

## Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification in Washington State

### REPORT SUMMARY

#### Study Direction

In creating the state grants for alternative routes to teacher certification, the 2001 Washington Legislature also directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to:

*submit to the education and fiscal committees of the legislature, the governor, the state board of education, and the Washington professional educator standards board, an interim evaluation of partnership grant programs funded under this chapter by December 1, 2002, and a final evaluation by December 1, 2004.<sup>1</sup>*

The Institute received funding from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to incorporate the four federally funded projects in this evaluation.

#### **The key research questions addressed in this interim report are:**

- What are alternative routes to teacher certification?
- What is the status of Washington's alternative route partnerships?
- Who are Washington's alternative route interns?
- What are the next steps for the Institute's evaluation?

#### Background

Washington's alternative route programs were created by the 2001 Legislature based on the recommendations of the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB).<sup>2</sup> The Legislature articulated four primary objectives for alternative routes to teacher certification:

1. Provide high-quality preparation;
2. Offer flexibility and expedience to prospective teachers;
3. Target shortage subject areas and geographic locations; and
4. Meet state standards for teacher preparation.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E2SSB 5695, Section 8; Chapter 158, Laws of 2001.

<sup>2</sup> E2SSB 5695; Chapter 158, Laws of 2001.

<sup>3</sup> E2SSB 5695, Section 1; Chapter 158, Laws of 2001 – Legislative Intent.

For the 2001–03 biennium, the Legislature appropriated \$2 million to support mentored internships and forgivable loans to assist current school staff with tuition costs. Additionally, in December 2001, OSPI received a \$1.2 million federal grant to help mid-career professionals become part of the teaching force.

## Washington State’s Partnership Grant Program

In 2001, the Legislature adopted the PESB’s recommendations and created state partnership grant programs for school districts and state-approved teacher preparation programs to offer three alternative routes to certification, each targeting a different type of prospective teacher.<sup>4</sup>

*Exhibit 1*  
**Washington’s Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification**

Route	Target Interns	Intern Qualifications	Other Criteria*
I	Classified instructional staff currently employed by a district	Transferable associate degree  3 years’ employment with a district	Seeking endorsement in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special education</li> <li>• Bilingual education</li> <li>• ESL</li> </ul>
II	Classified staff currently employed by a district	Bachelor’s degree  3 years’ employment with a district	Endorsement in subject matter geographic shortage area
III	Individuals not employed by a district or who hold emergency substitute certificates	Bachelor’s degree  5 years’ professional experience  Demonstrated successful experience with students or children	Endorsement in subject matter or geographic shortage area  Non-shortage areas allowed for secondary school endorsements

As outlined in the legislation authorizing alternative routes to teacher certification, partnership programs are to have the following characteristics:

- **Mentored Internship.** Interns must receive intensive classroom mentoring for at least half of a school year.
- **Trained Mentor.** Programs must assure that mentor teachers are trained either through the OSPI mentor training academy or an equivalent local training.
- **Performance-based.** Programs rely on a teacher development plan that compares each intern’s prior experience and education with the state standards for residency certification and adjusts program requirements accordingly.

<sup>4</sup> E2SSB 5695; Chapter 158, Laws of 2001.

- **Training and Coursework.** Training and coursework for Route I interns should enable them to complete both a bachelor's degree and residency certification in two years or less. Interns for Routes II and III should complete an intensive summer teaching academy complemented by flexibly scheduled training throughout the year.

The \$2 million appropriated by the Legislature for the 2001–03 biennium is used to support:

- **Intern and Mentor Stipends.** During the mentored internship, interns receive a stipend equivalent to 80 percent of a first year teacher's salary: \$22,654 for the 2002–03 school year. The remaining 20 percent provides a \$5,664 stipend for mentor teachers.
- **Conditional Scholarship.** Current classified staff (Routes I and II) receive tuition assistance through conditional scholarships. Interns may receive loan forgiveness of up to \$4,000 a year for every two years they teach in a K–12 public school.
- **Planning and Administration.** No funds were allocated for planning or administrative support.

## **Federal Transitions to Teaching Grant Program**

With the \$1.2 million awarded to support Transitions to Teaching programs in Washington State, OSPI and the PESB created a second grant opportunity modeled closely after the state's partnership grant program. The two programs differ only in the following respects:

- The federal grant is targeted only to interns eligible for Route III.
- Transitions to Teaching interns receive a stipend of \$5,000 during their internship year and an additional \$3,000 during their first year teaching after certification. Mentor teachers receive a stipend of \$500 during the internship year, and individuals who mentor the interns as first-year teachers also receive a \$500 stipend.

## **What Is the Status of Washington's Alternative Route Partnerships?**

OSPI and the PESB awarded seven grants (three state and four federal) to support alternative route programs for the 2002–03 school year (see Exhibit 2). These partnerships had a very short time to design and implement programs, generally three to six months. A total of 166 individuals are currently enrolled as alternative route interns.

**Exhibit 2**

**Program Summary: Number of Interns by Route and Recruitment Focus**

	<b>Partnership Name</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Number of Interns<sup>5</sup></b>
<b>STATE GRANT</b>	<b>Southwest Washington Consortium</b>	<i>City University ESD 112 8 local area school districts</i>	Route I: 13 Route II: 8 Route III: 4
	<b>Puget Sound Partnership</b>	<i>Seattle Pacific University Puget Sound ESD 8 local area school districts</i>	Route II: 6 Route III: 11
	<b>South Sound Partnership</b>	<i>Pacific Lutheran University Green River Community College 13 local area school districts</i>	Route I: 11 Route II: 8 Route III: 10 Route III: 30 (Federal)
<b>FEDERAL GRANT</b>	<b>Seattle Transitions to Teaching</b>	<i>University of Washington Seattle School District</i>	Route III: 20
	<b>Skagit Valley Network</b>	<i>Western Washington University 4 local area school districts</i>	Route III: 16
	<b>South Sound Transitions Consortium</b>	<i>St. Martin's College Pierce Community College 2 local area school districts</i>	Route III: 29

Alternative route programs have the following characteristics:

- All programs focused recruitment on shortage subject areas, including special education, English as a Second Language, mathematics, and science. Some programs also accepted interns based on willingness to teach in a shortage location.
- In general, alternative route programs tend to be more performance-based, and learning opportunities were adapted to accommodate a year-long, intensive internship.
- Route I interns earn 90 or more quarter (equivalent) credits, while Route II and III interns earn from 27 to 68 quarter credits, depending on the program.
- The total cost of tuition for Route I interns ranges from \$7,200 to \$35,000. The cost of tuition for Route II and III interns ranges from \$8,000 to \$16,000. Tuition at the four private institutions costs the same as or less than a comparable regular program at the same institution, while tuition at the two public institutions ranges from \$1,000 to \$10,000 more than a comparable regular program.

<sup>5</sup> Including self and/or district-pay interns.

## Who Are Washington's Alternative Route Interns?

- The median age of all interns responding to the Institute's summer questionnaire<sup>6</sup> is 41. The widest range of ages is found among Route III interns, and more than two-thirds of Route I interns are between 40 and 50 years old.
- Thirteen percent of interns reported an ethnicity other than Caucasian, compared to 11 percent of all individuals earning beginning teacher certificates in Washington in 1999–2000.<sup>7</sup>
- Overall, slightly fewer than one-third (31 percent) are male, consistent with the proportion of males employed as classroom teachers in Washington State during the 2001–02 school year (29 percent).<sup>8</sup> However, among Route III interns, 40 percent are male and among Route I interns none are male.
- One-third of Route II and III interns report having a bachelor's degree in science or engineering, with another 26 percent in arts and humanities, and the rest split between social sciences and education (12 percent), business (8 percent), math (7 percent), and other degrees in non-shortage subject areas.
- Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of Route I and II interns report working as classroom instructional assistants prior to starting an alternative route program; 30 percent report working as assistants for early childhood education or Title I remedial programs. Nearly half of Route III interns report working in an education field prior to applying, and the rest in business (23 percent), science or engineering (17 percent), or social services (6 percent).

## What Are the Next Steps for the Institute's Evaluation?

The Institute's final report, due in December 2004, will focus on the remaining three research questions:

- 1) How do alternative route programs meet legislative objectives?
- 2) How do alternative route programs and interns compare with regular programs and students?
- 3) Are alternative route programs, as currently designed and implemented, a feasible way for Washington to prepare teachers.

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<sup>6</sup> The information in this section is based on 140 surveys, with a return rate of 84 percent from 166 interns. Surveys were returned by 19 Route I interns (79 percent), 21 Route II interns (95 percent), and 100 Route III interns (83 percent).

<sup>7</sup> OSPI, *Annual Report 2000-2001: Certificates Issued and Certificated Personnel Placement Statistics* (Olympia, WA: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, February 2002).

<sup>8</sup> OSPI, "Data Administration for School Year 2001-02: Personnel by Major Position and Sex" (Olympia, WA: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, data table), <<http://www.k12.wa.us/dataadmin/R1808H01.pdf>>, November 20, 2002.