Leadership Internship Program

Budget Language

$477,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2026 and $477,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2027 are provided solely for the leadership internship program for superintendents, principals, and program administrators.

Proviso Purpose

The Washington State Educational Leadership Intern Program funds school districts for the partial release time of district employees participating in administrative (principals. Superintendent and program director) internship programs. The program is designed to provide interns with rigorous, authentic, and quality training experiences. This program, aligned with the goals of educator retention and school improvement, provides leadership training and essential skills to future administrators, with the outcome of greater student achievement.

Services Provided

The Washington School Principals' Education Foundation (through AWSP) under contract administers the grant awards for interns going through a superintendent, principal, or program administrator preparation program. Services include:

1. Develop Leadership Internship Program application materials and program materials (under the Superintendent's direction and agency letterhead).
2. Develop and keep current the Intern Program database, which includes information such as the participant's name, address, school, district, grade level, region, gender, program completion date, training participation, placement, etc.
3. Process Leadership Internship Program applications, prepare preliminary data for advisory committee, select and secure meeting sites, and organize and facilitate the candidate selection process.
4. Prepare and distribute acceptance and rejection notices to applicants.
5. Provide the Contract Manager with a breakdown of the applicants upon request. Breakdown shall include information such as the number of applications received, the number funded, etc.
6. Collaborate/partner with other organizations and advisory committees such as the Washington Council of Educational Administration Programs, Washington Association of School Administrators, and school districts to define required training/workshops/conference activities.
7. Organize, implement, and notify participants of the training activities.
8. Provide information to the Contract Manager regarding trainings, workshops, and conference activities upon request.
9. Develop and conduct workshops for program participants.
    a. Provide access to program participants for the "Aspiring School Leaders Network"
    b. Stage 1 topics will include: becoming a racially literate school leader, attending the first professional learning network for

leaders, creating and developing an action plan for your internship, and goal setting for a successful internship.

c. Stage 2 topics will include: matching activities with leadership and job responsibilities, applying an equity lens during your internship, FERPA and confidentiality, ASB/Booster Club/PTA's, maintaining a positive internship.
d. Stage 3 topics will include: elevating student voice, engaging students in systemic change, conducting equity audits for systemic change, and courageous conversations.
e. Stage 4 topics will include: job search preparation, "I got an interview! Now what?", leading conversations around race and equity, school-wide inclusive practices, defining my leadership impact.
f. Inclusive of all operational and logistical expenses including venues, food, A/V, communications, marketing printing, clock hours, office supplies, and instructional materials.
g. Expand the "Aspiring School Leaders Network" to include affinity groups and a virtual PLC where interns can engage about their problem of practice.

10. Organize and maintain all data related to principal interns, including demographic data, level in which internship shall be completed, and job placement data at the end of the internship year.
11. Communicate regularly with interns on professional issues, meetings, in-service, publications, and other training opportunities.
12. Recommend adjustments to The Washington State Educational Leadership Intern Program Grants when needed.

Criteria for Receiving Services/Grants

- Applicants must be enrolled in a Professional Educator Standards Board-approved preparation program.
- Each school district shall determine which applicants meet their internal criteria for participation in the principal internship program. The school district must provide the signature of the mentor principal as well as the superintendent or designee acknowledging that an internship has been approved as part of the application process.
- School districts and institutes of higher education approved principal programs and internships must comply with WAC 181-78A.

Beneficiaries in the 2025-26 School Year

Number of School Districts:	86
Number of Schools:	141
Number of Educators:	162

Are Federal or Other Funds Contingent on State Funding?

No.

State Funding History

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
2026	$477,000	$476,577
2025	$700,000	$700,000
2024	$477,000	$476,625
2023	$477,000	$393,330
2022	$477,000	$423,920

Number of Beneficiaries Per Fiscal Year (e.g. School Districts, Schools, Students, Educators, Other)

Fiscal Year	Number of Beneficiaries
2026	162
2025	167
2024	171
2023	177
2022	195

Programmatic Changes Since Inception (If Any)

2023-24 marked the first year that included affinity group work during the Aspiring School Leaders Network. This work has continued through 2025-26. The goal of these affinity groups is to give people with similar racial, or ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to discuss and navigate shared issues that are important to them and their journey towards racial equity and racial justice. The facilitation in these spaces aims to acknowledge shared experiences, provide support, encourage wellness, and advocate for change. For future school leaders, the collective work in leading and creating schools that are both inclusive and racially affirming is of paramount importance.

2024-25 was the first year monthly virtual learning sessions were added and continue to take place in 2025-26. Each session is focused on one topic and typically hosts a guest speaker. These sessions allow equal accessibility and provide additional support and networking opportunities to all interns across the state.

Program(s) Evaluation or Major Findings

Participant evaluations are completed annually and reviewed by the Intern Grant Advisory Committee. This evaluative information, combined with feedback from our Advisory Committee, is used to adjust and make improvements to the program. Findings include enhanced awareness

and subsequent teaching, learning, and acquisition of pertinent skill sets needed to be a successful administrator in the current educational environment in schools and districts.

Major Challenges Faced by Program(s)

Overwhelmingly, AWSP continues to hear that additional substitute release days are needed to adequately prepare someone to step into an administrative role. When the grant started, interns received 45 release days for administrative experiences and job shadowing. Now the language suggests 20 days. As district sub rates continue to increase, the ability for us to offer a minimum of 20 full release days severely limits the number of interns we can fund. The appropriation has continued to be inadequate to support programmatic needs and accomplish the goals and intent of the program.

Future Opportunities

This program is essential to the preparation of qualified, effective building, and district administrators. The program needs a substantial increase in funding to better meet the preparation needs of future school leaders across the state. The state principal workforce continues to see an increase in retirements and people stepping away from their jobs. The realities of leadership and the need to increase preparation is outlined in a research report written by Dr. David Knight, co-Director of Education Policy Analytics Lab and the Center for Early Childhood Policy and Equity.

A future opportunity for this program would be the ability to offer a residency intern program. One in which a classroom teacher can secure a long-term sub or be placed in a dean of students or equivalent role to therefore participate in a truly robust internship. To ensure equitable participation in this program, funding would be needed to provide districts with dean of student positions across the state. This would also eliminate any negative impacts on student learning by having teachers absent from the classroom.

Without continued investment in future school leaders and creating an equitable, authentic system of preparation, we will continue to see leaders leave in the first three years. This program is critical to the future of leadership in our state and the outcomes of our students.

Other Relevant Information

N/A

Schools/Districts Receiving Assistance

Click here to see a list of all OSPI grant recipients in the 2026 Fiscal Year.

Program Contact Information

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