

18.44 Supporting a Diverse and Effective Education Workforce

Resolution passed 2023

Whereas, the Washington state legislature has recognized that “excellent, effective educators* are essential to the state’s ongoing efforts to establish a world-class, globally competitive education system” and effective educators are the most influential in-school factor contributing to student success; and

Whereas, research shows that establishing a diverse workforce is one way to close the opportunity gap, and that all students benefit when diversity is increased. However, there continues to be an extreme shortage of educators who reflect the diverse demographics of K-12 students in Washington, and closing this gap is a critical step in making public education more equitable; and

Whereas, in Washington, educator shortage areas persist in classrooms serving some of the state’s most vulnerable students, such as those receiving special education services and multi-language learners. Shortage areas also exist in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and substitute teachers, school counselors, speech and language pathologists and school psychologists, and especially in rural areas and high-poverty schools; and

Whereas, educator shortages have effects across the entire education system and harm students farthest from educational justice; and

Whereas, paraeducators provide the majority of instruction in programs designed by the legislature to reduce the opportunity gap. By setting common statewide standards, requiring training in the standards, and offering career development for paraeducators, as well as training for teachers and principals who work with paraeducators, students in these programs have a better chance of succeeding; and

Whereas, educator shortages have multiple causes, but there are promising practices that have been identified to address them, including increasing access to preparation programs, reducing the financial barriers to enter and stay in preparation programs, programs that increase retention of beginning educators, policies that facilitate the portability of certifications between states, increasing public support for the profession, improving school climate, and market-rate compensation that is reflective of regional economic conditions.

**“Educator” means a paraeducator, teacher, principal, administrator, superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, school nurse, school physical therapist, school occupational therapist, or school speech-language pathologist or audiologist.*

Therefore, be it

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall support efforts that reduce barriers to creating and maintaining a more diverse, culturally responsive, demographically reflective, and effective educator workforce, including expansion of and funding for:

- recruitment programs, including grow-your-own district programs and alternative routes to certification, especially those that focus on shortage areas
- conditional scholarships and paid residencies

- equitable access and reduced barriers to entry into preparation programs
- interstate and international portability of certifications
- inclusive district policies and hiring practices
- preservice and ongoing in-service training in addressing the unique needs of every student in the school system, universal design for learning, effective family and community engagement, development of positive school climate, and social emotional learning
- mandated and fully funded paraeducator training, including the fundamental course of study and additional professional development to attain the general paraeducator certificate and including mandatory training in specific learning disabilities and neurodiversity prior to working with students identified with those disabilities or neurodivergence; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall support programs and policies that positively impact educator retention, including:

- expansion of programs designed to mentor and retain early career educators, paraeducators, and administrators, including the Beginning Educator Support Team grants and programs specifically to support educators of color
- positive school climate
- appropriate workload by implementation of the recommendations of the School Day Task Force
- adequate staffing levels by implementation of the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup recommendations; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall support market-rate compensation that is reflective of regional economic conditions, and sufficient to attract and retain a multi-cultural, multi-lingual educator workforce; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils shall advocate for policies and programs that support all educators, including:

- access to diverse and inclusive curricula and professional learning opportunities
- staff mental health supports
- activities that strengthen respect and support for educators as trained and dedicated professionals.