

Recruiting Washington Teachers Redesign Work Group
Recommendations 5-26-2016

About RWT

The Recruiting Washington Teachers (RWT) program is designed to grow our own diverse group of future educators who closely reflect today's student population. With support from the state legislature since 2007 (RCW 28A.415.370), RWT partnerships recruit diverse cohorts of high school students who are underrepresented in the teaching profession, and support them in exploring and preparing for careers as educators in shortage areas.

RWT program strategies vary considerably, reflecting the context and needs of their local communities, but all focus on achievement in academics and leadership; emphasize equity and culturally responsive pedagogy; and affirm culture, language, and identity as assets for learning and empowerment in school and in life. Based on intentional partnerships and targeted recruitment, RWT programs provide students with the following:

- An intensive academic year program (and in some cases summer academy), using a revised Careers in Education curriculum that embeds cultural competence, academic support, high expectations, and leadership opportunities
- A supportive cohort experience
- Hands-on classroom field experiences
- Ongoing advising, mentorship, and support
- Exposure to higher education options, including campus visits, workshops, and conferences
- An articulation agreement with a higher education partner formalizing the transfer of course credit

Redesign and Scale Up

Over the years, RWT programs have achieved great success. However, the impact of the program has been limited by its small scale and by areas in which the program and broader system of educator pathways could be improved. Given the need for strengthening our grow-our-own programs as a key strategy for addressing the teacher shortage crisis, and piggybacking on the momentum of the new RWT-based curriculum for Careers in Education courses statewide, the PESB determined the time was right for a redesign work group to help build on the success of the RWT program and bring it to scale. With a successful redesign and scale up, RWT will make a significant impact on the number and diversity of individuals entering the education profession, alleviating the teacher shortage crisis while improving workforce diversity to better reflect the P-12 student population.

About the Work Group

The PESB convened over 30 individuals representing a wide range of stakeholder groups, including school districts, institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, education associations, program staff and alumni, and others. Over the course of 6 meetings between January and May of 2016, the work group was charged with combining their stakeholder input with lessons learned from the program history and other research to:

- Redesign the RWT program, building on strengths and strengthening weakness, to increase its impact
- Identify scalable components and best practices to expand the impact of RWT beyond the grant-funded sites to statewide
- Make programmatic, policy, and funding recommendations

Recommendations

Professional Development: Create a PD initiative to support existing academies and the creation of new ones, ensuring fidelity of implementation to the core components of the RWT model, including the new curriculum with emphasis on cultural competence and equity pedagogy. Modeled on BEST, and with oversight at the regional level, this initiative would support teams of districts, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and community based organizations (CBOs), combining required professional development for both the team and the academy teacher with flexible local grant funding.

Conditional Scholarship: Establish a conditional scholarship program to help Teacher Academy graduates overcome the financial barriers to completing educator preparation. The details of this scholarship are yet to be determined, but the work group suggested covering the “last dollar” cost (after other sources of aid) of in-state tuition at 2- and 4-year institutions for the entire post-secondary career (up to 6 years of funding depending on pathway) with a teaching service obligation of 5 years for complete loan forgiveness (otherwise prorated) for Teacher Academy graduates enrolling in PESB-approved teacher preparation programs.

Regional Connector Staff: Create a position for connector staff, reflective and understanding of the community, who serve as caseworkers providing personal outreach to students, connecting them with resources, and assisting them with navigating transition points throughout their pathway to a teaching career. This position would be staffed at the regional level, with one connector for each ESD, serving as a liaison between the districts and IHEs within their region, and between their region and other regions in the state.

Create a Teacher Academy Movement by:

- Integrating Teacher Academies into the statewide teacher recruitment campaign
- Sharing data and information about “grow your own” teachers and the pipeline with all stakeholder groups
- Producing and disseminating a “grow your own” programs infographic and starter kit for districts, IHEs, CBOs, and other stakeholder groups
- Increasing the base of funding vehicles by building awareness and elevating Teacher Academies as a priority that is interconnected with other initiatives addressing the teacher shortage and improving workforce diversity

Online Portal: Support Teacher Academies with an online portal that helps connect sites to each other, helps students stay connected throughout their pathway, provides a medium for teachers to develop and share innovative lessons within the new curriculum, and tracks the progress of participants after they graduate high school.

Best fit teacher: Ensure the best fit teacher is identified with consideration for the demographics and needs of the student body. Increase the types of teachers that are aware of and have access to teach the course.

Multiple Pathways: Teacher Academies should discuss multiple career pathways in education, including not only the various pathways to a career in teaching, but also pathways to other careers in education.

Support for Paraeducator Pathway: Teacher Academies should support students who want to become paraeducators as part of their pathway to a teaching career by:

- Ensuring that the Teacher Academy curriculum is aligned with the competencies for the ParaPro exam and the Associate of Applied Sciences for Paraeducators
- Covering the ParaPro test fee for RWT students in districts that require it
- Ensuring that district job placement is conducive to the career goals of paraeducators who intend to become teachers

Cascaded Mentorship: Use a cascaded mentorship model where participants are mentored by a near-peer who is one step ahead of them on the pathway and also serve as a mentor to a near-peer who is one step behind.

Testing Support: Build awareness of testing requirements into the Teacher Academy curriculum and include SAT/ACT test prep support.

Articulation: Ensure that the Teacher Academy course will transfer to IHEs statewide by building upon the successful agreements that are in place, moving toward a statewide high school course articulation agreement between the Teacher Academy course and the community and technical college (CTC) EDUC 202: Introduction to Education course and/or similar courses.

Awarding Preference: Teacher Academy alumni who are current pre-service candidates should be granted an awarding preference for the Teacher Shortage Conditional Grant Program.

In-service Mentoring: State funding for districts to provide mentor support for the first 2 years to Teacher Academy alumni who they hire.

Emphasize the following core components:

- **Partnerships:** Create strong partnerships between high schools, institutions of higher education, and community based organizations, with mutually reinforcing benefits for RWT teachers, educator preparation faculty, pre-service teachers, and RWT students, including opportunities for professional development, cross teaching, visits, and mentoring.
- **Recruitment:** Intentionality in targeting underrepresented student populations.
- **Curriculum:** Implement the Teacher Academy curriculum statewide.
- **Summer Academy:** Emphasize the importance of offering a Summer Academy on a college campus.