



Developing and Sustaining Strong School Leaders in Every District

2024 Supplemental Operating Budget Decision Package

Recommendation Summary

Principals have a unique and critical role as building-level school leaders. Day-to-day, principals supervise students and educators, set the tone for school culture, and hold the responsibility for fostering learning environments that meet the academic and behavioral success of each student. On a broad scale, principal leadership makes or breaks state education policy implementation. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requests increased funding for programs serving new and incoming principals, while also funding centralized supports for new and veteran school leaders seeking guidance on academics, student discipline and behavior, and implementation of K–12 education policy.

Fiscal Details (Funding, FTEs, Revenue, Objects)

Operating Expenditures	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund 001-1	\$0	\$1,860,000	\$1,860,000	\$1,860,000
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$1,860,000	\$1,860,000	\$1,860,000
Biennial Totals	\$1,860,000		\$3,720,000	
Staffing	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
FTEs	0	0	0	0
Average Annual	0		0	
Revenue	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
General Fund State - 01	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Biennial Totals	\$0		\$0	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Obj. C	\$0	\$1,860,000	\$1,860,000	\$1,860,000

Package Description

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

School principals play a critical role in the success of the entire K–12 educational system. Unlike superintendents and other district-level leaders, principals are immersed in the day-to-day operations of a school; maintaining daily contact with students and educators, observing classrooms, engaging frequently with families, and confronting and resolving behavioral and academic challenges. This unique access to the individuals our system is designed to serve, and the responsibilities that accompany that access, make principals the strongest connection point between K–12 policy and individual outcomes.

The Association of Washington Principals (AWSP) surveyed their 3,577 active members in November of 2022, and heard that nearly half the school leaders in the state were new to their roles, whether they were first-time principals or in a new position of school leadership, typically in a different district than before. The pipeline for high school principals is particularly thin, declining from 60 interns seeking credentials in the 2021–22 school year to only 20 in the 2022–23 school year. In the survey, 85% of respondents cited unrealistic expectations and workload as the main barrier facing the profession.

Today’s principals manage ever more complex schools and even seasoned leaders face tough challenges. The mental and behavioral health needs of students have changed in recent years. Educator and substitute staffing shortages often leave principals scrambling to staff classrooms and take on various other roles around the school building. It is also the primary responsibility of the school principal to navigate the complex and deadline-driven teacher evaluations, which are themselves critical to the health of the system. All of these create an array of competing priorities on a principal’s time and energy, leaving few resources for even the most experienced principal to direct toward strategic and visionary leadership.

It is these same overburdened leaders we expect to be stewards of change. It is on principals to foster the trust and confidence of individual students, families, and educators in the public education system and its policymakers. Systemic shifts in the K–12 landscape such as mastery-based learning, new graduation pathways, and additional requirements around educators’ professional development can only take root when school leaders have the time and energy to understand and embrace new laws, tools, and practices.

With little state funding dedicated to training and properly onboarding new principals, and limited supports available to them once they take on the role, burnout is common. High principal turnover robs our schools of consistency and fidelity in leadership, weakens public trust in the K–12 system, and keeps policy solutions from having their full intended impact on student outcomes.

What is your proposed solution?

OSPI’s solution is twofold. First, the agency proposes the state increase its investment in principal preparation by funding more substitute time for intern principals—those training to take on principal roles—to leave the classroom and shadow working principals through the

State Intern Grant Program. Current funding of \$477,000 a year relieves intern principals for 8–10 days of shadowing, which provides insufficient exposure to the variety of situations that principals confront. An additional \$1,000,000 per year will bring state funding more in line with where it was 20 years ago, when intern principals spent an average of 30–45 days of shadowing working principals.

The second piece of OSPI's proposal focuses on serving principals already on the job. OSPI proposes funding three additional positions who will work collaboratively with state and regional partners to provide all principals in the state with centralized supports that focus on three main areas: 1) behavior and discipline policy and best practice; 2) instructional models, pathways, and academic success; and 3) teacher evaluations.

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

OSPI is requesting \$1,000,000 per year to be added to the existing State Intern Grant Program. The additional funds will buy instructional time from educators who are training to become principals by funding substitute teachers. These hours of classroom time, once freed up through substitutes, are spent shadowing working principals, giving intern principals unique and invaluable insight into the complexities of the job, exposure to effective leadership styles and strategies, and the chance to build strong mentor-mentee relationships that can serve them throughout their time as principals. This combination of on-the-job training and professional networking will allow new principals to enter the role with a wide array of situation-specific strategies and skills developed under the guidance of an experienced mentor, and the ongoing support of that mentor, which in turn will build capacity and reduce burnout.

In addition, OSPI is requesting \$860,000 for fiscal year 2024, ongoing, to contract with a statewide professional association that supports principals to fund four full-time equivalent (FTE) positions: 3.0 FTE Associate Director positions and 1.0 administrative support position. These positions will be charged with providing technical assistance, engaging in problem-solving, and advising school principals. In partnership and collaboration with OSPI, these positions would be responsible for delivering professional learning and technical assistance around behavior and discipline policy and best practice; instructional models, pathways, and academic success; and providing comprehensive, timely, and informative teacher evaluations. Not only will these three positions provide much-needed day-to-day support to school leaders, but they will also ensure that support and guidance for principals is consistent across the state – supporting all school principals in building their capacity as policy champions and stewards of change.

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

OSPI considered an approach focused on the prototypical school funding model to provide for additional principals, assistant principals, deans of students, and other essential leadership positions. However, while the agency stands behind the need for additional leaders in buildings, we believe that the most appropriate investment for a supplemental budget is represented in this proposal, which targets the most immediate needs facing this component of the K–12 system.

Performance Measures

Performance outcomes:

Funding this request will result in intern principals completing more days of job shadowing, which in turn will result in first-time principals who are better prepared to take on their new responsibilities, and more likely to remain in positions of leadership long-term. The funding for AWSP support staff will result in more consistent and cohesive implementation of state policy, particularly around discipline, as school leaders seek guidance from centralized resources. This consistency in guidance will lead to more uniform results, practice, and progress across Washington's schools.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal represents an additional state investment in the State Intern Grant Program, currently funded in the 2023–25 biennial budget (Senate Bill 5187 Sec. 515(2)(c)).

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

Beginning in fiscal year 2024, OSPI is requesting \$1,860,000 per year for a contract to support increased principal internship opportunities. If funded, the additional investment would provide \$25,000 to support screening of applications, increase Aspiring Leaders Workshops by \$37,000 which would allow for additional sessions, and provide an additional \$938,000 to expand internship opportunities. To provide centralized support for principals statewide, an additional \$860,000 would also be needed to fund dedicated staff who would deliver professional learning, support school leaders, and provide technical support.

Workforce assumptions:

None.

How our Proposal Impacts Equity in the State

At the forefront of every program, policy, and decision, OSPI actively focuses on ensuring all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.

Turnover in school leadership exacerbates existing inequities in K–12 schools. High-poverty schools, rural schools, and schools serving a higher-than-average number of students grappling with behavioral or academic challenges struggle to attract and retain effective principals; and the consequences of that churn are often felt most by the most vulnerable students, families, and communities. These same communities suffer when policies meant to close opportunities gaps are stymied by lack of leadership. By shoring up supports for emerging and existing leaders, and centralizing these supports to ensure every school leader has access to consistent, high-quality resources and guidance around the toughest and most complex issues, this proposal will alleviate some of the burdens placed on principals serving students furthest from educational justice.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic framework:

This proposal furthers the Results Washington goal to provide every Washingtonian with a world class education, which in turn works to support the Results Washington goal to sustain a prosperous economy. While this proposal supports the first three of Superintendent Reykdal's four strategic goals, it particularly serves to advance Goal #3, ensuring our schools have a Diverse, Inclusive, and Highly Skilled Workforce.

Other Collateral Connections

Intergovernmental:

None.

Stakeholder response:

AWSP is in enthusiastic support of this proposal.

Legal or administrative mandates:

None.

Changes from current law:

None.

State workforce impacts:

None.

State facilities impacts:

None.

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A