State Policy Review: New Educator Induction

Washington

1. Educators Served

State policy should require that all beginning teachers, principals, and administrators receive induction support during their first two years in the profession.

The state operates a competitively funded beginning teacher assistance program—Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST)—in which school districts are not required to participate. Operated by the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the BEST Program provides support to educators in the beginning of their careers through information sharing, professional development, resources, and grants [as appropriated by legislative funding] for comprehensive induction programs. The goals of the BEST program are to: reduce educator turnover; improve educator quality for student learning; and ensure equity of learning opportunity for all students.

The state does not require new school administrators to participate in an induction program.

2. Mentor Quality

State policy should require a rigorous mentor selection process and foundational training and ongoing professional development for mentors. State policy should also establish criteria for how and when mentors are assigned to beginning educators and allow for a manageable caseload of beginning educators and the use of full-time teacher mentors.

Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction define mentoring as the “working relationship between novice teachers and experienced teachers,” with the primary focus of strengthening the new teacher’s impact on student learning. The Standards suggest that mentor selection be conducted according to established criteria which include knowledge, skills and dispositions for promoting the instructional growth of new teachers. They outline criteria for selecting mentors, including professional qualities and characteristics, effective interpersonal communication, and effective teaching practice.

Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction requires that “mentors must receive differentiated, job-embedded, ongoing professional development tailored to the unique contexts of their assignments.” That training must focus on six essential knowledge and skills: (1) building relationships that foster learning; (2) facilitating new teachers’ integration into school communities; (3) reflective practice; (4) understanding adult learning; (5) deepening content and pedagogical skills and knowledge; and (6) responding to school and community cultures and contexts. Initial skill training is provided through the state’s Mentor Academy, a 3-day training focused on developing the skills of experienced teachers to serve in a mentoring and/or coaching role. Mentor Roundtables—monthly opportunities for mentors and coaches to build their knowledge, practice their skills, network with colleagues, and reflect on their work supporting teacher growth—are offered around the state. In 2015-2016, the state added an on-line Rural-Remote Roundtable course as well.

BEST program grant recipients are required to have well-trained, carefully selected, well-matched mentors who provide an average of 1-to-1.5 hours of support each week for first-year teachers. The caseload for full-time release mentors of first-year teachers should not exceed 1:20.

3. Time

State policy should encourage programs to provide release time for teacher mentors and dedicated mentor-new teacher contact time. Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction stipulate that district and building leaders should provide mentors with time to “connect, problem solve and collaborate with others who also support the learning of beginning teachers.” The Standards note, “Where capacities allow, many districts choose to release mentors full-time from classroom assignments in order to have them focus on supporting beginning teachers.”

The Standards suggest that beginning teachers be provided time to meet with their mentors and spend time working with them and that mentors be given time for formal professional learning. In addition, programs should “provide time and classroom coverage for mentors and new teachers to co-observe exemplary teachers.” They suggest that new teachers as well as staff members who plan and/or deliver orientation be compensated for their time.

BEST program grant recipients are required to provide release time for observations: by mentors of mentees to provide formative feedback; and for mentors and mentees to observe accomplished peers.
4. **Program Quality**

State policy should address the overall quality of induction programs by requiring regular observation of new teachers by mentors, the provision of instructional feedback based on those observations, and opportunities for new teachers to observe experienced teachers’ classrooms. It should encourage a reduced teaching load for beginning teachers; and encourage the participation of beginning educators in a learning community or peer network.

BEST program grant recipients are required to implement the following program components: (1) An orientation; (2) Job description and compensation for mentors; (3) A well-trained, carefully selected, well-matched mentor; (4) Professional development for beginning teachers; (5) Release time for observations; (6) Professional development for mentors; and (7) Special attention to the needs of early-career teachers in under-performing schools. In grantee districts, mentors are expected to observe their mentees a minimum of four times per year, to gather data, and provide feedback. Specific tools and training are provided at the state-sponsored Mentor Academy and reinforced through Mentor Roundtables.

5. **Program Standards**

The state should adopt formal program standards that govern the design and operation of local educator induction programs.

Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction provide an overview of induction programs as well as elements of quality practices regarding hiring, orientation, mentoring, professional learning, formative assessment of teacher growth; and induction program impact.

6. **Funding**

The state should authorize and appropriate dedicated funding for local educator induction programs; and/or establish competitive innovation funding to support high-quality, standards-based programs.

BEST grants were first made available by OSPI in 2009. During the 2015-16 school year, grantee districts received $2,500 per first-year teacher, and continuing grantees received $500 per second-year teacher. Grants were awarded to 38 school districts and four consortia consisting of an additional 30 districts. In addition, the state offered a pilot program to provide support for beginning Educational Staff Associates (counselors, nurses, OT/PT, SLP, psychologists) to 7 districts, providing $1000 per new ESA.

The BEST Program uses a competitive funding process that takes the following into account: (1) Evidence of Need – Recent history around new hires and placement challenges; (2) Evidence of Capacity – A commitment to use funds to build local expertise, examine and alter induction policies and practices, and invest in a long-term strategy for supporting beginning teachers; (3) Leadership – Identification of a district team that will collaborate to create a system of coordinated support for novice teachers; (4) Differentiated Support – Special attention given to the way that novice teachers are placed and supported when they are assigned to high-need students and high-need schools; (5) Alignment with Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction; and (6) A letter of support from the superintendent.

7. **Educator Certification/Licensure**

The state should require beginning educators to complete an induction program to move from an initial teaching license.

The state does not require beginning teachers to complete an induction program in order to advance to a professional teaching license.

8. **Program Accountability**

The state should assess and monitor induction programs through strategies such as program evaluation, program surveys, and peer review.

OSPI requires successful BEST grant applicants to:
• Fully participate in an external program evaluation;
• Conduct 2-3 mid-year surveys of participating teachers;
• Identify areas for program assessment and gather appropriate data; and
• Track and provide retention data and summary of evaluation ratings of program participants.

9. **Teaching Conditions**

The state should adopt formal standards for teaching and learning conditions; conduct regular assessments of such conditions; and incorporate the improvement of such conditions in school improvement plans.

State policy does not address teaching and learning conditions.

**Links**

- Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST): [http://www.k12.wa.us/BEST/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/BEST/default.aspx)
- Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction: [http://www.k12.wa.us/BEST/InductionStandards/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/BEST/InductionStandards/default.aspx)

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has reviewed this state summary.

This information is accurate as of February 2016.