

Integrating High Skilled Immigrants into a “Grow Your Own” Educators Strategy to Address Teacher Shortage

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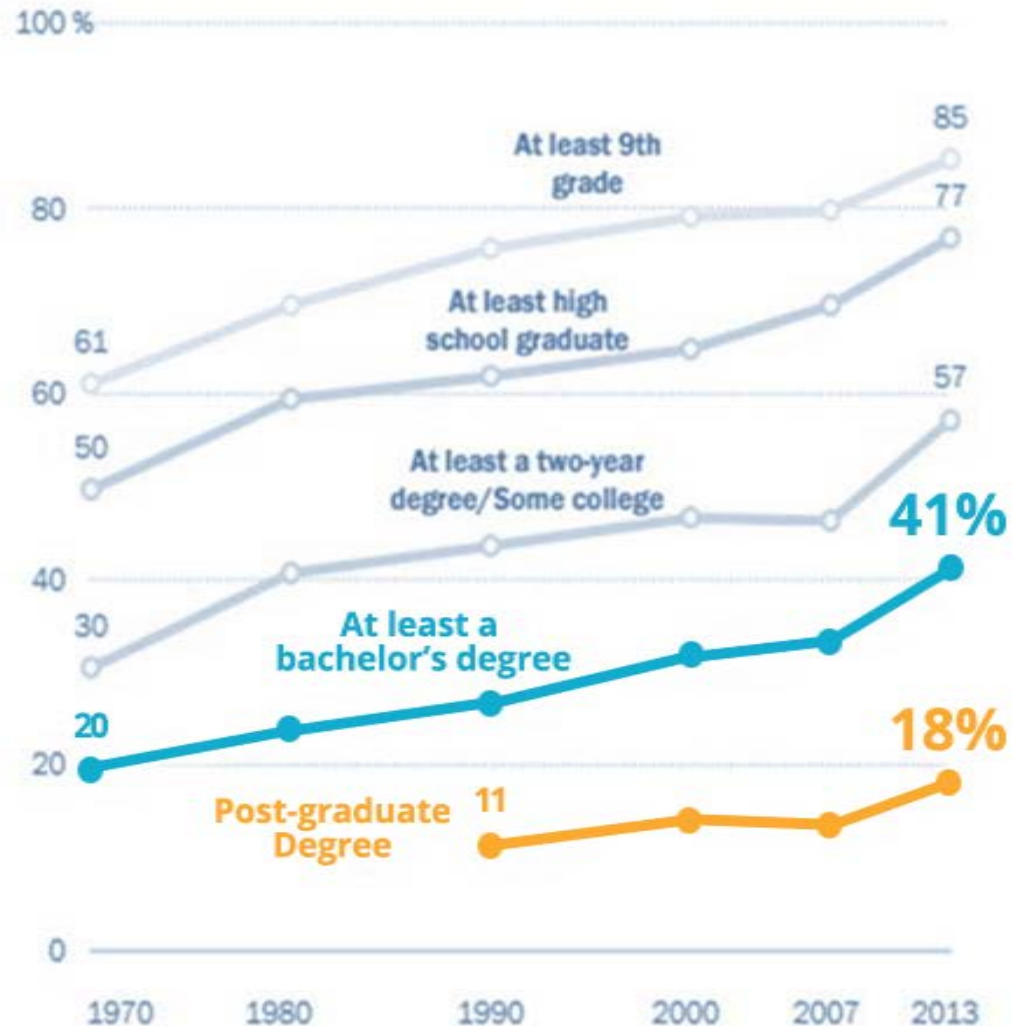
Immigrant Worker Education Levels

An Increasing Proportion of Immigrants are Highly-Skilled

Bachelor's Degree or higher:

- 32% - overall
- 41% - newly arrived (past 5 years)

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 1970-2000 U.S. decennial census data and 2007 and 2013 American Community Survey (IPUMS)



“Grow Your Own” in WA

- Growing Your Own Teacher programs are becoming increasingly important for developing future teachers for districts due to teacher shortage.
- Current vehicles available to grow your own teachers, including alternate routes, retooling and teacher academies.
- PESB has been working in the following areas to support highly skilled immigrants find pathways into the teaching profession
 - Collaborative Brainwaste Report
 - Provide funding for preparation and support through Alternative Route Block Grants
 - Conduct work group to map out pipeline for bilingual educators
 - Focus on district, regional, state policies and Legislation to support high skilled immigrants entering the educator workforce

Brainwaste Report

[Link to Full Report](#)

BRAIN WASTE AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The integration of foreign-trained teachers and other immigrant professionals into the educational system also demands attention from policy makers and promises to bring about positive change in the educational experience of Washington State students.

The education sector has one of the highest forecasted rates of growth of any occupational category in the state, but the field is also highly professionalized: over 75 percent of jobs require at least a bachelor's degree.³⁹ Unfortunately, foreign-educated teachers show the greatest rate of underemployment compared to other immigrant professionals like nurses and engineers.⁴⁰ They are also nearly three times more likely to be underemployed compared to their U.S.-born peers with the same education level. Those who can find work in the education system typically hold jobs that do not reflect their level of education or experience, often employed as instructional assistants or para-educators, and, in some cases, even janitors or school bus drivers. While the state has a responsibility to screen teacher candidates for competence and essential pedagogical skills, the exclusion of so many potentially highly qualified diverse professionals is a great loss to the educational system.

This loss occurs at a time when the demographic profile of students in Washington State has changed dramatically. While 43 percent of students in the state identify as people of color, only 12 percent of teachers are from these backgrounds;⁴¹ in a 2014 study, Washington ranked 24th among the states in the Teacher Diversity Index.⁴²

Levels of Employment for Teaching BA/BS Degrees			
	U.S.-BORN	FOREIGN-BORN	
		Foreign educated	U.S. educated immigrant
Teaching Graduates	97,400	5,300	3,400
High-skill employment	69%	34%	47%
Middle-skill employment	16%	26%	26%
Low-skill employment	11%	32%	21%
Unemployed	4%	6%	3%
Affected by brain waste	15%	38%	24%

Source: Migration Policy Institute, *Select Labor Force Characteristics of College-Educated Native-Born and Foreign-Born Adults, 2014*

The percentage of English language learners has also steadily increased, reaching 10.2 percent of the student body in 2012-2013,⁴³ creating a strong market for qualified bilingual teachers. Demographic projections indicate that, by 2025, 1 in 4 of our students will be English language learners.⁴⁴ As student diversity increases, we must build a teacher workforce that reflects this diversity. Foreign-educated immigrants – whether teachers in their home countries or holders of other advanced degrees – can help as a pool to meet this demand.

Improving Student Outcomes: Why Diversifying Washington's Teacher Workforce Matters

Establishing pathways for foreign-educated teachers or other professionals to pursue teaching careers brings much needed language and cultural skills, as well as rich experience and training, into the classroom.

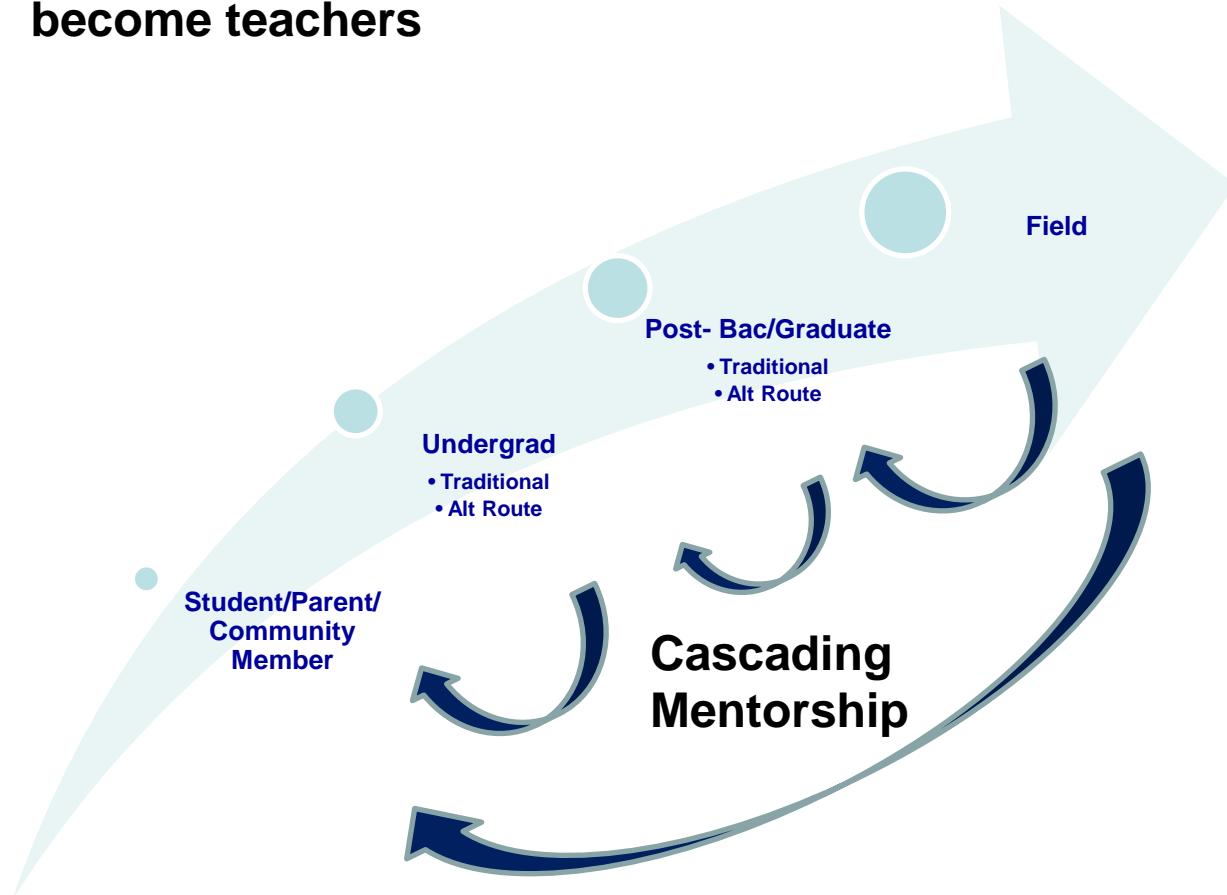
The importance of teacher diversification as a strategy for closing the opportunity gap has been widely recognized in research and by community advocates.⁴⁵ Establishing a more representative education workforce is also among the top ten priorities identified by the state for improving educational outcomes.⁴⁶ Addressing and implementing efforts to diversify the teaching workforce often brings many improvements and positive outcomes for the morale of students, staff, and schools. Diverse teachers are more likely to understand the perspectives of marginalized students, which can be a powerful learning experience for students beyond academic curricula. Diverse teachers also bring culturally or linguistically based teaching approaches that expand the views represented within a school's teaching staff.

Brainwaste Report Recommendations for Washington State

- Bringing diverse, bilingual instructors from the immigrant talent pool will require programmatic and systemic supports from state agencies, school districts, schools, and education degree programs to recruit, train, and retain these individuals as teachers in their communities
- Making the effective integration of foreign-educated teachers a priority by building the existing alternate routes to Teaching Certification infrastructure to strengthen career pathways for foreign-educated teachers
 - Develop policy to support, accelerated pathways for those with foreign degrees
 - Develop programs and policy that help candidates support and navigate the pathway to become a teacher for those with education from foreign countries
 - Expand the alternate routes to teaching pathway routes to include a design explicit for foreign-trained educators, which include recruitment advising, developing tailored teacher training programs, and securing employment in the field.
- Centralized Credential Evaluation and Standard Setting
- Case Management tied to Scholarship and Loans

“Growing Our Own” Teachers

Partnerships that support student transitions to become teachers



LILLYA: HAVING MY CREDENTIALS EVALUATED OPENED MY LIFE



My parents in Ohio and I were from Ukraine. Ever since I was a child I have always loved the English language. The sounds and culture fascinated me so much that I started learning English at a young age in addition to Ukrainian, Russian and of course Ukrainian. I found this passion with me to the University of Minnesota where I earned a degree in English and planned to become a teacher. Right after graduation, my husband and I were married in celebration of the opportunity to immigrate to the U.S. with his family. We arrived in Seattle with no social network and uncertain how we would make it for ourselves.

My love for English meant I took Russian and made that my employment niche quickly but coming from a foreign nation, where (nearly) everyone else did not speak any of my own languages, I was uncertain of my own abilities. When I worked, I was never asked about my education level by any of the managers, co-workers or clients and I never thought to question it. So I took the first job I could find at a fast-food restaurant. You would not expect teaching in a fast-food setting when I needed to be able to support my family. My one passion for English education never went away. Fast-food was not engaged me to "follow my dream." I saw no viable work out of my current situation and I started off as a teacher assistant in a private school. Although I speak Russian, English, Ukrainian, and Russian I did not realize I also knew skills that were desirable for a school district and for many could give me employment in the education field.

So I called the district every day until they finally hired me as an interpreter and later a para-educator. This led me to later become a para-educator.

I came after when I was in the classroom with students. Although I experienced a bit of skepticism and loss around my position, some of my colleagues were so kind and supportive that they encouraged me to become a teacher. Even though the certification process was a challenge, I was determined that, after years of working in a low-wage job teaching my passion, I was going to pursue my dream. I got hired and worked up about \$3,000 and sent my program out of state to be evaluated. I was fortunate to have my degree from the University of Minnesota evaluated in a matter of weeks. I was in the U.S. and still had no right with no teaching license, no suitable job education and training. Sometimes, I wish to return to my teacher credentials and begin teaching much sooner than I expected.

After about 10 years working in the classroom, being a para-educator and interpreter, I began to explore my teaching career. I was in an all-in-one school district in the country. I'm very fortunate for the support I have received that allowed me to find my first teaching job and to be a bright future teacher in the U.S. and the only thing that held me back was that I did not have the certification that gave me my path. I had a lot of help from the community that gave me my path. I had a lot of help from the community that gave me my path. I had a lot of help from the community that gave me my path. I had a lot of help from the community that gave me my path.

Foreign Trained Teacher Workforce Entry-Credential Evaluation

DANIEL: MY JOURNEY FROM SCIENTIST TO CLASSROOM TEACHER



My journey to "teach" and to be in the U.S. has been hard, at times, but pursuing a PhD in an advanced science with degrees from universities in East Africa and Europe. I was not happy through my PhD in Ecology when my family had the opportunity to come to the U.S. I came with them in 2011 and thought I had enough education to secure a well-paying job in my field.

I realized quickly that finding a job to use my challenging particular science was not as easy as I thought. You don't understand the culture and practices of the professional world. I had to learn my fundamentals, and I didn't know where to turn. I applied for many jobs but mostly got rejected for reasons I struggled to communicate in professional settings and I felt like I was not being heard. I was not being heard. I did not feel happy for someone in my situation, a highly educated foreigner, but secure employment in my field of study.

After some time I gave up on an ecology and applied for positions where I could utilize my education as well as my professional skills. I finally found work with Seattle Public Schools (SPS) where I applied for a job opening as a para-educator. I was not happy through my PhD in Ecology when my family had the opportunity to come to the U.S. I came with them in 2011 and thought I had enough education to secure a well-paying job in my field.

Many of the students in my class speak a language other than English, at home, and I know it makes a difference that their teacher would understand them through I would find myself in when I first came to the U.S. I am grateful that I could find well-respected teaching jobs that allowed me to support my family, utilize my education and language background, and most importantly, contribute to the education of the next generation.

Foreign Trained Professional Workforce Entry-Alternative Route Program

PESB GYO Initiative

- Grow Your Own Website launching July- Toolkit for Districts
 - Para Survey/ District Grow Your Own Self Assessment
 - Sample job descriptions, policies and resolutions
 - Guidance for ESSA, spending Title dollars
 - Data Tools related to hiring, recruitment, retention etc.
- Bright Spots Report
 - Best practices as it relates to human resources, recruitment and advancement, high schools teacher academies, para/emergency substitute pipeline, engaging career changers and retirees, and candidate tracking across systems.
 - Demographic report with data that demonstrates teacher shortage needs and the potential opportunities to strengthen workforce development through Grow Your Own. Analysis on and strategies for statewide sustainability and implementation of GYO programs in WA.
 - A Toolkit of recommended strategies for growing/ sustaining Grow Your Own programs in Washington State in the form of mini-case studies
- FAQ for Foreign Trained Teachers

Alternative Routes to Teaching certification program created by the legislature and implemented Washington's Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) in partnership with local universities and districts. This program is designed to assist classified school district staff and eligible professionals to become lead classroom teachers.

What are the needs?

- Testing assistance
- Tuition assistance
- Full or part of their salary during student teaching
- Flexible time requirements
- Social support and a nurturing environment
- Life experience, prior learning credit
- Transcript evaluation
- Child-care assistance

What are the barriers?

- Lack of information or guidance
- The challenge of language
- Testing
- Navigating certification
- Cost of credential evaluation and certification
- Support services along the pathway

Alternate Route Design

“**Grow Your Own**” refers to a type of program or project a district implements to cultivate their own teachers in the district’s high need areas.

Approaches to Prioritize:

- Priority Populations
- Regional work
- Collaborative Recruitment and Selection
- Strong partnerships
- Innovative Design
 - **Design:**
 - Alternate Routes for individuals engaged by the district as Resident Intern in a mentored internship
 - **Design:**
 - Alternative route for individuals teaching with conditional certificates

agencies or education colleges offer little support. The requirement for successful completion of a state-approved teacher preparation program is also a formidable barrier. These programs are competitive and require a major investment of time and money.

Alternate Routes to Teaching Certification program can, in theory, offer a point of entry, particularly for immigrants currently working as para-educators or career changers, yet Alternate Routes is not a sufficient solution on its own to support this population. The absence of a clear alternate pipeline for foreign-educated immigrant professionals and addressing several navigating the process is a missed opportunity to tap into a talented, diverse talent pool our schools so desperately need. In the face of these obstacles, many foreign-educated immigrants interested in pursuing careers in education choose to work as para-educators, or even as volunteers, looking out on the chance to play a leadership role in educating the growing number of children from diverse backgrounds.

Washington State has the potential to build on the existing Alternate Routes to Teaching Certification infrastructure to strengthen career pathways for foreign-educated teachers or those with a foreign degree who wish to make a career change and pursue teaching. Community colleges, traditionally places for adult learning and career training, would be a natural place to recruit and support this population's entry point into continuing their careers in education. With the state's reputation for innovations in education, Washington can be a trailblazer in marrying the rich resources of the immigrant community with the needs of children in our school systems.

REDUCING BRAIN WASTE: Creating Career Pathways for Foreign-Educated Immigrants in Washington State

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TEACHING CERTIFICATION

"Alternate Routes" is a teacher certification program created by the Washington State Legislature and designed by Washington's Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) in partnership with local universities to address teacher shortages. With the goal of reviving the teaching workforce by encouraging local residents to become teachers, this program is designed to assist classified school district staff and eligible professionals to become lead classroom teachers.

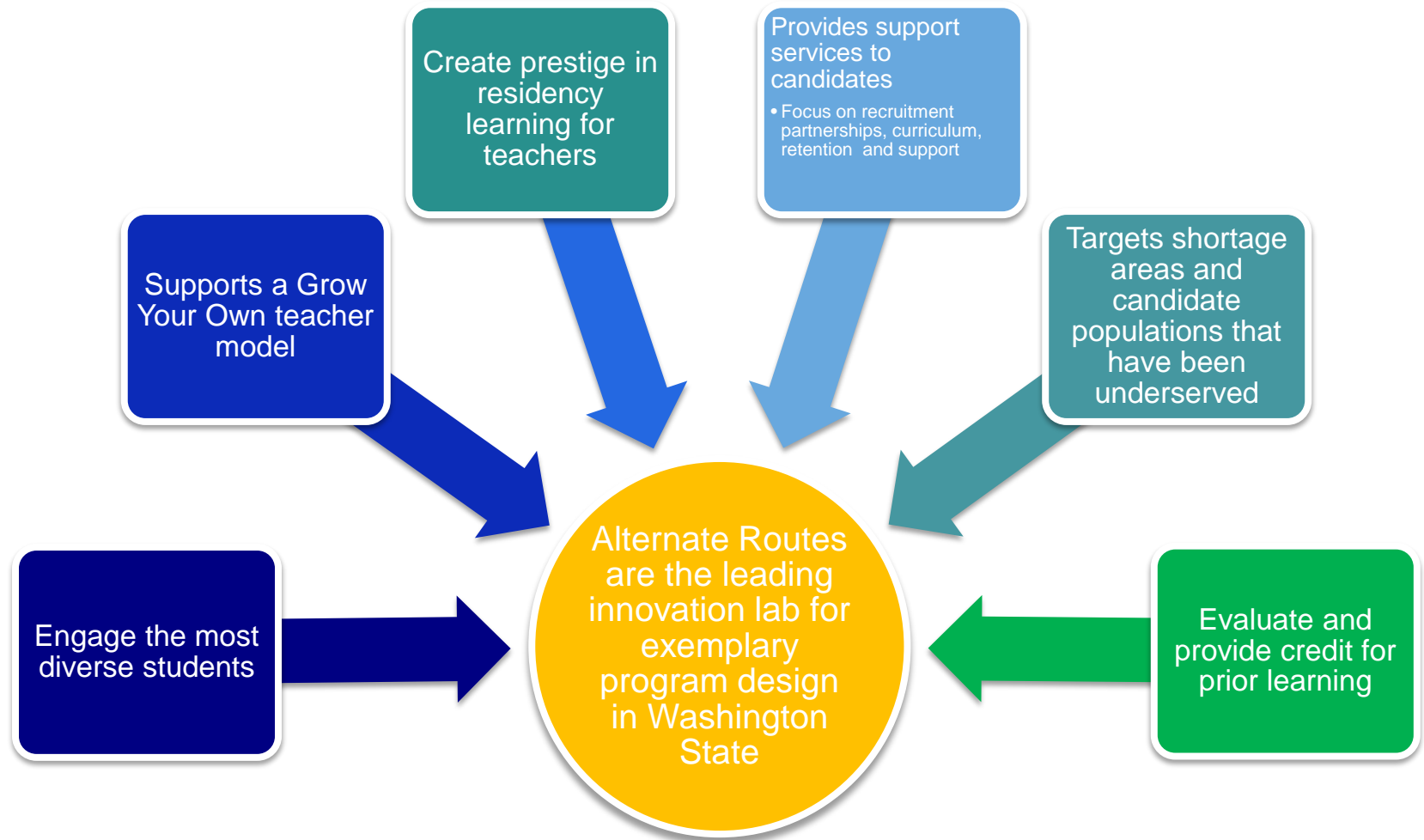
According to their education level, candidates must identify which of the four Alternate Routes is the most appropriate and apply (and get accepted) to an approved program. Upon acceptance, candidates will receive a conditional scholarship to complete their course of study. Prior to placement in an Alternate Routes program, candidates must take a teacher assessment exam – the WEST-6, which measures basic knowledge, and the WEST-7, which measures subject area competency, if applicable – and a pre-classroom preparation course. Other steps include securing additional funding, and, for some, continuing to actively teach in a classroom while pursuing their certificate.

Alternate Routes offers four teacher certification pipelines:

1. Para-educators or emergency substitute teachers who wish to transition their associate's degree to a bachelor's degree, the education attainment level necessary to qualify as a lead teacher;
2. Para-educators who already have their bachelor's degree but still require a teaching certificate;
3. Qualified, educated subject matter experts with an advanced certification agreements with school districts agreeing to complete coursework within a set timeframe;
4. Those who hold a bachelor's degree and enter conditional certification agreements with school districts agreeing to complete coursework within a set timeframe.

Foreign-educated immigrants may qualify for routes 2, 3, and 4, depending on their degrees and work history. They either are employed as para-educators with a bachelor's degree or have a degree and subject matter expertise in teaching or another subject, but are not working in the profession. The routes, however, are primarily designed for those educated in the U.S. The addition of an explicit path for foreign-trained educators, which includes recruitment, advising, developing tailored teacher training programs, and securing employment as the field would open many opportunities for this population and recognize the valuable role they can play in the education of Washington's children.

Next Generation Alt routes



Alternate Route Block Grant

PESB awarded block grant awards to partner to address teacher shortage. Of those funded, 77% address developing paras to become teachers. We would like to see all public and private institutions of higher education as well as public community colleges offer an alternate route programs that meet their local need.

Grant spotlight: focused on high skilled immigrants and developing dual language/bilingual educators in WA

- Future Bilingual Teacher Fellows (FBTF) Program
- Secondary Educators for Equity and Diversity (SEED) Program
- Heritage University Accelerate Program
- ARC Program in partnership with STARTALK

Questions?

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Alexandra is the Alternate Routes to Certification program administrator for the state, and has experience with a variety of education social justice, public service and diversity initiatives in the non-profit, education and government sectors.