

## **Why Starting Teacher Salaries and Loan Debt are Major Contributors to the Teacher Shortage Crisis and How We Addressed These Factors in Enacting SB 6455 Utilizing a Comprehensive Approach from House Bills in 2016:**

**We have a severe teacher shortage in Washington – which is preventing us from being able to lower class sizes or to provide basic education for Special Education, bilingual students and many science and other areas:**

- Enrollments in teacher prep programs are down 30% in Washington and similarly nationwide;
- Enrollment in CA is down 50% over past 5 years (numerous news and data sources) (CA would be #1 source of in-migration for WA, although anecdotally I can tell you that I have repeatedly met teachers considering moving from CA to WA who say they can't afford the much lower peak salaries in WA, particularly given housing costs in Seattle area).
  - This is why an investment in increasing enrollments at our teacher prep schools for very specific targeted shortage areas is vital as part of the response. The investment in increasing enrollments was considered to be purely appropriation, so it was removed by the House Appropriations Committee from 2573 and the Senate Bill 6455 (which we put 2573 language in). For instance, WWU offered specific proposals for Special Education, bilingual, and other specific enrollment increases, requiring \$1.1 million. If we make the investments in increased enrollment capacities at our teacher prep programs (proposed to be trimmed to \$3 million) we know we will produce 2,000 of our needed 7,000 teachers in shortage areas within a four year span.
- The US Dept of Ed latest [annual historic trend report](#) on teacher shortage areas (tsa) declared by state, WA is on pages 152-3, shows dramatic increase in the number of tsa in WA. Note that USDOE has strict definition of tsa, and that PESB and OSPI find more areas of declared shortage.
- Remember, tuition increases in WA were the highest in USA from 2008 to last year, and even with the tuition reduction for 2016, we rank in top 5 states of tuition increase.
- Average student loan debt for WA public colleges is now over \$7,000 per year, and teacher candidates graduate with higher debt (e.g., due to bar on working while student teaching). Thus, on average, a new teacher will graduate with approximately \$35,000 debt. At new rates for federal subsidized loans, that means the teacher will owe \$4,660 per year, more than 12% of a starting \$38,000 teacher's pay (assuming they work in a district which is adding to starting salary above the state's contribution).
  - If the student seeks federal income based repayment, the payments go up to 15% of income topping out at \$389/month, for over \$60,000 stretched out for 209 months – the federal program is NOT attractive for students going into teaching.

- Federal conditional loan program for teachers is very unattractive (and not available at all schools) because if you leave teaching in 4 years, your debt converts to an unsubsidized loan rate! And, the new teacher has to teach in the toughest schools with lowest pay districts as well as be in a shortage area.
- Thus, our proposed conditional loan program from my HB 2881, adopted by the House in HB 2573, and then enacted in SB 6455, solves some of the teacher shortage which is due to the combination of tuition, student loan debt and low starting teacher pay by offering a new conditional loan or grant program if the student gets certificated to teach in a shortage area. The conditional grant reverts to a loan at the same rate as a subsidized federal loan based on a schedule if the new teacher leaves teaching before five years (leave after one year, owe 85% of the amount; reducing by 15% per year until you have met obligation to teach five years).
  - Our new conditional loan program provides tuition for final 2 years of school after declaring to be an education major, IF the student is qualified for our State Need Grant (family income is below 70% of median household income). So, if a college student goes into teaching, this conditional grant program will help our State decrease the 30,000 qualified students who are denied State Need Grants annually.
  - SB 6455 as enacted also incorporated a small new grant program (subject to appropriation) which I proposed in HB 1983 to cover the cost of the endorsement and certification tests for State Need Grant qualified students who have been foregoing the tests to be certificated to teach in shortage areas due to test costs. Our teacher prep colleges and school districts reported that even the \$4-\$600 test costs were a barrier to otherwise qualified students from being endorsed / certificated to teach in shortage areas.
- 50% of our teachers leave in 5 years, which tracks the national average. Therefore, we designed the conditional loan to get over the five year hump; and, as urged by all teacher prep colleges, school administrators, PESB, WEA, Dean of Ed at UW and many other experts, the legislation includes an investment in mentoring for new teachers to help them stay in teaching for the difficult first years.
  - Mentoring Works to keep new teachers and to significantly improve their teaching and student outcomes – shown by a significant body of research.
  - We need the mentoring grant investment (part of SB 6455 as enacted / HB 2573; originally proposed in my HB 2881) in teachers staying for those first five years, and being helped to improve and be high quality teachers. This will improve outcomes for kids as well as making a big dent in the teacher shortage.
  - Here's how it works: districts get grants to pay for some of the time of their very best teachers to serve as mentors for the newest teachers, helping them with classroom management, curriculum challenges, reviewing assessments and responding to data... Districts may also hire excellent teachers or recent retirees to work exclusively as mentors with 10-15 new

teachers for their first two years, observing and meeting regularly with the new teachers.

- Alternative Routes to teaching: many of our paraeducators (e.g., instructional aides for special ed) know what it is like to be in the classroom and would like to move up. There are many other people who already have a bachelor's degree and would like to enter teaching. But, both groups find that the cost of spending 6 months to a year without a pay check while paying tuition is too high a barrier. Therefore, we developed new alternative route programs, including providing a new residency grant program (requiring funding in the budget) to provide a stipend for student residencies for lower income student teachers, based on the successful Seattle-UW-SEA STAR program.
  - Recent retirees can also be utilized to meet the substitute teacher shortage with highly skilled teachers, instead of unskilled fill-ins. This frees up teachers and principals. Therefore, we increased the amount of time recent retirees can spend as substitutes to allow them to be long-term subs or work much of the school year without losing their pensions.
- **We need to address starting salaries, loan debt and the need to assist new teachers to succeed (via mentoring) to reduce the 50% loss of new teachers and to have enough new teachers to solve the current teacher shortage crisis and reduce class sizes in coming years. A bipartisan group of legislators from the House and Senate Education Committees reached agreement on this comprehensive approach, adopted and sent to the governor in SB 6455.**  
**Now, we need to ensure that the funds are appropriated for each element, including expanding enrollment capacities at our teacher education colleges, our new conditional grant / loan program for low income students entering teacher shortage areas, and to provide mentors for new teachers.**