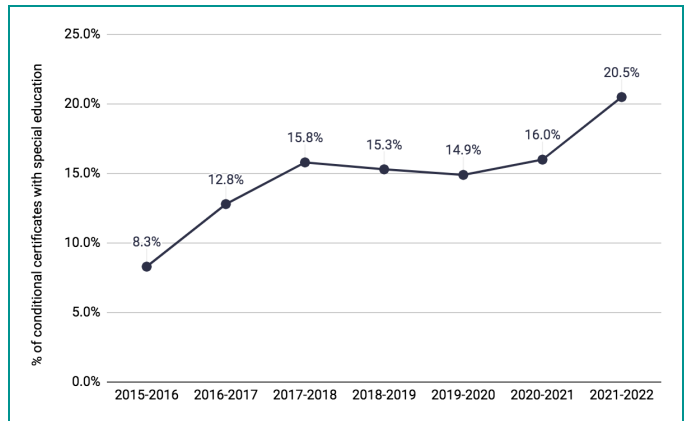
Figure C. Number of limited certificates issued per year



## Conditional certificates

Conditional certificates are requested by schools when they are unable to find a regularly certified educator for a position. Of the many content area shortages spanning the state, qualified special education teachers continue to be a significant shortage in Washington’s educator workforce. The percentage of conditional certificates issued in special education continues to increase (Figure D).

Figure D. Percentage of conditional certificates issued in special education



## Policy approach

### Address role shortages through job-embedded educator preparation

PESB recommends increasing investments in job-embedded educator preparation as programs work in partnership with local school districts to meet workforce needs. Residency initiatives and grant programs, such as the alternative route block grant, can help incentivize partnerships and reduce educator shortages in high-need content areas such as special education, and emerging areas such as mastery-based learning, climate science, and ethnic studies.

Additionally, PESB recommends job-embedded opportunities for high-demand roles such as school psychologists and school counselors to help meet a growing workforce need.



# GEOGRAPHIC SHORTAGES

One indicator that is often overlooked in the context of shortage is the unique challenge faced by remote and rural school districts to create a robust educator workforce. It is not uncommon for many small towns and rural areas of Washington to encounter barriers in teacher recruitment and retention, often caused by a lack of human capital, financial resources, and economic opportunities. Additionally, rural school districts have fewer partnership options with teacher preparation programs, leading to an often limited candidate hiring pool.

## The imperative

Ensuring all regions of our state have access to an ample supply of educators is an important equity issue. Progress is occurring through regional partnerships between districts, ESDs, educator preparation programs and strategic Grow Your Own initiatives.

## Shortage indicators

Many factors impact geographic shortages at district and regional levels. Districts may experience difficulty filling specific educator roles and persistent issues in attracting and retaining educators of Color. As the state continues to make progress to address geographic shortages, strategies must continue to increase local hiring pools through alternative routes and other preparation program collaborations that provide streamlined pathways into the profession. Additionally, ongoing examination of certification and placement policies will enable districts to tap into out-of-state educator talent to address vacancies.

Perspective is important when considering the geographic educator shortage. If a district is having problems filling a specific position, there is a local shortage. Districts hope for a number of high quality candidates to select from their hiring pool, while candidates are looking for open positions in their job type and preferred geographical location. Program providers look at information including what endorsements program applicants are interested in and what percentage of their program completers are being hired. From a statewide perspective, candidates coming from educator preparation programs and candidates coming from out-of-state are important considerations in examining ways to meet educator workforce needs.

Regional partnerships are increasing the access to becoming a teacher through PESB ARBG funding. Several personal journeys tell the story of how grant funding and district partnerships made it possible for these candidates of Color to become teachers especially in rural areas.

To improve geographic shortages, rural areas are establishing “Grow Your Own” (GYO) programs to recruit community members as future teachers (2011, Grow Your Own Teachers).

## Policy approach

Rural school districts have difficulty retaining talented, qualified educators. One approach to support higher retention rates in rural areas includes providing loan forgiveness or longevity stipends for teaching in rural areas, such as across Eastern Washington, where the state has the most pronounced geographic shortages.

# PESB RESOURCES AND TOOLS

## Shortage mapping tool

Educator shortages vary across the state. PESB’s shortage mapping tool includes detailed information and regional data on shortages across educator roles and content areas.

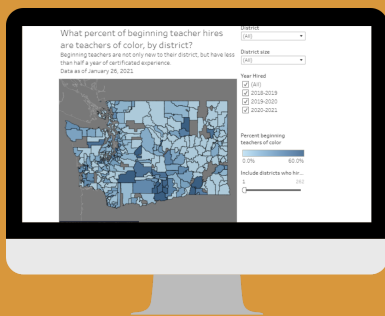
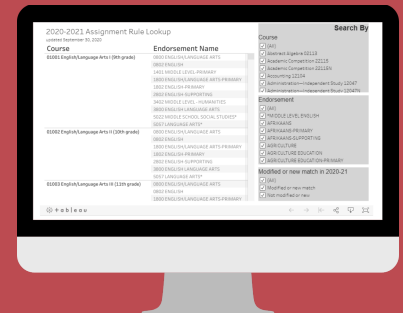


## TeachWA tool: becoming an educator

Through PESB’s recruitment tool Teachwa.org, future teachers can easily navigate their journey into the classroom. The website aims to improve access into the profession by providing an overview of pathway options, financial aid resources, and information on the certification process. Visit the [teachwa.org](http://teachwa.org) website.

## Assignment tool

PESB works to ensure that Washington’s students have access to appropriately credentialed educators. One way PESB does this is through assignment policy: matching teacher endorsements with courses, and matching certificates with educator roles. [View the assignment tool to see endorsement and course matches.](#) [View guidance for specific teacher content areas](#) and [educational staff associates \(ESAs\)](#).



## District workforce data tool

To support education stakeholders in understanding and making use of data, PESB has produced online interactive data displays on shortage-related topics. These displays are organized by district and include data on demographic hiring, in district teacher persistence, use of limited certificates, and percentage of students enrolled in courses with teachers out-of endorsement. [View the data displays.](#)

# PANDEMIC IMPACT



# PANDEMIC IMPACT ON EDUCATOR SHORTAGES

The 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years have been unlike any other. Between the COVID-19 pandemic and what may have been the largest civil rights movement in this nation's history, educators were called upon to be more responsive and flexible to students' social, emotional, and learning needs.

Despite the rapid response of districts attempting to support their students and staff, the pandemic continues to have an undeniable impact on the state's overall education system.

When school buildings closed to comply with regional health and safety protocols, the migration to online instruction triggered monumental implications for student learning. These changes created new challenges for families who were now responsible for coordinating student instruction, ensuring access to technology, and supporting their students' mental and physical well-being.

Moreover, those living at or below the poverty line were, and continue to be, most impacted, given their reliance on food programs and social services delivered through local schools.

## PESB response to new challenges

Educator shortages in high-need fields and high-need schools have grown more severe due to a range of pandemic-related factors. At the same time, the pandemic posed new barriers to pre-service educators who were completing certification requirements.

PESB responded to these emerging challenges with new accommodations, guidance, and flexible policies.

In March, 2020, PESB issued emergency rules allowing preparation programs to recommend candidates for an emergency certificate if they had met all program requirements with the exception of completing one or more of the assessments.

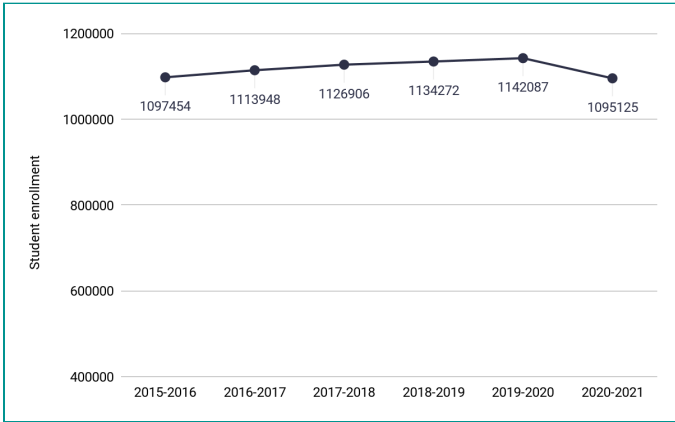
## Student enrollment and workforce fluctuations

Prior to the pandemic, Washington and states across the country were already confronting the influences and impact of widespread educator shortages. The pandemic has exasperated this problem by creating unprecedented shifts in learning environments and unthinkable realities for students, families, and educators.

**By August 2020, public school enrollment declined statewide by four percent, with kindergarten enrollment down by 14 percent - the first drop in student enrollment experienced in years, and a possible explanation for why districts requested fewer limited and emergency substitute certificates (figure E).**

Shifts in student enrollment can disrupt workforce stability and create persistent, long term consequences for our education system. One year into the pandemic and there continues to be widespread health concerns and limited in-person learning. At the time of this report, it is difficult to predict if and when enrollment fluctuations will stabilize.

**Figure E. How many students were enrolled at the beginning of each school year?**

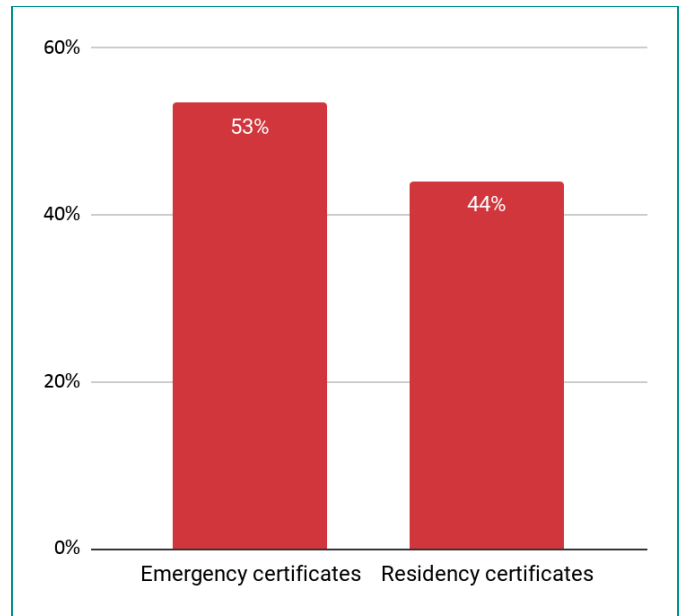


## Emergency certificates address candidate challenges

A clear indicator of workforce shortages can be seen in the volume of emergency certificates issued following PESB’s policy decision and guidance in March 2020. By fall, educators with emergency certificates were hired at greater rates than educators with residency certificates (Figure G). Specifically, 805 emergency certificates were issued to educator candidates who, due to pandemic-related challenges such as closed testing centers, were unable to obtain their residency teacher certificate.

Overall, Washington’s workforce experienced a drop in the total number of new certificates issued in 2020, and a drop in candidates with new certificates working as teachers the following year (Figures H and I). Only 46 percent of candidates with newly issued emergency or residency certificates combined were employed as teachers in 2020-21, whereas just two years earlier, 74 percent of these individuals were employed.

**Figure G. Percent of teachers working with newly issued emergency certificates and teachers working with residency certificates in 2020-21**



**Figure H. Number of certificates issued and percent of candidates working as teachers the following year, 2018-2020.**



School districts also requested fewer emergency substitute certificates in 2020. Emergency substitute certificates are available at district request when a district does not have fully qualified substitutes available. This is a possible indication that districts were filling their substitute needs with existing employees, individuals holding regular substitute certificates, or through asynchronous learning with the regularly assigned teacher.

Figure I. Number of certificates issued and percent of candidates working as teachers the following year, 2018-2020

Year	Number of certificates issued		Percentage employed the following school year
2018	3495 residency certificates		74%
2019	3675 residency certificates		64%
2020	Residency certificates	2261	
	Emergency certificates	805	
	2020 Total	3066	46%

## STAFFING INSIGHTS AND CHALLENGES

To understand how the pandemic affected educator shortages, PESB conducted an informal, qualitative survey of human resource directors and principals across the state. With support from the Association of Washington State Principals (AWSP) and Washington School Personnel Association (WSPA), 164 respondents provided feedback on issues that arose or were intensified by the pandemic. Survey responses have provided insight to aid PESB in making programmatic and policy recommendations moving forward.

### Shortage areas

- Special education, science, math, and CTE teachers remain high workforce shortage areas.
- Hiring challenges extended beyond teacher roles to include school counselors, speech language pathologists, and psychologists.
- Hiring substitute teachers, especially in rural areas was a challenge. Substitute shortages existed across all grades and content areas.

### Strategies implemented

- To recruit substitutes, some districts increased their pay, guaranteed a certain number of days, or hired designated substitutes to work everyday in the district as a regular employee with benefits.
- Some districts provided substitutes with extra training to successfully implement remote learning.
- Districts reported using student teachers with emergency substitute certificates to fill in for classroom teachers. Some student teachers were hired as long-term substitute teachers, or were conditionally certified to fill positions in special education.
- Districts continued outreach and recruitment efforts through Grow Your Own (GYO) programs with ESDs, community colleges, and university partnerships.

## Challenges reported by districts

- Hiring recently retired teachers during the pandemic.
- Insufficient hiring pool of qualified substitutes, and training them to be prepared for virtual learning and use of technology.
- Filling paraeducator vacancies in special education and English language learner (ELL) education.
- Building and sustaining pools of qualified applicants from local communities who could be awarded emergency substitute certificates to fill workforce shortages.
- Normal recruiting strategies were not available, and shifting to online interviewing was necessary, but not necessarily the most desirable way to hire. Relying on virtual career fairs, social media, and community advertising was a change in hiring practices.
- A total redesign of instructional delivery and classroom management to accommodate for remote learning increased staff stress and workload.
- Timely and accurate district-level communications: changing data points on reopening in-person learning and legitimate health concerns required the entire educational ecosystem to demonstrate adaptability and flexibility to continue to meet student learning needs.

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**“We had to become extremely nimble and flexible when dealing with staffing issues. What we would normally deploy as ‘best practices’ in staffing support had to totally change. We were very appreciative of several emergency policy changes that allowed our district to adapt and meet the needs of our staff and students.”**

**- Director of Staffing and Support**



**“This fall we scrambled to hire 50-60 long term substitutes and give them extensive training in Canvas applications and remote learning tools in order to ensure they could fill the gap. We had to plan for various personnel leave situations throughout the year and needed our substitutes to step into the job. It was a big undertaking.”**

**- HR Director**

# PROMISING PRACTICES

# INCREASING ACCESS INTO THE PROFESSION

Washington has long endured educational inequities with lasting consequences for students and communities. Arguably one of the most significant institutional challenges to reducing these inequities falls on the persistent shortage of educators. To address these shortages, we must address the barriers preventing future teachers from entering the profession, and make strategic investments that better support state and local workforce needs.

## “Grow your own” (GYO) programs

One way to alleviate the shortage, and close the diversity gap between students and educators, is through “Grow Your Own” (GYO) programs. GYO programs are designed to recruit diverse community members, such as parents or paraeducators, and help them enter the teacher workforce.

### Program impact

The impact of GYO programs on the workforce builds over time and efforts across the state are already showing promise. For example, early indicators of a more diverse workforce can be seen through the change in demographic data of Washington’s preparation program candidates.

In 2018-19, 23 percent of program completers were people of Color - almost double the number of current teachers of Color. Expanding investments and systems of support for GYO programs will increase Washington’s capacity to identify, recruit, and prepare our next generation of teachers.

## Bright spot: Seattle creates local pathway to increase teachers of Color



Seattle Public Schools has long recognized the imperative to develop strategic initiatives that diversify the educator workforce. The Academy for Rising Educators (ARE) is designed to recruit more educators of Color by helping diverse high school seniors, recent graduates, school district employees, and community members earn their teaching certificate.



Academy of Rising Educator participants

The ARE program uses “grow your own” strategies, including cohort-based placement, monthly support structures, and foundational racial equity and anti-racism coursework.

Candidates first take classes at Seattle Central College and then transfer to partner universities to earn teaching credentials and complete endorsements in ELL and special education.

Currently, the 2020-21 cohort has 158 candidates of Color, including 46 Black males, who will serve future students attending Seattle Public Schools.

[Read more about Seattle’s academy of rising educators.](#)

## Bright spot: Regional recruitment collaborative

Since 2014, PESB and a core group of road map district initiative that began in 2010 to improve student achievement have been working together to recruit and retain educator communities.

The Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) regional level that will support district needs. The schools Highline, Federal Way, Kent, Renton, Auburn, and Tukwila components of their plan:

- Develop a case management approach to track and follow up on interest forms submitted by future teachers
- PSESD will provide a “pathway navigator” to serve as a point of contact to answer questions and help GYO educator candidates make informed decisions
- Implement a media campaign to promote GYO pathways to become future teachers
- Host future educator career fairs
- Establish affinity workgroups to help retain and support future teachers on their
- Centralize relationships with colleges and universities for follow-up. Setting up a regional database of preferences to choose the best match for them.



[Read more about the GYO collaborative.](#)

## Recruiting Washington Teachers and Bilingual Educators Initiative

The Recruiting Washington Teachers (RWT) program was created in 2007 to “grow our own” group of future teachers who more closely reflect the diverse demographics of today’s students. RWT is a high school teacher academy that recruits underserved, multicultural, and multilingual students to explore cultural identity and educational opportunities through the lens of the teaching profession. The program aims to diversify the educator workforce, close the opportunity gap, and diminish the teacher shortage. Created in 2017, the Bilingual Educator Initiative (BEI) works to address the same goals, with a focus on developing future bilingual educators.

Collectively, RWT and BEI programs are recruiting students of Color (73 percent) at higher rates than they are represented in the statewide student population (47.5 percent) (Recruiting Washington Teachers 2019-20 annual report).

**Recognizing that educators of Color play a crucial role in providing an equitable education system, RWT and BEI programs provide an opportunity to reduce the teacher shortage and recruit diverse teachers into the profession.**

Students of Color enrolled in these programs are more demographically representative of their districts’ student population. Meaning, if RWT and BEI program graduates continue on the pathway towards entering the educator workforce, Washington should see a noticeable increase in teachers of Color and bi/multilingual teachers.

Despite one of the most disruptive and difficult years for students, families, and teachers, RWT programs were still able to make noticeable strides toward engaging and supporting students.

By supporting participants holistically as they explore the teaching profession, complete high school, and apply to college, RWT strengthens the pathway from high school to teaching, with the goal that students will become certified teachers, and education leaders in their communities.

PESB supports the implementation and expansion of RWT and BEI programs through grants that focus on developing partnerships between high schools, teacher preparation programs, students, families, and community-based organizations.

### RWT AND BEI GRANTEES

#### RWT sites

- Burlington-Edison School District
- Mount Vernon School District
- Renton School District
- Tacoma Public Schools

#### BEI sites

- Everett-Marysville Consortium
- Highline Public Schools
- Pasco School District
- Quincy School District





## Case study: Maestros Para el Pueblo program at Skagit Valley College and Western Washington University



The Maestros Para el Pueblo program (teachers for the community) is a partnership between Mount Vernon and Burlington Edison high schools, Skagit Valley College, and Western Washington University, designed to help bi/trilingual and Latinx students pursue a career in teaching.

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**“Working towards systemic change takes time, but with a dedicated network of professionals informed by the experiences and strengths of their students, we are working to eliminate barriers for future bilingual teachers and teachers from the communities.”**

**- Dr. Maria Timmons Flores, Woodring College of Education, Western Washington University.**

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The Maestros program begins with an RWT or BEI high school class where students learn to see their culture, language, and identity as assets; understand their academic and career options; and gain hands-on experience in the field of education. The primary goal is that all students graduate from high school, and apply to and succeed in college.

Maestros has a designated teacher, a community college navigator, and a diversity recruitment and retention specialist who coordinates wrap-around services and advocates for students at each milestone.

Students are able to pursue a clear pathway towards teacher certification with academic and social advising, a sense of community and belonging, and support with admissions applications and funding opportunities.

[Read more about maestros para el pueblo.](#)



## Bright spot: Quincy addresses rural educator shortages through Grow Your Own (GYO) program



In an effort to reduce their educator shortage and diversify their workforce, Quincy School District implemented a GYO pathway to teacher certification. Quincy School District, North Central ESD, and Eastern Washington University participate in the Transition to Teaching alternative route (T2T) grant program to help implement their GYO program. Quincy’s pathway starts in high school with a BEI program, and then transitions to supporting paraeducators becoming teachers. Through this partnership, the district is able to provide financial incentives to their paraeducators and keep them employed as they earn their residency teacher certificate.

**"The GYO program has been the single most impactful program on the current teacher shortage. The program offers Quincy community members a pathway to make a significant difference within their community. Most importantly, the program has helped our district to diversify our teachers. The majority of our GYO graduates are Latinx and bilingual. The program helped the district take an actionable step towards diversification and I am so very thankful for the difference it is making." – Nik Bergman, Assistant Superintendent**

### Spotlight: Five personal journeys from the Quincy GYO program

#### Deisi Alvarez

Deisi graduated from Quincy High School and attended Big Bend College to earn an associate degree. Deisi, who always loved working with children, then applied to be a substitute paraeducator in the Quincy School District. Deisi received encouragement and help from district administrators, who saw her talent, to apply for the T2T program. Deisi was also able to receive tuition support from the alternative route block grant. Quincy has already hired Deisi to teach a third grade classroom while she is enrolled in the T2T program. She will graduate in fall 2021.



EWU graduates

#### Crystal Pedrego

Crystal began her teacher journey after working 13 years as a paraeducator in the Quincy School District. During this time, Crystal was able to receive instructional experience in reading and math while working in the transitional bilingual program. Timing was important for deciding when to enter the T2T program, and with tuition support, she could finally make it work. Attending the monthly weekend classes was doable, and keeping her job was key to completing program requirements. In addition to the skills she acquired as a paraeducator, Crystal was able to learn new instructional strategies and pedagogy through her coursework and student teaching. Crystal received her teacher certificate in 2020 and is now teaching fourth grade at Pioneer Elementary.

When asked what made a difference in achieving her teacher certificate, Crystal replied, “The program was rigorous and challenging, and with support from my colleagues, district administrators, and instructors, I was able to attain my K-8 teaching credentials. I am so glad that I was born and raised in Quincy and can give back to my community.”

### **Abigail Martinez**

Abigail graduated from college with a bachelor’s degree in business and worked in the medical field for nine years. It wasn’t until she began volunteering in her son’s kindergarten class that she decided to change careers. She began substituting in the Quincy school district with an emergency substitute teacher certificate, and after two years, she was encouraged by the school to apply for the T2T program. Abby joined the first cohort in 2018 and graduated in June 2019 with an elementary teacher certificate. She was hired that fall for a second grade position in the same school where she had completed her student teaching.

When asked what advice she would give to anyone considering a career in teaching, she replied, “Be ready to put in hard work and understand the job is demanding, but don’t become overwhelmed. Believe in your students and your ability to help them grow and become respectful learners. Watching your students’ transformation is wonderful and very rewarding.”

### **Jaqueline Felix**

Jaqueline’s journey to becoming a teacher was not through a traditional pathway. Jaqueline became a single mother at 16, and began working in a grocery store to support herself and her daughter. She completed her general educational development (GED) and was later hired by the Quincy school district as a special education paraeducator. It was in this role that Jaqueline found her passion for working with children.

When the Eastern Washington University’s T2T program became available, Jaqueline applied and was accepted. She was offered tuition support and was able to continue working full time during her student teaching. Jaqueline has since become a kindergarten teacher in the Quincy School District. When asked what advice she would give to anyone considering a career as a teacher, she replied, “Volunteer in a school setting first to see if you like working with children. Then if you like the work, have an open mind to exploring your options. It is an amazing career.”

### **Oscar Romero**

Oscar always wanted to help people reach their potential, so he became a paraeducator at Quincy middle school. He found connecting with his students to be very rewarding, and several classroom teachers recognized his skills at establishing positive relationships, and recommended he consider becoming a teacher. In 2018, Oscar earned an associate degree at Wenatchee Valley College and was offered an opportunity through the T2T program to become a teacher. Oscar was hired as a full-time paraeducator during his program and received a grant to cover tuition and other costs. Oscar will graduate in June 2021.

When asked what motivated him to consider a career in teaching, he replied, “Making a difference and inspiring my students as a male role model from our Hispanic community is very important to me. I want to help Quincy School District and other staff members see the value of hiring teachers of Color from our local community.”

## Alternative routes to teacher certification

Alternative route programs are designed for career changers and individuals already working in the school system, such as paraeducators and limited certificate holders, who want to become a fully certificated teacher with at least one shortage area endorsement. Compared to traditional teacher preparation programs, Washington’s alternative routes tend to be shorter, more affordable, and more practically oriented by providing job-embedded learning.

**Alternative route programs provide the opportunity to “grow your own” teachers by establishing district and community partnerships, developing strong recruitment networks, and reducing barriers to obtain a teacher certificate.**

Washington has four alternative routes that each culminate with a residency teacher certificate. A candidate’s educational background, learning preferences, and professional experience will determine which route is best for them.

- Route 1: For district staff (e.g., paraeducators) with an associate degree
- Route 2: For district staff with a bachelor’s degree
- Route 3: For “career changers” with a bachelor’s degree
- Route 4: For district staff with a bachelor’s degree and a limited certificate.

PESB has seen a significant rise in applications to offer both new educator preparation programs, as well as adding alternative routes to existing programs.

Washington State allows community colleges and non-higher education organizations to serve as educator preparation program providers. A total of 24 providers are approved to offer alternative route programs statewide.

### Addressing content area shortages

Alternative route programs establish strong recruitment networks within communities, respond to local workforce needs, and address critical shortage areas. Washington State is able to address these shortage areas through the alternative routes block grant (ARBG). Grants are awarded through a competitive process to educator preparation programs, districts, and candidates to engage in GYO teacher strategies that address local workforce needs.

The grants are designed to increase access into the teaching profession by supporting candidates as they navigate the education and certification systems; ensure paid time to meet student teaching requirements; provide professional development opportunities for candidates and their mentors; and reduce financial barriers for tuition, books, and assessment fees.

### Addressing demographic shortages

Teacher candidates participating in ARBG are consistently more diverse than traditional route programs. In the 2018-19 academic year, 42.61 percent of ARBG participants were candidates of Color, compared to 23.73 percent of traditional route completers.

## Case study: Kent School District and Antioch University-Seattle partnership increases ELL and special education teachers



Kent School District (ranked the fifth most diverse district in the state) and Antioch University-Seattle have been collaborative partners since 2008 to address workforce shortages and develop future teachers who more closely reflect the demographics of their communities. Through the alternative routes block grant, the district and university support paraeducators and other classified staff to advance their careers as teachers with endorsements in key shortage areas, such as elementary education and ELL. All class schedules are responsive to working professionals so candidates can remain employed while earning their teacher certificate.

When asked what makes their partnership so successful, Kim Cushman, Assistant Director of Classified Development, responded, “We have worked with Antioch over time to create trust and respect for each other’s strengths and expertise. Because this program is so successful, word is spreading throughout the community and we have so many applicants that we can’t accept all who apply for the block grant slots. We wish we could fund more.”

### Program results

- Kent School District has 652 paraeducators who currently hold an associate degree or higher, providing a significant pool of prospective candidates.
- All program graduates have accepted teaching positions following program completion.
- 90 percent of all graduates since 2017 are still working in the Kent School District.
- 74 percent of program graduates are from underrepresented communities, including people of Color, first generation college students, and veterans.



**“We focus a great deal on building a powerful sense of community within each group of teacher candidates. In addition to wrap-around support, our candidates are really held by a strong sense of belonging and a connection to a community of justice-oriented educators. That sense of community and connection are central to each student's success and to our program's success.” - Dr. Rachel Oppenheim, Chair, Antioch University Seattle, School of Education**

[\*\*Read more about Kent and Antioch’s partnership.\*\*](#)

## Case study: City University alternative route program fills shortage areas



For more than a decade, City University’s alternative route program has focused on filling teacher shortage areas by recruiting career changers interested in becoming teachers.

City University has partnerships with Bellevue, Edmonds, Lakewood, Maryville, Mukilteo, and Seattle school districts to fill workforce shortages in high-need endorsement areas, such as special education, ELL, and math. The program also focuses on recruiting new teachers that better represent the diverse student populations within each partner district.

During the 2020-21 school year, City University enrolled over 180 new alternative route candidates with a retention rate of over 90 percent. Of those candidates, 40 percent are candidates of Color or non-native English speakers. The vast majority of candidates are currently employed by school districts as classified staff members.

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### Spotlight: Journey to becoming a teacher

When Abby Schuette’s three children all attended the same elementary school in Silverdale, she spent so much time at the school that she applied for a job in the lunchroom, and later as a special education paraeducator. After eight years as a paraeducator, she desperately wanted to become a teacher, but thought there would be too many obstacles standing in her way.

**“If it hadn’t been for the alternative route program, I wouldn’t have stopped my life to get a teaching degree,” says Schuette. “My schooling provided the least amount of disruption to my current trajectory.”**

Thankfully, Schuette did not allow potential obstacles to stand in her way and within two years, she received her teacher certification and a master’s degree. Four months before she finished the program, a new school hired her as a special education teacher, and she now oversees three paraeducators.

**[Read more about City University’s alternative route program.](#)**



## Case study: Rural partnerships key to closing geographic shortages



Eastern Washington University (EWU), Wenatchee Valley College, Big Bend Community College, Walla Walla Community College, and North Central ESD 171 have partnered to serve over 20 rural school districts to encourage classified employees to consider a career in teaching. By recruiting local community members into the Transition to Teaching (T2T) alternative route 1, 2, or 4 programs, more diverse and underrepresented candidates now have greater opportunities to access the teaching profession. At the time of this report, T2T has supported 29 graduates. In 2020, over 70 applicants applied for the program, but only 20 slots were filled due to limited grant funding. Without increased investments in the alternative route block grant, future teachers may continue to be turned away from the profession due to financial barriers.

### Student spotlight from Eastern Washington University's T2T program

Cecilia Reyes immigrated to the United States from Mexico when she was in fifth grade. During her senior year in high school, she participated in a teacher academy program and found her passion for working with young children. While working as a pre-school assistant, Cecilia decided to expand her professional experience and became a paraeducator with Moses Lake School District, supporting kindergarten and third grade classrooms. Cecilia's advisor from Big Bend Community College encouraged her to apply for the Eastern Washington University T2T program, where she was accepted in June 2019. During her program, Cecilia received financial support from the block grant and was able to continue working as a paraeducator while completing program requirements.



Cecilia Reyes

At the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, Cecilia was offered a limited certificate position in Moses Lake School District as a third grade teacher, which also served as her student teaching experience. Through continuous support by her mentor teacher and field supervisor, Cecilia was able to successfully provide remote learning for her 27 students. She will graduate in June 2021 and hopes to continue in her teaching position. Cecilia will be the first in her family to graduate with a bachelor's degree and is hoping to encourage others to consider teaching as a career.

"Teaching is challenging, but also very rewarding. Being a role model for my bilingual students and having a positive impact on their lives makes it all worthwhile." - Cecilia Reyes

[Read more about Eastern Washington University's rural partnerships.](#)

## Case study: South Central Washington partnerships increase educators in high need areas



In 2016, Heritage University partnered with Yakima, Toppenish, Selah, East Valley, West Valley, Mount Adams, Sunnyside, Union Gap, Wapato, and Mabton school districts to address rural workforce needs. Through their partnership, the Heritage University Accelerate program focuses on recruiting, training, and placing diverse teacher candidates in high need areas, specifically special education, ELL, bilingual education, and STEM subject areas, such as middle-level math and science. Heritage University has since expanded their partnership program to the Tri-Cities, which includes Kennewick, Pasco, Walla Walla, Richland, and North Franklin school districts.

With 73 graduates, the Accelerate program is beginning to collect longitudinal data demonstrating program effectiveness. This pathway option has promising completion rates and maintains high satisfaction ratings from graduates and their administrators.

**"Recruiting teacher candidates is more than increasing numbers. It is about the connection to the community, the profession, and the long-term goals we have for the education field. We must be the support we needed when we were entering this profession. I believe in helping lift others by reaching back into the community and building connections."**

**- Dr. Margarita Magaña, Ph.D, Director of Recruitment and Retention, Heritage University.**

Dr. Magaña was raised in the Tri-Cities and attended WSU for her undergraduate, master's and doctorate degrees. Margarita taught high school math in the Kennewick School District.



Dr. Margarita Magna

### Results are improving

By fall of 2020, Heritage University reported having 53 undergraduates enrolled in the Tri-Cities and Toppenish campuses, 41 of which are of Latinx descent. When compared to the 2017-2018 school year (pre-grant), the 2020 school year saw an 83 percent increase in overall recruitment, and an increase in Latinx students.

**[Read more about Heritage University's Accelerate program.](#)**



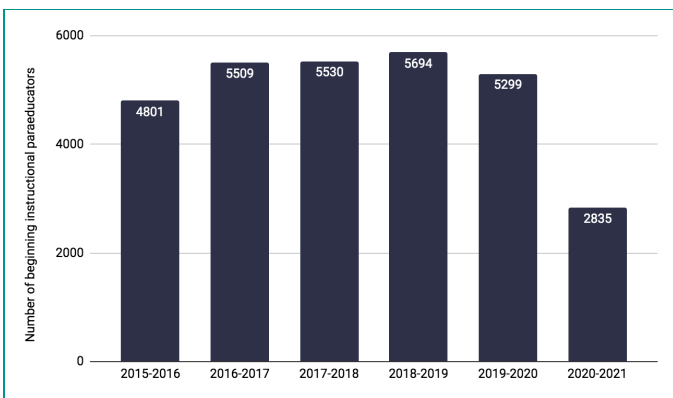
## Paraeducator workforce pathways and possibilities

When compared to the teacher workforce, paraeducators more closely reflect the racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds of their students (Williams, Garcia, Connally, Cook, & Dancy, 2016) - making them particularly suited to help alleviate the demographic shortage of educators experienced across the state. Most of the state’s 27,000 paraeducators are employed in roles that cover a wide variety of classroom and student learning responsibilities, and in some instances, provide the bulk of instruction to ELL students or students receiving special education services.

### Workforce shifts during the pandemic

During the pandemic school year 2020-21, many paraeducators were laid off by school districts and the number of new paraeducators sharply declined.

**Figure L. Number of new instructional paraeducators by year**



### Recruiting paraeducators to become teachers

Recruiting paraeducators to enter the teacher profession has become an important pillar of the

state’s multifaceted approach to diversifying the educator workforce.

Because many paraeducators work with students receiving specialized services, preparing them to become teachers also enables the state to address shortages in high-need content areas.

In 2020, the Paraeducator Board administered a survey, collecting over 2,500 paraeducator responses. Of those who responded, 31 percent indicated they would be interested in pursuing teacher certification if they had all the support needed.

To ensure paraeducators can support successful academic outcomes of all students, all instructional paraeducators must receive ongoing professional learning focused on strengthening the skills of their profession. To meet this workforce need, the Paraeducator Board implemented the Paraeducator Certificate Program beginning school year 2019-20, requiring school districts to provide 14 hours of training to all instructional paraeducators. Today, Washington ranks as a national leader in paraeducator professional learning and development. A key responsibility of the Board also includes

establishing a career ladder for paraeducators who are interested in becoming teachers.

**While Washington has made significant progress in supporting paraeducator career advancement, policy makers, school districts, and university partners must remain committed to removing barriers that continue to inhibit paraeducators from becoming teachers. Offering additional financial incentives and scholarships, and expanding alternative route programs are among the most effective ways to broaden access to the teaching profession and reduce educator shortages.**

## Case study: Highline Public Schools celebrates bilingual teaching fellows

Highline Public Schools' bilingual teaching fellows program is a GYO program that celebrates the assets of bilingual paraeducators and provides them an opportunity to become classroom teachers. Addressing demographic, geographic, and content area shortages, the program also supports Highline's goal of recruiting bilingual teachers from within their own community.

Bilingual teaching fellows study over a two-year period at Western Washington University's Woodring College of Education, while also continuing to work full-time in their paraeducator roles. Upon completion, fellows graduate with a teacher certificate and a bachelor's degree. The bilingual teaching fellows program is a recipient of PESB's alternative route block grant.

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**“We have reports from mentor teachers that the Bilingual teaching fellows are some of their most prepared student teachers because of their on-the-job experience in schools throughout the program. As district curriculum specialists and coaches, we appreciate the opportunity to teach in the program and train the fellows in our district's particular curriculum and instruction context and feel they are better equipped to step into the role of a first year teacher in our district.”**

**- Rachel Hoff, Highline Public Schools, ELL teacher on special assignment**

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Cohort 1 Bilingual Fellows, 2016 graduation at WWU

[Learn more about Highline's bilingual teaching fellows program.](#)

## Spotlight: The journey from being a paraeducator to becoming a teacher



### Andrea Victoria

Andrea Victoria started volunteering in her children’s classrooms and soon discovered she had a passion for helping students. She was hired as a paraeducator and encouraged by colleagues to pursue teaching. Andrea enrolled in an alternative route program, which allowed her to continue working as a paraeducator while she pursued a teacher certificate. Andrea began the Antioch program in 2019 and graduated in December 2020. The district offered her a teaching position at Mill Creek Middle School.



Andrea Victoria

“One of the most significant indicators of student success is the presence of authentic, meaningful, and caring relationships with the adults that serve and support them. Paraeducators often work with students who are mislabeled as ‘disruptive’ and ‘challenging.’ I do not know a single paraeducator who is not able to overlook these labels and see a student who needs a little more time, a little more love, and a little more grace. I spent five years working as a paraeducator before enrolling in the Antioch University alternative route program – that time has been foundational to who I am as an educator and who I am as a human being. I am the teacher I am today because of the time I spent learning from and connecting with the students I supported in my work as a paraeducator.” - Andrea Victoria

### Harprett Pandher

Harprett Pandher’s journey to becoming a teacher started in India, where she taught for thirteen years before coming to the United States. She was soon hired by Kent School District as a substitute paraeducator and within one year, Harprett was hired as a full-time paraeducator. After attending Antioch University-Seattle’s open house on alternative route programs, she learned she could keep her paraeducator job, receive financial support to pay tuition, and apply her bachelor’s degree from India to earn credit towards a master’s degree and teacher certificate. Harprett is scheduled to graduate in September 2021 and hopes to land a teaching position right away.

“Kent School District’s partnership with Antioch University is a unique way in which teachers of Color like me are able to become certified teachers. It is the flexibility of the program and the financial support that allowed me to pursue my long-standing passion for serving multiethnic students and families.” - Harprett Pandher

# ADDRESSING BARRIERS AND ADVANCING EQUITY IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION

Educators play a critical role in preparing students for academic success. This can only happen, however, if educators themselves are also adequately prepared. When educators are competent and confident in their knowledge, skills, and abilities, they are better positioned to facilitate student learning and support students socially, emotionally, and academically. Not only do students thrive with well-prepared educators, but so does the workforce.

Teacher retention and turnover can often be traced to a teachers' sense of effectiveness, which is, in turn, linked to their preparation experience (Darling-Hammond, Furger, Shields, & Sutchter, 2016). Providing strong, supportive, and equitable preparation strategies means educators are more likely to remain in the profession.

## Advancing equity grants

Advancing equity grants are designed to address persistent inequities, and increase culturally responsive practices, in Washington's educator preparation programs. While preparation program data shows that currently enrolled candidates are the most diverse in the state's history, strategies such as the advancy equity grant can help us continue to move the needle on growing a more diverse educator workforce.

PESB's advancing equity grants are designed to fund transformative campus-based projects that advance racial equity, strengthen community engagement, and increase culturally responsive practices.

## Sample grantees

- [Antioch University | School of Education](#) created a Committee of Community Advisors (CCA) to guide policy shifts towards a vision of racial equity and social justice, and to better reflect the wisdom of local communities of Color.
- [Central Washington University | School of Education](#) designed and implemented an equity vision and action plan to support the effectiveness of institutional practices around racial equity, and identify challenges and opportunities to better support teachers of Color.
- [University of Washington – Seattle | College of Education](#) is advancing racial equity and disability justice by promoting curricular change in special education teacher preparation programs. By fostering collaborative partnerships between Seattle Public Schools (SPS), the UW Special Education - Teacher Education Program program will prepare special education teachers to support the full range of student diversity in today's schools.

## Flexible assessment policy

Another strategy to improve educator preparation is removing the barriers that many candidates face while completing their required assessments. While assessments are an essential step in the preparation process, they can also serve as a gatekeeper, especially for bilingual candidates and candidates of Color.

Washington cannot afford to lose potential teachers who bring a range of diverse strengths and skills to the classroom, but are unable to become certified as a result of inequitable testing barriers.

## Expanding educator diversity through flexible assessment policy

PESB, with the support and guidance of statewide partners, has led efforts to introduce and expand flexibility in the educator assessment system through innovative policies and approaches.

In 2019, PESB successfully advocated to remove the passing score requirement for the WEST-B assessment, resulting in increased access to preparation programs. Programs now use basic skills as a formative assessment to develop individualized support for candidates.

“The WEST-B especially impacted underrepresented candidates. This change in the law will not weaken the academic readiness of pre-service teachers, but instead gives programs the ability to make informed decisions on candidate support and progression,” said Ron Jacobson, a PESB board member. “We have removed a significant barrier that has limited our effectiveness in diversifying the teaching workforce, and has kept quality candidates from a profession in which they will thrive. This is a welcomed and equitable change.”

In November 2020, PESB approved a case-by-case exception process to better support candidates as they work to meet content knowledge assessment requirements. This exception process reduces barriers, allows for more equitable pathways into the teaching profession, and provides a community-based review process within a diversity, equity, and inclusion framework.

Alex Castro-Wilson, teacher candidate, said, “With this [policy], I will be granted the opportunity to not let a test define if I am qualified to be a teacher. I can show in other ways that I know these content areas, and prove that I am a good teacher and qualified to do so.”

## Community colleges respond to local workforce needs

Community colleges across the state are partnering with surrounding school districts to identify shortage areas and create a rigorous residential program to meet district workforce needs. Community colleges such as Columbia Basin, Pierce, Grays Harbor, Centralia, Yakima Valley, Highline, Lower Columbia, and Wenatchee Valley have started to offer a Bachelor of Applied Science in Teacher Education (BAS-TE), which integrates applied curriculum and residency experience. The BAS-TE program is residency-based and prepares candidates for a teacher certificate in either early education or elementary education, with additional optional endorsements in special education or ELL.

Candidates complete an intensive residency experience (student teaching) that requires hands-on work in K-8 classrooms under the guidance of a mentor teacher and field supervisor within local partner schools. Candidates must also complete core courses, which are delivered through in-person and online classes.

Through community engagement and increased marketing efforts, enrollment is expanding. Community colleges and school districts are reporting successful results with the BAS-TE program to address defined shortage areas.

# PLACEMENT

The hiring, placement, and onboarding process of educators sets the stage for meaningful employment. Districts must carefully consider an educator’s classroom placement and ensure that students are at the center of those decisions. Once placed in those assigned roles, every educator, from novice to expert, needs support from colleagues and administrators.

Mentorships are one way to enhance beginning educators’ confidence and skill level. Mentors are able to provide job embedded professional development tailored to specific educator needs.

Additionally, strong teacher residencies can improve the recruitment and retention of effective teachers, especially among teachers of Color, and have long-term benefits for students (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2016).

While Washington continues to experience a significant educator shortage, particularly evident in certain geographic regions and content areas, it can be especially challenging for some districts to ensure the educators they place in classrooms are appropriately credentialed to be there. Implementing and improving placement practices helps all schools and districts, but is particularly important for supporting and retaining educators in the workforce.



## Bright spot: Strategic placement improves shortage areas



In 2016, the Spokane School District initiated a process to ensure the field placement of student teachers provided them with the best possible opportunity to succeed, while also meeting their workforce shortage needs. Local preparation programs submit requests to the district for available field placement slots and through weekly reviews, careful matches are suggested. The teacher mentor then has an opportunity to interview the suggested candidate and together, they mutually decide if the match is a good fit. Annually, 600 teacher candidates from seven universities within the Spokane Valley region have been successfully placed in student teaching opportunities in the district.

Every month, district and university representatives, known as the Greater Spokane Consortium, meet to discuss and problem solve issues or concerns that student teachers and mentor teachers may be experiencing. These monthly meetings help strengthen the consortium partnership and ensure the highest quality of support is given to each educator position.

# RETAINING EDUCATORS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

While many efforts to reduce workforce shortages focus on recruiting more teachers into the profession, it is also just as important to focus on strategies to keep them there.

Most educators begin their careers feeling inspired, excited, and eager to enter the classroom. Despite this early motivation for positive student impact, many educators choose to leave the profession somewhere along their journey.

Although many factors can influence these decisions, we know through data and anecdotal evidence that educators are more likely to remain in the profession when they experience fulfilling work environments through quality professional learning, leadership opportunities, and culturally inclusive workplaces.

The primary role of an educator is to foster growth for each of their students. To do this effectively, educators must receive opportunities across the trajectory of their career to also grow and develop themselves and their skills.

Research shows that districts who implement a variety of purposeful strategies focused on attracting and selecting well-prepared teacher candidates, developing their skills further, and creating working conditions that help retain these effective educators.

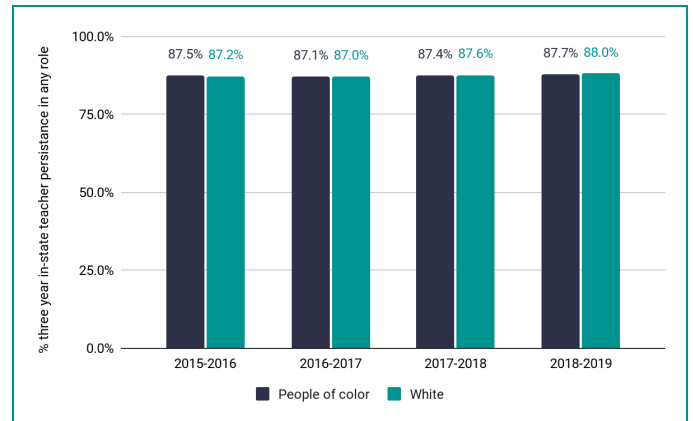
Successful district strategies include a clear philosophy and effective process for teacher hiring, a well-developed teacher pipeline, a strategic long-term commitment to professional growth, and a focus on teacher retention (Learning Policy Institute, 2020).

## Persistence rates

Persistence rates between teachers of Color and of White teachers are similar (Figure M), however persistence by district varies greatly.

For information on persistence in specific school districts, please visit PESB’s [interactive tool](#).

**Figure M: Three year persistence of teachers of Color and white teachers**



## Bright spot: Regional support to retain educators and principals of Color



The educators of Color leadership community (ECLC), created in 2017, is designed to strengthen recruitment and retention by providing community and support services to educators of Color in the Puget Sound region (Bazzaz, 2019). The initiative has served over 140 participants in four cohorts that provide professional development on leadership, mentorship, and community-building.

Each cohort works together for three years. ECLC provides educators of Color with new skills and learning that empowers their voices, asserts their self-worth, and encourages them to pursue leadership roles. ECLC affirms the important and necessary role that educators of Color play in the lives of their students, those of Color and white alike. ECLC has given them the tools and added impetus to have difficult conversations at the district level especially in light of the current movement for racial equity and justice (Educators of Color Leadership Community, 2020). ECLC was a recipient of the 2020-21 PESB professional growth grant.

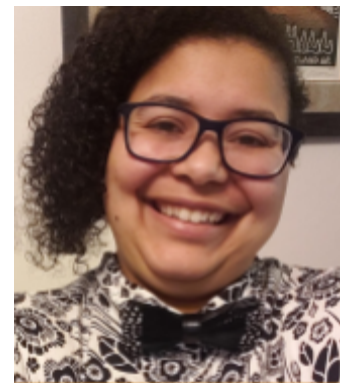
“We need these educators of Color to lead the way in education transformation. They have the vision, they have the experience, they have the expertise. It is not [simply] about hiring more people of Color; it’s about hiring more teachers of Color and then allowing them to lead and teach and educate in a way that’s authentic to them. That’s what our students of Color need. I think that is going to be key if we’re serious about eliminating the opportunity gap; these are the leaders we need to be following.”

- Eileen Yoshina, Director of Equity in Education and ECLC, Puget Sound Educational Support District

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**“ECLC reminded me over and over again that the power granted to me by a white supremacist hierarchal system is much less than the power I innately have, and that I am granted by community.”**

**- Tamasha Emedi, Assistant Principal, Hazel Valley Elem, Highline SD.**



Tamasha Emedi

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[Read more about the ECLC program.](#)



## Bright spot: Network for EdWork

### *Recruiting, developing, and empowering educators of Color in Washington State*



Network for EdWork brings together educators and leaders of Color in education - providing them with a community to help sustain inclusive and equitable schools for all students. Formed from a need to dismantle and replace institutionalized racist structures and practices, Network for EdWork provides educators with tools to re-think and undo oppressive structures.

Across Washington, teachers and education leaders are disproportionately white. Students of Color deserve to see themselves represented in education, and educators of Color deserve to work in environments that value their identities and perspectives. Network for EdWork prioritizes and supports the emotional and professional development of educators of Color at all stages of their careers.

The Network for EdWork is sponsored by Technology Access Foundation (TAF), who partners with school districts, educators, and organizations to challenge the current public education system. TAF helps schools create collaborative, anti-racist learning environments grounded in equity where every student wins.

### **Programs to lead, liberated.**

Network for EdWork offers two core programs that support educators of Color from the time they step into the classroom, through their entire journey within public education.

**Martinez Fellowship:** This program recruits teachers of Color into the profession and equips them with the tools necessary to navigate their first three years of teaching – as an educator and person of Color. Through early-career coaching, ongoing professional development, and networking opportunities, fellows remain in education longer, are better able to withstand early burnout, and become education leaders who accurately represent the racial diversity of Washington’s students.

**Education EnCounter:** This program from practical leadership and community building through the lens of decolonization for current and aspiring education leaders of Color. Education EnCounter uses liberation pedagogy and is centered around “headwork, heartwork, and community” allowing for leaders to chart their own path for growth and change.



# Professional growth plans

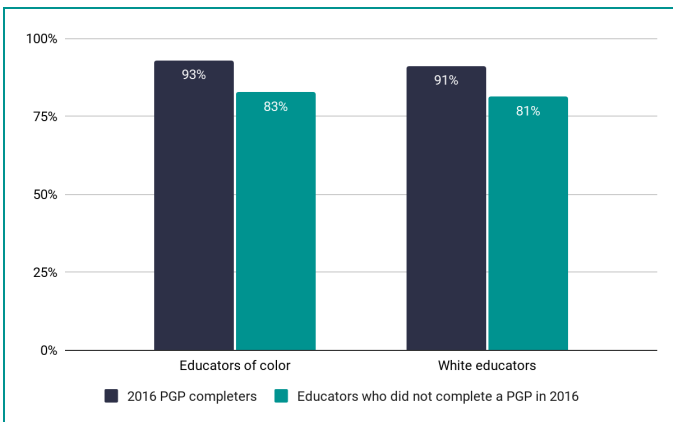
## Professional learning as a retention strategy

High quality, job-embedded professional learning is a key to retaining educators and growing a more diverse workforce across the career continuum. Educators who are able to set their own goals for professional learning may be more motivated to stay in the profession.

Professional growth plans (PGPs) are job-embedded, self-directed professional development. With a PGP, teachers, administrators, paraeducators and ESAs set their own goals, align them to certification standards, design an action plan, and collect evidence. Educators then reflect on the process.

PGPs allow educators to tailor their professional learning to their individual career ambitions, interest areas, and the needs of their students and families. The three-year persistence rate for those who completed a PGP is about ten percentage points higher for educators of Color and White educators (Figure N).

**Figure N: Three-year persistence for educators completing a PGP versus those not completing a PGP**



PESB offers PGP grants of up to \$15,000 to strengthen educator retention through professional learning communities (PLCs) focused on SEL or virtual learning. Grantees are required to include paraeducators and educators from populations that have been historically underrepresented and systematically excluded from the educator workforce.

## Strategies mitigating demographic shortages

Educators who participated in PGP grants indicated they were better able to align their learning to their career goals and professional interests. Moreover, PGP grant recipients stated that they benefited from cohort and school support. Participants reported:

- Collaborative connections with staff members to share best practices for virtual learning pedagogy
- Application of social emotional support strategies for students to reduce anxiety and stress
- Engagement and support for positive student interactions and family communication
- Improved communication with other staff members for continuous support and self care

**“As a paraeducator, this is my first opportunity to be included in staff development and training with educators from different roles, and to feel integrated into this process. I am challenged and supported in my PGP PLC.” - Paraeducator**

## Bright spot: Educators of Color network strengthens retention through professional growth opportunities

The Kent Educators of Color network, established in 2019 with over 60 educators of Color and 28 supportive allies, focuses on making a positive impact in attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. The network supports educators of Color and the success of all students, especially students of Color. In 2020, the network was a recipient of PESB’s professional growth plan grant to provide opportunities for educators of Color to connect and support each other in addressing systemic challenges.

“As an educator working with students of Color, I see the burden they shoulder, and the toll it takes when they pick and choose the parts of their identity to bring with them to the spaces they inhabit. Educators of Color share the same burden. The need to be seen and share space with people who, not only look like you, but know and understand your experience is just as important. Being a member of the Kent network gives me that space - a space where I feel safe and welcome to show up whole and completely who I am on any given day.” - Andrea Victoria, MAT, Mill Creek Middle School, Kent School District

### Personal story from a beginning teacher of Color

Jesse McMorris knew in high school that he enjoyed working with kids. He was encouraged to pursue a career in education during his senior year while working at various jobs helping youth after school. When he graduated from Washington State University’s teacher preparation program, he started applying for jobs with several school districts. During his interview with Kent School District, he felt a positive connection, but it was not until he shared his passion for social emotional learning strategies that the interview took off. He felt reaffirmed, and believed the diversity of the district’s student population would be a great fit for his skills and talents.

The Kent School District has an intensive induction program for new teachers. Through co-teaching experiences with an instructional coach, monthly mentor meetings, district wide professional learning communities for new teachers, and building-based support, Jesse felt supported and welcomed into the district. During his second year of teaching, Jesse joined the Kent educators of Color network.

**“The network has provided an opportunity for me to learn from others, share and talk about real issues, and to just be myself with others who are like me.” - Jesse McMorris, Kent School District, Panther Lake Elementary**



Jesse McMorris

# SYSTEMWIDE SOLUTIONS

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## A comprehensive, systemic approach

State government agencies, preparation programs, school districts, and community-based organizations all play a part in addressing Washington’s educator shortage.

PESB is currently exploring policy approaches through its work with the Professional Educator Collaborative. The Collaborative, established by the Legislature, provides recommendations on educator recruitment, certification, retention, professional learning, leadership development, and evaluating educator effectiveness. [The Collaborative’s first report](#), released October 2020, outlined preliminary recommendations to strengthen the educator certification system with a focus on revising the cultural competency standards. Their final report, due to the Legislature on November 1, 2021, will provide additional recommendations and guidance on state and local policies and practices.

In addition to the Collaborative’s contributions, PESB urges state and local policymakers to prioritize the following recommendations and strategies:

### Increase equitable pathways into the education profession

- Invest in TeachWA.com, a statewide educator recruitment tool, to highlight shortage areas, workforce needs, and build an interactive program comparison tool.
- Scale “Grow Your Own” programs, such as RWT and alternative routes, to improve pre-service teacher recruitment and strengthen educator pathways.
- Expand student teaching residencies through alternative route programs that prioritizes workforce needs.

### Support incentives for candidates pursuing certification in shortage areas

- Expand the number of bridge programs that help future educators transition from high school to preparation programs.

### Remove policy and institutional barriers impacting paraeducators entering the teaching profession

- Examine district and PESB policies to enable paraeducators to work full-time while meeting student teaching requirements for preparation programs.

### Incentivize collaborative community partnerships to address regional workforce needs.

- Strengthen systemic partnerships to recruit and prepare aspiring teachers earlier in the educational process, through increased investments in partnership grants for high school and community college pathways
- Expand and adapt the alternative routes model to address other educator role shortages including school counselors.

## **Increase collaborative learning between districts and preparation programs to improve educator placement in shortage areas.**

- Establish a workgroup to explore and recommend residency options for funding student teaching with a focus on educators of Color and bilingual educators. Determine how the district apportionment system could support a teacher residency initiative.
- Expand support for and placement of those already in the workforce who are developing into new educator roles. Focus policy and incentives to streamline educator growth and placement.

## **Increase incentives for professional learning that support persistence and retention.**

- Establish a workgroup to examine the practices of districts and ESDs that retain the greatest number of educators from year-to-year.
- Provide financial incentives and leadership opportunities for mid-career educators in exchange for additional years of service.
- Provide in-service educators with opportunities to pursue a credential in emerging shortage areas.

## **CONCLUSION**

Washington's educator workforce shortages require multi-faceted solutions, policy innovation, and collective action. Steady progress has been made to reduce educator shortages through innovative strategies and policies at local, regional and state levels. However, demographic, content, role and geographic shortages persist.

What can our state do now to ensure that every student in every classroom benefits from well-trained, equity-minded educators? The answer lies in increasing investments in research-based approaches; scaling existing best practices; and incentivizing strategies targeting recruitment and retention, including regional collaborations. We must proceed with a focus on advancing diversity in the teacher workforce and addressing inequities across the career continuum – from attracting students of Color into the profession, to preparing them for the classroom, and then developing, supporting, and retaining them in the profession.

# REFERENCES, APPENDICES, AND GLOSSARY

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Data caveats and methodologies

### Figure A: Washington State student and teacher demographics, 2020-21; and Figure B: Demographic comparison between Washington State teachers and students, 2020-21

Methodology: A count of teachers (S-275 duty roots 31, 32, 33, 34, or 63) with greater than 0.0 FTE was taken. Teachers were disaggregated by ethnicity and race. Hispanic teachers of any race were reported as hispanic. Teachers with multiple reported races were reported as multiracial in Figure A, and as teachers of Color in Figure B. Student enrollment counts from the OSPI report card were also taken. The percentage of each race-ethnicity group was determined.

- Caveats: 2020-2021 SAFS data is preliminary.
- Data ID: P18/381
- Data source: OSPI report card, SAFS
- Data as of January 27, 2021
- [Data webpage](#)

### Figure C: Percentage of students of Color versus percentage of teachers of Color by school district. Interactive tool.

Methodology: A count of unique teachers working in teacher duty codes (S-275 31, 32, 33, 34, or 63) was taken by school district. Each teacher's race was then classified as the following: Hispanic teachers of any race were coded as a Person of Color (PoC). Teachers with two or more races were considered a Person of Color (PoC). Teachers only reporting their race as White were counted as White. Teachers reporting their race or ethnicity as any other race or ethnicity were considered a Person of Color. Those with no race data or insufficient ethnicity data were classified with a

"Missing" race, and their totals contributed to teacher totals and percentage PoC denominators. The count and percentages of students by school district were taken from OSPI's annual report card. The percentages were then plotted on a scatter graph. Point size correlates to the student enrollment count in the district.

- Caveats: There is no option for students to have a "Missing" race, but it is available for teachers. 2020-2021 data is preliminary.
- Data as of: January 25, 2021
- Data Source: OSPI Report Card, SAFS
- Data ID: 380
- [Data webpage](#)

### Figure D. Regional shortage areas

- Data as of December 11, 2020.
- [Data webpage](#)

### Figure E. Percentage of conditional certificates issued in special education

Methodology: A count of teachers with a valid conditional teacher certificate (C280700) in a given school year was taken. A count of teachers with valid a special education endorsement (Early childhood special education endorsements 0500, 1500, 3500 or special education endorsements 0304, 1304, 3304) on their valid conditional teacher certificate in a given school year was taken.

- Caveats: 2020-21 and 2021-22 years are incomplete and ongoing. Certificates may be counted in multiple school years, if their validity spanned multiple school years. A certificate and endorsement was considered valid in a school year if its issue date was before the end of the school year (June 30) and its expiration date was after the beginning of the school year (June 1). Data does not take into account employment status.
- Data as of December 11, 2020
- Display updated March 1, 2021
- Data source: eCert
- Data ID: 67
- [Data webpage](#)

**Figure F. How many students were enrolled at the beginning of each school year?**

Methodology: Includes OSPI student report card enrollment data from 2014-15 through the most current year of data. Data is disaggregated by school, district, and the state level and includes counts of students by the following groups: grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, and student programs and special characteristics.

- Data source: [OSPI student report card](#).

**Figure G. Percent of candidates with newly issued emergency certificates and residency teacher certificates working as teachers in 2020-21**

Methodology: To determine if there was preferential hiring for those with residency first issue certificate over those with an emergency certificate: teachers who were issued either a residency first issue certificate, or an emergency teacher certificate, from 4/1/2020 to 10/1/2020, were compared to the 2020-21 SAFS personnel file to determine the proportion of each group working as a teacher (S-275 duty codes 31, 32, 33, 34, or 63).

- Caveats: 2020-21 data is preliminary. These newly certificated teachers were assumed to be newly hired when appearing in the personnel file.
- Data ID: 422
- Data source: eCert, SAFS
- Data as of: February 10, 2021

**Figure H, I. Number of certificates issued and percent of candidates working as teachers the following year, 2018-2020**

Methodology: To enhance analysis of COVID's impact on hiring of new residency first issue certificates and emergency certificate teachers in Figure G, 3 years of residency first issue hiring was tracked. Teachers issued a residency first issue certificate between 4/1 and 10/1 each year were compared to the SAFS personnel file's 10/1 headcount to determine how many were teaching in WA K-12 schools (S-275 duty codes 31, 32, 33, 34, or 63) the following year.

- Caveats: 2020-21 data is preliminary. These newly certificated teachers were assumed to be newly hired when appearing in the personnel file.
- Data ID: 422
- Data source: eCert, SAFS
- Data as of: February 10, 2021

**Figure J. Number of limited certificates issued per year**

Methodology: A count of issued limited certificates per school year (July 1 to June 30) was taken. Limited certificates included were: conditional, conditional CTE teacher and renewal, probationary CTE teacher and renewal, emergency substitute administrator, emergency administrator, emergency ESA, and emergency substitute teacher.

Emergency teacher certificates issued 2019 and before were included, but emergency teacher certificates issued beginning in 2020 were not included.

- Caveats: Data as of October 6, 2020. School year 2020-2021 is not complete until June 30, 2021, so certificates issued for 2020-2021 will continue to rise. Data does not take into account employment of certificate holders. C250700 Emergency Teacher certificates had a substantial change in policy and use. They were discontinued in 2019-20 and policy was redeveloped in 2020-21 in response to COVID-19 disruptions.
- Source: OSPI eCert
- ID: 45
- [Data webpage](#)

**Figure K. Number of total instructional paraeducators by year**

Methodology: A count of instructional paraeducators (duty code 91, activity code 27) per school year was taken. An estimated 15% of instructional paraeducators in S-275 data are miscoded into other activity codes, so this number has been adjusted to include a further 15%.

- Caveats: Only paraeducators with greater than 0.0 FTE were counted.
- Data ID: P31/ 384
- Data as of January 27, 2021
- Data source: SAFS (2020-21 preliminary)

[Data webpage](#)

**Figure L. Number of new instructional paraeducators by year**

Methodology: A count of beginning instructional paraeducators (CBRTN code B or N, S-275 duty code 91, activity code 27) each school year was

taken. An estimated 15% of instructional paraeducators in S-275 data are miscoded into other activity codes, so this number has been adjusted to include a further 15%.

C: Continuing individual - An individual who was reported by the district in the previous year, unless the person is a certificated employee with less than 0.5 certificated years of experience as of August 31. In that case, such a person is reported as a beginning individual.

B: Beginning individual - An individual with a certificated assignment who is reported with less than 0.5 certificated years of experience.

R: Re-entering individual - An individual with a certificated assignment who was not reported in a certificated capacity anywhere during the previous 2017–18 school year, and has at least 0.5 years of experience as of August. Individuals returning from leave are reported in this category.

T: Transferring to district - An individual with a certificated assignment who was employed in a Washington district (in a public or a private school), another state, or foreign country during the previous school year and has at least 0.5 certificated years of experience as of August 31, and was not reported by the current school year’s employing district last year.

N: New Employee - An employee with only classified assignments that was not reported by the reporting district for the previous school year.

- Caveats: Paraeducators may be miscoded as beginning or new when hired in a new district instead of coded as continuing or transferring.
- Data as of January 27, 2021
- Data ID: P30 / 385
- Data source: SAFS (2020-21 preliminary)
- [Data webpage](#)

### Figure M: Three year persistence of teachers of Color and white teachers

Methodology: Beginning educators (CBRTN codes B or N) and educators of any experience level (any CBRTN code) were grouped by educator role. These cohorts were compared to the personnel file of the following year. Those who were working that next year in any educator role (S-275 Duty Codes 11, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 32, 33, 34, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 63, 64, 91, or 99) and in any CBRTN code were considered 1 year persistent. This allows for the educator to change roles and still be considered persistent. Educators who began in multiple roles were counted once in each role group. The initial cohort was further analyzed by comparison to the personnel file of the following year. Those working the next year in the same role and in any CBRTN code were considered 1 year persistent in role. Educators must have worked more than 0 FTE in their role.

For definitions of CBRTN codes, see methodology for Figure N.

Caveats: Principals, superintendents, program administrators, and other administrators did not have a "beginning" group because these roles do not start under CBRTN codes B or N. Certificated on leave educators were not counted as persistent. Behavioral Health Analyst (duty code 49) began in 2019-2020. 2019-2020 (persisting into 2020-2021) school year data is preliminary. Initial cohorts with an n size < 6 have been suppressed and do not appear in the graph.

- Data as of January 25, 2021
- Display updated February 16, 2021
- Data source: SAFS
- Data ID: 404
- [Data webpage](#)

### Figure N: Three-year persistence for educators completing a PGP vs. those not completing a PGP

Methodology: A count of educators recording a completed Professional Growth Plan (PGP) within a school year (July 1 - June 30) was taken. Counts were disaggregated by race-ethnicity and gender. Hispanic educators of any race were considered a person of Color.

Educators who completed a PGP in a target year were examined to see if they were working in a WA K-12 school that year and the following year, +3 years later, and +5 years later. Intermediate years were not measured or considered. Completers of a PGP may have been working in any educator role (any S-275 duty code) to qualify as persistent.

For comparison, the persistence of all educators (teacher, principal, superintendent, ESA, and program administrator duty codes only) from that same target year was measured.

For comparison, the persistence of all educators (teacher, principal, superintendent, ESA, and program administrator duty codes only) from that same target year who did not complete a PGP that year was measured.

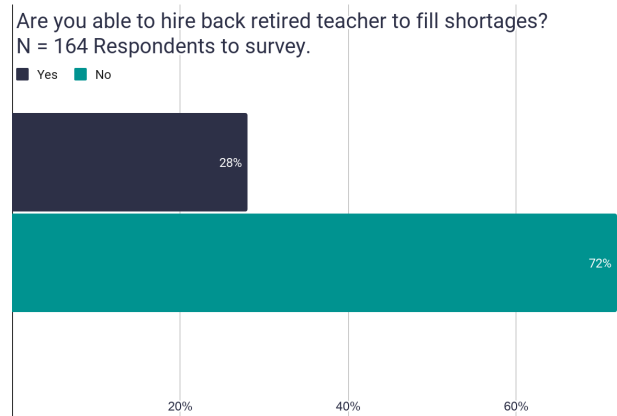
- Caveats: Educators may record completed PGPs at a later date, and counts are expected to rise, especially for more recent years. Educators may have completed a PGP and not recorded at the time the persistence data was queried.
- Data source: eCert, SAFS
- Data as of July 1, 2020
- Data ID #345
- [Data webpage](#)

## Appendix B: PESB survey

To understand how the pandemic affected educator shortages, PESB conducted an informal survey of human resource directors and principals from across the state. Through administrative support of the Association of Washington State Principals and the Washington School Personnel Association, 164 respondents provided feedback to aid PESB in making programmatic and policy recommendations. Below, find the survey questions and response highlights.

### Describe the teacher shortages you are experiencing.

Districts reported that special education at all levels was a top shortage area, followed by science, math, and CTE. Several districts mentioned struggling in other areas: school counselors, speech language pathologists, and psychologists.

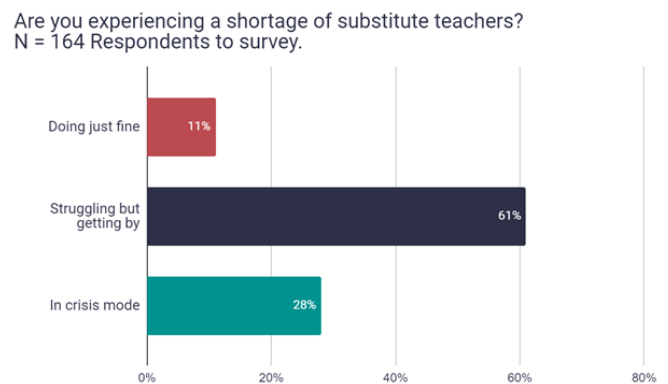


### Are you able to hire back retired teachers to fill shortages?

72 percent of districts reported they were unable to hire back recently retired teachers during the pandemic. Retirees were not willing to come back to fill either part time assignments or fill in as substitute teachers.

### Are you using student teachers to fill in as substitute teachers?

85 percent of districts reported using student teachers to help fill in for their classroom teacher, if a substitute was needed, and the student teachers were issued an emergency substitute certificate. Some student teachers were hired as long term substitute teachers, or conditionally certified to fill positions, mostly in special education.



89 percent of districts reported as struggling or in a crisis mode in trying to hire enough substitute teachers, especially in rural areas. Substitute shortages existed across all grades and content areas. Districts reported their regular substitutes were declining to return until they were vaccinated and/or transmission rates were reduced. Guaranteeing a certain number of days or hiring designated substitutes to work every day in the district increased the pool of substitutes in some areas. Substitutes required extra training to successfully implement remote learning. Some districts increased substitute pay to attract enough people. Even recruiting

from local communities to find qualified people to hire under an emergency substitute certificate was a challenge. Some districts commented that it has been difficult to fill open paraeducator positions in special education and ELL. Some districts are struggling to find paraeducators in general. Hiring substitute paraeducators is a recurring issue.

## **Describe what strategies your district is using to deal with shortage areas.**

- Hiring full time substitutes to become regular employees and receive benefits
- Continuing outreach and recruitment efforts to hire current student teachers and to utilize GYO programs through ESDs, community colleges and university partnerships
- Increasing substitute pay to attract more applicants
- Conducting outreach to local community members about open positions and career pathways to become a teacher or paraeducator

## **What are the three biggest staffing issues your district has faced during COVID-19?**

### **Staff stress and fear of returning to in-person learning**

According to some districts, the biggest staff issue they faced was dealing with staff fear of returning to in-person learning due to concerns over health and safety. Staff expressed concerns about their increased stress during remote learning. Keeping positive communications with staff during uncertain times was a challenge. Due to changing data points on in-person learning and health concerns, many staff voiced frustration and distrust with district and board leadership.

### **Substitute shortage**

Dealing with availability of substitutes for school staff and training them to be prepared for virtual learning and use of technology was expensive and a resource drain. Traditional substitute pools were drained and non-traditional recruiting strategies were deployed using social media, connections to community based partnerships, and word of mouth to fill both substitute and regular positions. It was difficult to find enough candidates to even offer emergency substitute certificates.

### **Recruiting staff**

Dealing with leave replacement, retirees, and staff turnover was more difficult when trying to recruit ample applicants. Normal recruiting strategies were not available and shifting to online interviewing was necessary but not always the most desirable way to hire.

“We had to become extremely nimble and flexible when dealing with staffing issues. What we would normally deploy as “best practices” in staffing support had to totally change. We were very appreciative of several emergency policy changes that allowed our district to adapt and meet the needs of our staff and students.” - Director of Staffing and Support

# GLOSSARY

**Alternative routes to teaching certification:** Alternative routes are designed for individuals who hold an associate’s degree or higher. Candidates are often career changers or individuals who already work in education and are ready to transition into a full-time teacher position.

Alternative routes offer several flexible options for full residency certification.

- Route 1: For district staff (e.g., paraeducators) with an associate degree
- Route 2: For district staff with a bachelor’s degree
- Route 3: For “career changers” with a bachelor’s degree
- Route 4: For district staff with a bachelor’s degree and a limited certificate.

**Bridge programs:** Bridge programs, which include summer bridge and first-year experience programs, are designed to ease the transition to college. While these programs take many forms, they equip students with the academic skills, knowledge, and support to successfully navigate their first year in college. Bridge programs foster a strong sense of community which strengthens fall term admissions and first-year retention rates among first-generation college students and students of Color.

**Grow Your Own (GYO) programs:** GYO programs are highly collaborative, community-rooted, and provide intensive support systems including recruiting, developing, placing, and retaining diverse educators. GYO programs also work towards dismantling institutional racism, fostering educational equity, and improving academic outcomes for all students.

**Limited certificates:** Limited certificates provide flexibility in the Washington state educator certification system. With a limited certificate, educators who have not met full certification requirements may practice in classrooms and schools if certain conditions are met. Limited certificates can be an entry point to the profession. Individuals pursuing alternative routes to certification can teach with a limited certificate while they are completing their programs.

**Persistence:** Persistence is one way of looking at educator retention. In this report, persistence is calculated by answering the question: “What percentage of educators appearing in the state S-275 personnel report data in a specific year still appear one year, three years, or five years later?”

**Recruiting Washington Teachers (RWT):** RWT is a high school teacher academy that recruits underserved, multicultural, and multilingual students to explore cultural identity and educational opportunities through the lens of the teaching profession. The program aims to diversify the educator workforce, close the opportunity gap, and diminish the teacher shortage.

**Recruiting Washington Teachers – Bilingual Educators Initiative (BEI):** The Bilingual Educator Initiative works to address the same goals as RWT, with a focus on developing future bilingual educators.



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