

CHAPTER 349

EDUCATION - PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HOUSE BILL 24-1376

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also SENATOR(S) Zenzinger and Priola, Bridges, Buckner, Cutter, Exum, Fields, Ginal, Jaquez Lewis, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Winter F.

AN ACT

CONCERNING MEASURES TO INCREASE TEACHER MENTORSHIPS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds that:

(a) In 2019, the general assembly created the teacher mentor grant program to provide funding to partnering local education providers and educator preparation programs to provide training and stipends for teachers who serve as mentors for teacher candidates participating in clinical practice;

(b) In 2023, the department of higher education surveyed over 100 mentors who participated in the program from 2021 to 2023. The survey results indicated that:

(I) As a result of completing the approved mentor endorsement training program, mentors reported high levels of confidence and skill across all five competency areas identified in the Colorado standards for mentor teachers and were most confident in their expertise around best practices that maximize student achievement;

(II) Mentors reported that their preparation encouraged them to carefully reflect on their own profession and practice while encouraging them to implement new evidence-based teaching practices; and

(III) Nearly all mentors reported that their preparation experience enhanced their

Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material added to existing law; dashes through words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law and such material is not part of the act.

own professional identity, encouraging them to think of themselves as teacher leaders and confirmed their commitment to and satisfaction with the profession. From 2021 to 2023, a total of 177 mentor teachers participated in the program, receiving training from four educator preparation programs that serve urban and rural school districts across the state.

(c) In 2023 and 2024, an additional educator preparation program was included in the program and several other preparation programs are interested in seeking approval to offer the mentor endorsement training program, which will greatly expand access to high-quality mentor preparation across Colorado.

(2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that the demonstrated success of the teacher mentor grant program warrants continued and increased support of the grant program.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-78-102, **amend** (1)(d), and (2); and **add** (1)(f) and (1)(g) as follows:

23-78-102. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly finds that:

(d) Research suggests that an effective teacher preparation program should include opportunities for teacher candidates to spend time in the classroom beginning in the first year of the program and continuing and increasing throughout the program, culminating in a full year of clinical practice using a classroom residency model in the final year of the program; ~~and~~

(f) EXPANDING MENTORSHIP TO NOVICE TEACHERS NOT ONLY CREATES VALUABLE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION WORKFORCE, BUT ALSO ULTIMATELY INCREASES THE NUMBER OF CAPABLE, HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS, PROMOTES JOB SATISFACTION, DECREASES TEACHER TURNOVER, OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPERIENCED TEACHERS TO FURTHER THEIR CAREERS, AND LIKELY IMPROVES STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT; AND

(g) SUFFICIENTLY EXPANDING MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR NOVICE TEACHERS REQUIRES A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH THAT ALSO CREATES AND BUILDS FUTURE CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL- AND DISTRICT-LEVEL SUPPORTS, INCLUDING LOCAL INDUCTION AND MENTORING.

(2) The general assembly finds, therefore, that it is appropriate to direct the department of education and the department of higher education to collaborate with local education providers, approved educator preparation programs, alternative teacher programs, and other interested parties to identify best practices in providing comprehensive, rigorous, and effective teacher preparation and guidelines for implementing these best practices. The general assembly further finds that it is in the best interests of the state to establish a grant program to provide funding for training and reimbursements for mentor teachers who provide guidance and oversight for teacher candidates while they participate in clinical practice OR FOR NOVICE TEACHERS.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-78-103, **add** (9.5) as follows:

23-78-103. Definitions. As used in this part 1, unless the context otherwise requires:

(9.5) "NOVICE TEACHER" MEANS A TEACHER WHO HAS FEWER THAN THREE YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE.

SECTION 4. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-78-105, **amend** (1), (2) introductory portion, (2)(c), (2)(d), and (5); and **repeal** (2)(e) as follows:

23-78-105. Teacher mentor grant program - created - standards - appropriation - report - rules. (1) ~~There is created in the department of higher education~~ The teacher mentor grant program IS CREATED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION to provide money to partnering local education providers and educator preparation programs to provide training and stipends for teachers who serve as mentors for teacher candidates participating in clinical practice OR FOR NOVICE TEACHERS. Subject to available appropriations and qualifying applications, the department of higher education shall award grants beginning in the 2019-20 budget year. The department shall establish the duration of each grant as a period of up to three budget years, subject to annual review and renewal.

(2) A partnership consisting of at least one local education provider and at least one educator preparation program may submit an application for a grant to the department of higher education in accordance with guidelines adopted by the department. The department shall establish the application requirements ~~which~~ THAT must include a plan by which the applicant intends to sustain the teacher mentor program after the grant period ends. In selecting grant recipients, the department shall ensure, to the extent practicable, that the grant recipients include applicants of varying size from rural, urban, and suburban areas across the state. The department may award grants only to those applicants that commit to implementing a teacher mentor program that:

(c) Ensures that the employing local education provider ~~provides~~ ALLOWS time within the mentor teacher's schedule to provide oversight and support for the teacher candidate OR NOVICE TEACHER; AND

(d) Pays each mentor teacher a stipend of at least two thousand dollars per school year or at least two thousand five hundred dollars per school year if the mentor teacher holds a master certificate or is national-board certified. THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION MAY PROMULGATE RULES TO CREATE A GRADUATED SCALE FOR THE STIPENDS BASED ON INFLATION, YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS A MENTOR, NATIONAL CERTIFICATION, AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS AS LONG AS THE STIPEND AMOUNTS ARE AT LEAST THE AMOUNTS IDENTIFIED IN THIS SUBSECTION (2)(d). THE DEPARTMENT MAY USE ANY AVAILABLE FUNDS TO PAY FOR THE STIPENDS DESCRIBED IN THIS SUBSECTION (2)(d).

(e) ~~In addition to mentoring teacher candidates, provides mentoring for newly employed teachers through an induction program for at least two school years after employment; and~~

(5)(a) The general assembly shall annually appropriate money to the department of higher education to implement the teacher mentor grant program, including an

amount to pay the direct administrative costs incurred in implementing the teacher mentor grant program.

(b) FOR THE 2024-25 STATE FISCAL YEAR, AND FOR EACH STATE FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL APPROPRIATE ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE TEACHER MENTOR GRANT PROGRAM TO FUND DIRECT ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS INCURRED BY THE DEPARTMENT, GRANT AWARDS, AND DIRECT ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS INCURRED BY GRANT RECIPIENTS TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM. THIS APPROPRIATION MUST SUPPLEMENT AND NOT SUPPLANT CURRENT FUNDING FOR THE TEACHER MENTOR GRANT PROGRAM. ANY UNEXPENDED MONEY REMAINING FROM THE APPROPRIATION IN THIS SUBSECTION (5)(b) AT THE END OF THE 2024-25 STATE FISCAL YEAR OR A SUBSEQUENT FISCAL YEAR:

(I) DOES NOT REVERT TO THE GENERAL FUND OR ANY OTHER FUND; AND

(II) MAY BE USED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION SOLELY FOR THE TEACHER MENTOR GRANT PROGRAM IN SUBSEQUENT STATE FISCAL YEARS WITHOUT FURTHER APPROPRIATION.

SECTION 5. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-60.5-106, **amend** (3) as follows:

22-60.5-106. Endorsement of license - effect - rules. (3) The department of education shall collaborate with the department of higher education to create a mentor teacher endorsement for teachers who provide mentoring and oversight for teacher candidates OR NOVICE TEACHERS in accordance with the standards adopted by the department of higher education pursuant to section 23-78-105 (3). The state board of education by rule shall establish the criteria for the endorsement, which must, at a minimum, include successfully completing training provided by an educator preparation program, as defined in section 23-78-103, and at least one full school year of successful experience serving as a mentor teacher for a teacher candidate who is participating in clinical practice OR FOR A NOVICE TEACHER, as defined in section 23-78-103.

SECTION 6. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-60.5-110, **amend** (3)(b) introductory portion as follows:

22-60.5-110. Renewal of licenses. (3) (b) A professional licensee shall complete the ongoing professional development within the period of time for which the professional license is valid. The professional development may include, but need not be limited to, in-service education programs, including training in preventing, identifying, and responding to child sexual abuse and assault; behavioral health training that is culturally responsive and trauma- and evidence-informed; and laws and practices relating to the education of students with disabilities in the classroom, including, but not limited to, child find and inclusive learning environments; college or university credit from an accepted institution of higher education or a community, technical, or local district college; educational travel that meets the requirements specified in subsection (3)(d) of this section; involvement in school reform; service as a mentor teacher for teacher candidates participating in clinical practice OR FOR NOVICE TEACHERS, as defined in section 23-78-103; internships; ongoing professional development training and experiences; and teacher externships

pursuant to section 8-83-602.5. The state board of education, by rule, may establish minimum criteria for professional development; except that the criteria ~~shall~~ MUST not:

SECTION 7. Appropriation. For the 2024-25 state fiscal year, \$100,000 is appropriated to the department of higher education for use by the Colorado commission on higher education and higher education special purpose programs. This appropriation is from the general fund. To implement this act, the department may use this appropriation for growing great teachers - teacher mentor grants.

SECTION 8. Safety clause. The general assembly finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for the support and maintenance of the departments of the state and state institutions.

Approved: June 3, 2024