

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1601

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

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

Brief Description: Concerning the beginning educator support team program.

Sponsors: Representatives Santos, Fey, Pollet and Slatter; by request of Office of the Governor.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/7/17, 2/14/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the Beginning Educator Support Team program to beginning principals.
- Prioritizes grant funds to school districts that demonstrate an understanding of the research-based standards for beginning educator induction.
- Adds requirements to the program, including: that professional development for program participants and mentors must be ongoing; that, when possible, an assignment for beginning principals and teachers must be less challenging than that of more experienced colleagues; and that the required program evaluation include a measure of identified areas of program development, for example, increased retention of beginning principals and teachers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Hargrove, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Springer, Steele, Stokesbary and Volz.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

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

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

- a paid orientation or individualized assistance before the start of the school year for the beginning educator;
- assignment of a trained and qualified mentor for the first three years for beginning educators, with intensive support in the first year and decreasing support over the following years depending on the needs of the beginning educator;
- a goal to provide beginning educators from underrepresented populations with a mentor who has strong ties to underrepresented populations;
- professional development for beginning educators that is designed to meet their unique needs for supplemental training and skill development;
- professional development for mentors;
- release time for mentors and their designated educators to work together, as well as time for educators to observe accomplished peers; and
- a program evaluation using a standard evaluation tool provided from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) that measures increased knowledge, skills, and positive impact on student learning for program participants.

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

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

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

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

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

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

encouraged the OSPI to use the mentorship training goals to develop professional development curricula.

Summary of Bill:

The BEST program is expanded to beginning principals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technical changes are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There is well-settled research that teacher quality is the most important factor in student achievement and staff stability in schools is a strong contributing factor; mentoring for new teachers from experienced colleagues improves both teacher quality and staff stability, particularly in high poverty schools. Leadership research shows that well-prepared and mentored principals are more likely to stay in the same school building for many years, contributing greatly to teacher stability and student success. Decreasing teacher and principal churn is very important. The Governor wants to shore up and scale up the program, so that all new teachers and principals in Washington can have a mentor for up to the first three years on the job.

The first years in the classroom are challenging. Supporting teachers during this time helps them develop better skills and higher satisfaction in the workplace, which ultimately keeps them around and benefits their students. About 21 percent of teachers leave the profession in the first five years. The number of new teachers doubled in the last six years. Teachers in the BEST program are more likely than other teachers to work in districts with poverty rates of 50 percent or higher and in districts with 50 percent or more students of color. The teachers in districts that have had the BEST program funded for five or six years are less likely to move within or out of the district, or exit the profession.

The program is based on the standards for new teacher induction; this includes hiring, placement, orientation, training for mentors and new teachers, time for observations and feedback, and coaching for district leaders. The OSPI has been working with districts to develop greater fidelity to the induction standards, which reflect research-based elements of support.

The BEST program was established six years ago to provide mentoring to new teachers. The BEST program has not had consistent funding, but has matured into a solid program. There is a waiting list of districts that would like to participate. The program funds ran out last year even though additional funding was provided. Every time the Legislature adds funding to the program, the districts snap up the grants.

Mentorship is important for principals to be successful. Behind the teachers, the principal is the biggest lever to student achievement, and the biggest driver of teacher performance. Principal churn is more rapid in high poverty and urban schools. When principals leave a building, student test scores decline and take an average of three years to recover. Thus, churn has a lasting impact on student success. Principals exiting preparation programs are not prepared because they are not getting quality residencies as they did in the past. Washington has over 300 new principals each year, but the Association of Washington School Principals is only able to provide professional development to about 75 of them over the course of a year. This is an equity issue.

Some districts enhance the state BEST funding to include all teachers new to the district in the program, although experienced teachers require a different kind of support than brand new teachers. There are new hires that are certified (nurses, counselors, etc.), who are not teachers, and these staff do not fit into the current BEST program. The program could be broadened and deepened to allow additional support to teachers in difficult teaching positions.

Some small districts benefit from the BEST network under the direct supervision of Educational Service Districts. This allows small districts to provide mentor support to beginning teachers. The program provides resources outside of the traditional day. The state should consider providing additional funding, and help unique regions in the state with innovations in technology.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Deb Merle, Office of the Governor; Sue Anderson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Ron Sission, Association of Washington School Principals; Tony Howard, Richland School District; Kyle Rydell, Liberty School District; Gene Sementi, West Valley School District; and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.