



Recruiting and Retaining Special Education Teachers Through Effective Teacher Residencies

2024 Supplemental Operating Budget Decision Package

Recommendation Summary

Washington students learn best from dedicated and prepared educators. Students receiving special education services, especially those in rural communities, are the most likely to be served by out-of-endorsement teachers and emergency substitutes. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) requests funding to support special education teacher residencies, and to offer professional development and career support and guidance to the 15,000 substitute teachers currently serving in Washington classrooms.

Fiscal Details (Funding, FTEs, Revenue, Objects)

Operating Expenditures	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund 001-1	\$0	\$7,303,000	\$6,112,000	\$5,996,000
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$7,303,000	\$6,112,000	\$5,996,000
Biennial Totals	\$7,303,000		\$12,108,000	
Staffing	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
FTEs	0.0	0.75	0.75	0.75
Average Annual	0.38		0.75	
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. A	\$0	\$59,000	\$59,000	\$59,000
Obj. B	\$0	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000
Obj. C	\$0	\$4,110,000	\$2,927,000	\$2,811,000
Obj. E	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Obj. G	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Obj. J	\$0	\$8,000	\$0	\$0
Obj. N	\$0	\$3,083,000	\$3,083,000	\$3,083,000

Package Description

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

The nation is facing a teacher shortage and Washington is no exception, feeling it particularly in a current lack of special education teachers. OSPI data show that special education vacancies exist at a rate four times higher than general elementary school educators, and 1 in 5 have three or fewer years of experience in the classroom. Nearly a thousand positions are currently filled with educators that do not hold a special education endorsement. This combination of longstanding teacher shortages and high turnover of appropriately endorsed teachers leaves the students with the most complex education needs without the properly trained educators to meet those needs. This gap is particularly visible in small and rural school districts across the state.

There are significant gaps in pathways for career changers, people who have already obtained a bachelor's degree, and those who are already working in schools to seek a credential to become a special education teacher. Educator Preparation Programs play a critical role in preparing qualified special education teachers. However, a traditional preparation route does not fit the needs of all Washington teacher educator candidates, including career changers, people who already have a bachelor's degree, and those who are currently working in schools and are in search of a teaching credential. Additional investments are needed to recruit and prepare candidates who are entering Washington classrooms for the first time as student teachers, and to ensure long-term retention of those educators as they become experienced Special Education teachers.

In the meantime, many districts rely on educators who are teaching outside their endorsement area – for example, a high school English teacher teaching math because the district cannot find a teacher with a high school math endorsement – and emergency substitute teachers to fill short and long-term gaps in their educator workforces. The practice of using emergency substitutes has spiked in recent years due to COVID-19 but existed long before the pandemic. [Washington's approximately 15,000 substitutes](#), who by and large are more diverse and reflective of the students and communities they serve, lack the types of professional development available to certified educators and paraeducators. While many of these individuals find the flexible and non-permanent nature of substitute teaching to meet their professional needs, others express an interest in finding a pathway to certification. Currently, Washington does not invest in this population of educators either by investing in their professional development as substitutes, or by proactively recruiting and training those interested into the teaching profession.

What is your proposed solution?

OSPI proposes key investments in recruiting and preparing special education teachers into districts that need those teachers, and additional investments that support these recruitments while helping to tackle larger educator workforce problems. This proposal includes three key parts, which are described in detail below.

The key parts are:

1. Recruit and Prepare Special Education Teachers
2. Develop the Emergency Substitute Teacher Pipeline

3. Provide for Data-Driven Workforce Investments

Recruit and Prepare Special Education Teachers

Funding educator preparation models such as teacher residency programs is an efficient and effective method for supporting the Legislature's commitment to funding special education by also funding the recruitment and retention of qualified and prepared special education teachers. OSPI proposes funding three cohorts of special education teacher residents who will complete a year-long program that combines professional training and coursework with in-the-classroom co-teaching experience alongside a mentor teacher.

Each cohort consists of:

- **A minimum of 15 residents** enrolled in an approved Educator Preparation Program (EPP) and seeking an endorsement that matches the need of the district that will train and then hire them.
- A dedicated **preservice mentor** matched to each resident to co-teach with and guide the resident.
- One **Field Specialist**, such as a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) or a retired teacher to provide feedback and instructional support to preservice mentors and residents.
- One **Coach** to build partnerships between the district, the EPP, and the community. Coaches leverage relationship-building to make progress on diversifying the district's educator workforce and to attract potential educators from the community. They support the residents in navigating the teacher residency program, as well as school district processes and structures.

This targeted and scalable cohort model works with districts to fill vacant positions by matching residency candidates with real-time job openings. Three cohorts of residents means that each year, Washington will have 45 additional endorsed special education teachers to add to the workforce.

Critical to the success and sustainability of this model is dedicated state funding streams not only to program administrators, but also to the districts who will pay the residents they take on as employees. Affordability and a debt-free experience is a key factor that prevents many keeping candidates, particularly candidates who have fewer means, from becoming teachers. It has been a goal of the Legislature for years to have our K–12 educators look like and come from similar backgrounds as the students and families they serve, and programs like teacher residencies bridge a gap that currently exists in the K–12 hiring landscape.

High-quality teaching candidates start their journeys at any age, from a high school student who is planning their post-secondary pathway, to adults many years into their professional lives who discover or have long held but not realized a desire to serve and educate K–12 students. Whether it be the traditional expenses of post-secondary training or the necessity to relocate an entire family to a new city to match a candidate with a vacant position, few candidates can afford to commit to this path for anything less than a living wage.

OSPI proposes that resident salaries and benefits be paid through state apportionment to the school districts hosting the residents in order to establish an employer-to-employee relationship between the district and the candidate. OSPI recognizes that there are several different models of residency programs. This model of establishing an employee-employer relationship and funding candidates via apportionment is especially effective for career changers, those with bachelor's degrees, and nontraditional students who are already in the workforce. However, other residency programs, such as those centered in institutions of higher education, may have alternative funding mechanisms to fund candidates, such as institutional aid. The apportionment model has consistent, long-term, and statewide reach and passes money directly from the state to the districts paying residents' salaries. Financial supports, including a living wage which is guaranteed by the state, removes financial barriers that currently make the teaching profession unattainable for many.

Finally, this proposal elevates key components of a high-quality teacher residency program while maintaining flexibility to coexist alongside a variety of EPPs and educator workforce pathways, and does not exclude the possibility of taking advantage of future funding streams such as federal apprenticeship dollars.

The combination of robust program and financial supports, a sustainable funding model that has the opportunity to reach into each and every district, and the ability to identify and match teaching candidates with teaching jobs will result in efficient and effective recruitment and retention of special education teachers across the state.

Develop the Emergency Substitute Teachers Pipeline

At the same time, the partnerships established through this residency model creates opportunities to tap into the existing workforce by connecting, supporting, and developing substitute teachers, providing the training and professional growth they miss by not going through a certification program, will enrich the thousands of classrooms in which they are currently supporting Washington's students. For those interested in pursuing certification, these supports can direct them toward the different pathways and opportunities available to them, and feed candidates with classroom experience into the EPP and teacher residency programs.

Through six strategic investments, Washington can support the over 15,000 substitute teachers working in schools. These investments include Relational Conversations, Online and In-Person Professional Development, SubCommunities, Career Coaching, and SubPosium – each of which is described in more detail below.

Relational Conversations

These one-on-one conversations with substitute teachers across Washington state are used to connect substitute teachers, regardless of where they live in the state, with learning opportunities. In these conversations, the state has the opportunity to learn about substitute teachers' experiences in schools, what's going well and what's challenging, and discuss their greatest professional development needs before identifying appropriate learning opportunities.

Online Professional Development

Many educators prefer the convenience and affordability of online professional learning, particularly those in remote parts of the state. Three-hour training modules, trained and facilitated by practicing substitute teachers, focus on high-demand topics like classroom management, culturally responsive instructional practices, student behavior support, social/emotional learning strategies and stepping into classrooms without substitute plans.

In-Person Professional Development

Through two-day in-person conferences, substitute teachers have the chance to take longer and more substantial courses that are best instructed in person. These courses have high levels of participant interaction, including role plays and simulations around challenging substitute teaching scenarios.

SubCommunities

These regional affinity groups of substitute teachers provide an ongoing learning community over seven meetings during the course of the academic year. SubCommunities builds camaraderie and support among substitute teachers and helps them develop and practice effective teaching strategies in a safe and supportive environment. Building a support network through this community helps substitutes work through challenging issues and helps retain them in the profession.

Career Coaching

There are many barriers to finding the right EPP. For substitute teachers interested in seeking full teacher certification, the Career Coaching program provides one-on-one support from certificated teachers to navigate each step of the process:

1. Determining teaching interests;
2. Researching programs (tuition costs, in-person/online/hybrid modalities, endorsements offered, and more);
3. Comparing program options;
4. Developing and submitting applications; and
5. Navigating financial aid options.

Career coaches also host regional events for substitutes interested in teacher certification to meet with and have informational interviews with representatives from EPPs.

SubPosium

One of the most important and credible individuals for substitute teachers is the school district substitute coordinator. Annual two-day SubPosium conferences pull together substitute coordinators and others who support substitutes (school office managers, association leaders, etc.) to network with each other, share best practices in substitute recruitment and retention, and to learn about the different professional development options described above. SubPosium participants are a key resource in connecting substitute teachers with the menu of support options.

Provide for Data-Driven Workforce Investments

A key benefit to state investment in programs such as teacher residencies is the potential to deploy state resources in a targeted and strategic manner. This proposal, for example, focuses on an area of highest need in Washington state based on current data available: special education teachers. However, with more robust and comprehensive data collection, Washington could better realize the full potential of these investments.

One factor exacerbating educator workforce challenges in Washington is the localized and reactionary way in which vacancies are identified and jobs are filled. Each district employs its own hiring strategies, tools, and mechanisms, essentially operating within a bubble. Candidates use the job-hunting strategies, tools, and mechanisms known to them, operating within bubbles of their own. Sometimes the right candidates and the right district job openings find each other, but often this is not the case, particularly in small and rural districts where the number of candidates in the immediate area is limited, and reaching beyond that immediate area is difficult.

Inability to find candidates leaves districts scrambling to fill vacancies with emergency substitutes year after year, and candidates squeezing themselves into jobs they find instead of jobs that best match their skills, credentials, and career ambitions leads to job dissatisfaction and increased turnover. This proposal intends to fund the creation of a centralized, sophisticated, data-driven tool that tracks real-time and upcoming vacancies across the state alongside the credentials and career preferences of both certificated educators seeking a position and those on track to become certificated educators, and then uses these data to match school district openings with candidates whose credentials and career ambitions align with those openings.

While such a tool will not solve every single educator workforce problem, it will give lawmakers a detailed picture of the workforce at the state and local levels. This tool will allow the state to both identify districts that consistently struggle to fill vacancies and predict future shortages by tracking not only existing vacancies, but anticipated vacancies due to factors such as educator retirement, relocation, and moves into administrative leadership. Lawmakers will then be able to proactively address these shortages by funding programs like teacher residencies that focus on developing the types of educators the workforce needs. To build this tool, OSPI will need to first conduct a feasibility study on the cost and timeline for its development. OSPI will then provide the Legislature with a full report on the costs and timeline associated with bringing the tool into existence.

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

Recruit and Prepare Special Education Teachers

There are three cost components critical to the success of this educator workforce recruitment strategy.

Wages and Benefits for Three Special Education Residency Cohorts

OSPI is requesting \$3,083,000 in ongoing funding to be paid directly through the apportionment model to districts employing residents and mentor teachers. These funds will

cover a \$40,000 annual salary with \$21,000 in benefits for each resident, and a stipend of \$7,500 for each mentor teacher.

Program Administration

OSPI is requesting \$2,373,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2025 for ongoing funding to contract with a residency provider to cover the administrative costs of preparing the three cohorts. These costs cover:

- \$75,000 to employ Field Supervisors
- \$100,000 to employ Coaches
- \$810,000 to bring cohorts together for a seven-week onboarding in the summer before their classroom co-teaching begins, and a seven-week offboarding in the summer following the conclusion of their year of co-teaching
- \$108,000 for books, online subscriptions, and other supplies for the cohorts to engage in and complete coursework
- \$405,000 for curriculum development
- \$875,000 for a team of administrative staff

Agency Administrative Support

OSPI is requesting \$81,000 in FY 2025 and \$76,000 annually thereafter for 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) dedicated staff to support school districts and partner with other state agencies including the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I), to implement state-funded teacher residencies. OSPI is requesting an additional \$29,000 in FY 2025 and \$26,000 in ongoing funding to support 0.25 FTE in administrative support. OSPI will also need \$400,000 in FY 2025 to make updates to the statewide apportionment system to allow the state to pay residents directly via their school district employers, with \$150,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing to maintain these capabilities within the system.

Develop the Emergency Substitute Teacher Pipeline

OSPI is requesting \$621,000 in ongoing funding to contract with an organization providing a suite of supports and professional development opportunities for emergency substitute teachers across Washington.

These costs include:

- \$103,000 for online and in-person professional development opportunities;
- \$212,000 for 10 regional groups of emergency substitute teachers to build affinity, learn together, and share best practices at seven in-person meetings per region;
- \$151,000 for one-on-one coaching support for emergency substitute teachers across the state; and
- \$155,000 to host an annual SubPosium to bring together substitute coordinators from across Washington to connect with one another, share experience and best practice, and to learn about the professional development opportunities available to substitutes in their district through the activities described above.

Provide for Data-Driven Workforce Investments

Finally, OSPI is requesting \$720,000 in one-time funding in FY 2025 to conduct a feasibility study into the costs and timeline for developing a database and tool that will allow state lawmakers and budget writers to identify real-time and future educator workforce shortages and target those shortages with targeted investments in teacher residency programs. This cost includes contracts for project management and quality assurance recommended by the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

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

OSPI submitted a budget proposal for the 2023–25 biennial budget that laid out the costs of a largescale, statewide teacher residency program. The cost of a program that addresses all of the education workforce needs proved prohibitive at this time, and so OSPI is following the Legislature’s lead in focusing this proposal on the area of most concern: Special Education endorsed educators.

By using a cohort-based model, this proposal is scalable to the funding available for investment in teacher residencies. Concerning the cost model, the decision to pay districts for all expenses, including resident salaries directly through apportionment, has been chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, the apportionment model is established and connected to every district in the state, and with some one-time changes to incorporate this new element, can serve districts and candidates reliably and consistently. Secondly, Washington’s many high-quality EPP programs are located in communities across the state, but do not have equitable reach into every community. To support districts and candidates in high areas of need, particularly small and rural districts, it is essential that districts and the K–12 system allocate the funding to encourage EPP expansion into new communities. And lastly, because apprenticeship programs tend to partner directly with employers, in this case school districts, funding districts directly may better allow Washington to tap into this emerging funding source and other potential funding streams when and where available.

Performance Measures

Performance outcomes:

Funding this proposal will result in 45 newly prepared special education teachers in Washington each year with established relationships with and experience teaching in the districts in which they are hired to teach. Washington’s 15,000 substitute teachers will have access to much-needed professional development and be better able to teach in the many classrooms across the state where they are so badly needed, and those who wish to pursue a teaching certificate will find guidance to do so. The state will also receive a report outlining the costs and timeline for development of a data tool that will allow lawmakers and budget writers to better predict future educator workforce shortages and direct targeted funding through educator workforce recruitment strategies like teacher residencies, apprentices, and other pathways that exist to prepare educators in Washington.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion or alteration of a current program or service:

This proposal expands on current state and federal investments in educator workforce solutions, including the recent partnership using OSPI's federally funded Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds between OSPI and the Washington Education Association's (WEA) teacher residency program, federally funded apprenticeship opportunities through L&I, and the state funding for PESB and institutions of higher education to develop additional teacher residency programs.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

Recruit and Prepare Special Education Teachers

There are three cost components critical to the success of this educator workforce recruitment strategy, described below.

Wages and Benefits for Three Special Education Residency Cohorts

OSPI assumed an annual salary of \$40,000 with benefits of \$21,000 for each resident, plus a stipend of \$7,500 for each mentor teacher. The total investment to support 45 educators would be \$3,083,000 per year.

Program Administration

OSPI projects the need for a contract with a residency provider to cover the administrative costs of preparing the three cohorts. The estimated cost for this agreement is \$2,373,000 in FY 2025, \$2,156,000 in FY 2026, and \$2,040,000 in FY 2027.

Agency Administrative Support

Staffing impacts are captured in the Workforce Assumptions section.

OSPI will also need \$400,000 in FY 2025 to make updates to the state apportionment system to allow the state to pay residents directly, with \$150,000 in FY 2026 and ongoing to maintain these capabilities within the system.

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Workforce assumptions:

This proposal includes 0.50 FTE Administrative Program Specialist 2 and 0.25 FTE Administrative Assistant 3 to support school districts and partner with other agencies to implement state-funded teacher residencies. The cost of the 0.5 FTE Administrative Program Specialist 2 is \$81,000 in FY 2025 and \$76,000 annually thereafter. The cost of the 0.25 FTE Administrative Assistant 3 is \$29,000 in FY 2025 and \$26,000 annually thereafter.

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. OSPI regularly engages with a wide array of partners and stakeholders to continuously connect with students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making. The proposed educator workforce recruitment strategy holds equity at its core. By securing a statewide, consistent, and equitable funding stream, this model will target areas of highest need, particularly small and rural districts, and candidates of highest need, particularly educators of color, educators from areas of high poverty, and educators from small and rural communities. It specifically serves students receiving special education services by directing these recruitment efforts at those seeking special education endorsements and teaching positions.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic framework:

While this proposal supports the first three of Superintendent Reykdal's four Strategic Goals, it particularly serves to advance Goal #3, ensuring Washington's schools have a Diverse, Inclusive, and Highly Skilled Workforce. This workforce is an essential component of both a World-Class education and a prosperous economy, the first two of the Governor's Results Washington goals.

Other Collateral Connections

Intergovernmental:

This proposal will strengthen OSPI's ability to support the Legislature, as well as partnerships with other agencies, regional educational service districts, and local school districts.

Stakeholder response:

This proposal has strong support from the Washington Education Association (WEA) and is supported by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB).

Legal or administrative mandates:

RCW 28A.300.040 provides that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall have supervision over all matters pertaining to the public schools of the state, and to report to the Governor and Legislature such information and data as may be required for the management and improvement of the schools.

RCW 28A.410.210 provides that the purpose of the Washington Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is to establish policies and requirements for the preparation and certification of

educators that provide standards for competency in professional knowledge and practice in the areas of certification; a foundation of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to help students with diverse needs, abilities, cultural experiences, and learning styles meet or exceed the learning goals outlined in RCW 28A.150.210.

Changes from current law:

None.

State workforce impacts:

This proposal includes 0.50 FTE Administrative Program Specialist 2 and 0.25 FTE Administrative Assistant 3 to support school districts and partner with other agencies to implement state-funded teacher residencies.

State facilities impacts:

None.

Puget Sound recovery:

N/A

Other Documents

Information Technology (IT) Addendum:

Yes.