

The BEGIN Program



**The Story of a District Helping
New Teachers Succeed**

**Washington School District
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The BEGIN Program

A Three-Year Teacher Induction Model

The BEGIN Program, initiated in 1987, focuses on the successful assimilation of new teachers into the teaching culture through peer support and training opportunities. Initially the BEGIN Program consisted of a one-year support model, but after several years, developed into a three-year model. Today the BEGIN Program not only focuses on the successful assimilation of a new teacher into the culture of teaching but also “builds” a Washington School District teacher. The content of the three-year model enhances the new teachers’ ability to demonstrate behaviors and values that will advance the core teaching standards. The BEGIN Program also embeds the Washington School District Teacher Evaluation Process into the three-year model. Below is a description of the three levels of BEGIN, who qualifies for each program and each level’s teacher outcomes.

BEGIN I

The BEGIN I Program is designed for teachers hired with 0-1 years of previous teaching experience. Each teacher is assigned a grade level master teacher Cadre Leader. The format of the program includes five days of inservice prior to the teachers’ contract start date. Also required of BEGIN I teachers is materials orientation classes based on their teaching assignment. During the school year, the BEGIN teachers will attend thirteen night meetings. The focus of the BEGIN I program is the successful management of students, time, materials, and space. The standards from the WESD Supervisory Teacher Rubric introduced in BEGIN I associated with the District’s Teacher Evaluation Process are Standard 1. (Learner Development), Standard 2. (Learner Differences) and Standard 3. (Learning Environment). The BEGIN I program stresses the importance of BEGIN teachers spending time with each other which, according to the literature on beginning teachers, is a critical variable in the successful induction of new teachers. Each scheduled BEGIN meeting includes a minimum of two hours of Cadre time during which teachers of the same grade level spend time problem-solving, sharing ideas, and asking questions with their Cadre Leader.

BEGIN I Teacher Outcomes:

The BEGIN I teacher will be able to:

- ◆ Develop, teach, model, and monitor classroom rules and procedures
- ◆ Describe the District’s curriculum documents and requirements

- ◆ Explain the District’s assessments, both standardized and district-level
- ◆ Implement strategies for dealing with specific student behavior issues
- ◆ Plan, conduct, and reflect on parent conferences
- ◆ Know and successfully participate in the Teacher Evaluation Process
- ◆ Organize the physical classroom in a manner that enhances student learning
- ◆ Utilize teaching materials that engage students in hands-on learning
- ◆ Discuss problem-solving strategies necessary for daily classroom operations
- ◆ Request assistance when needed
- ◆ Communicate with challenging parents in a productive manner
- ◆ Explain the necessity of balance between their personal and professional lives
- ◆ Know and utilize the various District Office departmental services when necessary

BEGIN II

The BEGIN II Program is designed for teachers during their second year of teaching and who have completed the BEGIN I program. Each teacher is assigned a grade level master teacher Cadre Leader, as well as, continue with or be assigned a building-level mentor. During the school year, the BEGIN teachers will attend after-school meetings with teachers from across the district who are of the same grade level/subject area cadres to promote continued networking and support. There will be one whole group session during the year. Teachers will also have a “choice” menu of activities/projects for deeper self-reflection based upon their goals. These may include videotaping lessons, observing colleagues and choosing readings on research-based strategies. The focus of the BEGIN II program is the successful management of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The standards introduced in BEGIN II associated with the District’s Teacher Evaluation Process are Standard 4. (Content Knowledge), Standard 5. (Application of Content), Standard 6. (Assessment), Standard 7. (Planning for Instruction) and Standard 8. (Instructional Strategies). The theme of BEGIN II is “Reflect, Refine, Reach”. Each session’s structure allows teachers to “reflect” upon their first year of teaching in a particular topic area, learn and experiment with new strategies to “refine” their skills in that area, and set goals to “reach” even further in their professional knowledge and skills.

BEGIN II Teacher Outcomes:

The BEGIN II teacher will be able to:

- ◆ Utilize the District’s curriculum documents to plan effective instruction
- ◆ Interpret and utilize the District’s assessments
- ◆ Apply the skill of reflection for the improvement of classroom instruction and professional growth

- ◆ Explain and implement effective classroom management and organizational strategies (continuation from BEGIN I)
- ◆ Utilize teaching procedures that increase engaged time on task
- ◆ Identify and apply strategies to plan lessons with an appropriate amount of rigor
- ◆ Identify and utilize modification/accommodation strategies for students with special learning needs
- ◆ Explain and implement a variety of informal assessment and student feedback strategies
- ◆ Utilize data from informal assessments to plan instruction
- ◆ Identify and utilize effective strategies for skill/knowledge retention, practice and homework
- ◆ Explain and implement effective student engagement strategies (speaking, writing, movement)
- ◆ Identify, explain and implement effective strategies to create an academic learning environment, i.e. Purposeful Academic Walls
- ◆ Explain and implement “Growth Mindset” strategies
- ◆ Problem-solve strategies necessary for daily classroom operations
- ◆ Request assistance when needed

BEGIN III

The BEGIN III Program is designed for teachers who have completed the first two levels of the BEGIN program. The Director of Professional Development Services is the program facilitator. The format of BEGIN III is structured in a more collaborative format with cross-grade level grouping of participants shaping the session dialogue. Several local and national consultants provide the participants with current, researched-based strategies for implementation as teacher as leader. BEGIN III teachers are also encouraged to continue their relationship with their previously assigned or informally acquired building-based mentors. The format of the program includes a monthly night meeting, online sessions, and menu of activities/projects for deepening the acquired skills. The theme of the third-year model is “Teaching-Leading-Learning.” The focus of the BEGIN III program is on the application of the role of “teacher as leader” in the Washington School District. The standards introduced in BEGIN III associated with the District’s Teacher Evaluation Process are Standard 9. (Professional Learning and Ethical Practice) and Standard 10. (Leadership and Collaboration) will be the main focus of the BEGIN III program. This final level of support for teachers during their induction phase of their careers is the culminating event in the successful assimilation into the culture of teaching. The BEGIN III Program will conclude with a Recognition Ceremony acknowledging the passage of the beginning

teachers from the induction phase to the competency building phase of their careers and into the family of the Washington School District.

BEGIN III Teacher Outcomes:

The BEGIN III teacher will be able to:

- ◆ Apply the skill of reflection to the improvement of classroom instruction and professional growth
- ◆ Define teacher leadership and how it relates to their role in and out of the classroom
- ◆ Demonstrate effective communication skills
- ◆ Dealing and resolving conflict situation
- ◆ Setting norms for group collaboration focused on data and planning instruction
- ◆ Explain and apply powerful professional development designs focused on job-embedded learning
- ◆ Demonstrate a variety of ways to conduct data meetings
- ◆ Model basic facilitation strategies necessary in the role of teacher as leader
- ◆ Explain how to participate in the process of building a learning community
- ◆ Conducting crucial conversations and building relationships with difficult teammates
- ◆ Apply the principles of the change process to their current settings and situations
- ◆ Request assistance when needed

Participation in the BEGIN Programs is invitational and not meant to be exclusive of other newly hired teachers who many need assistance and support. Newly hired teachers with two or more years of experience may participate in the BEGIN Again Program or petition into BEGIN I through these two methods:

- ◆ New teachers with experience complete a form in the Human Resources Department explaining the teacher induction model and will be offered the opportunity to participate in either the BEGIN Again Program or petition into the BEGIN I program.
- ◆ Principals may contact the Professional Development Department with a request for a new hire with previous experience to participate in the BEGIN Program based on current need and type or date of previous teaching experience.

Newly hired teachers after October 31 will participate in a Teacher Support Program and will be assigned to a mentor teacher designated by grade range. The mentor teacher will meet with the new teacher twice monthly and offer any assistance necessary to help that teacher finish the school year. The teacher will

be offered the opportunity to participate in the BEGIN Teacher Induction Program beginning the following fall.

There are many layers of support in WESD for new teachers. The Professional Development Department has a staff of Instructional Coaches to assist any new teacher who would like additional support. Principals also may request targeted assistance for a BEGIN participant that is experiencing difficulty with some aspect of management or teaching.

BEGIN SUPPORT

BEGIN Support is structured to support new hires with no previous teaching experience who are hired after October 31st. Due to the ongoing development of the first year teachers in BEGIN I, a new hire with no experience hired later in the year is not developmentally where the BEGIN I teachers are after three months on the job! To provide that late new hire with no experience needed support, the BEGIN Support Program was developed. Each late new hire with no experienced is matched with a one-on-one mentor who will support them throughout the rest of the school year through face-to-face meetings, emails, phone calls, and classroom visits as needed. At the end of the late new hire's first partial school year, he/she will be notified that they are invited to join BEGIN I in the fall to complete the three-year BEGIN Program.

The BEGIN Program is offered through the support of the Washington School District Governing Board and the District Superintendent. It is only through this support and the expertise of the very fine staff of teachers and administrators that this program can continue to provide the necessary support and information to beginning teachers. Funding for this program is derived from the Title I and Title II Federal Grants for Professional Development.

If you have any questions or would like to offer ideas or comments,
please contact the
Washington School District
Professional Development Department
602-347-2641.