

USBE Legislative Request Form

(Policy, Funding, & Efficiency / Reductions)

2027 General Session

SECTION 1: THE BOTTOM LINE

Request Title: Mentoring and Supporting Teacher Excellence and Refinement (MASTER) Program Request for a Stable, Ongoing Funding Structure

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Director Reviewer: Meghan Everette

Nature of Request (Select all that apply):

☒ **Policy Change:** Creating, amending, or repealing Utah State Code.
(Complete Section 4)

☒ **New/Increased Funding:** Seeking new financial resources.
(Complete Section 3)

Purpose Statement (BLUF - Bottom Line Up Front):

This request seeks the same amount (\$2.4 million) of funding ongoing rather than from year to year.

State code [53F-5-222](#) (established 07/01/2024). The Mentoring and Supporting Teacher Excellence and Refinement Pilot Program was established by the 2024 legislative session and was funded for two years. In the 2026 Legislative Session, the funding was renewed, but for one year through [HB 146](#). The early indicators of the impact of this program on teacher effectiveness and teacher retention has been very promising. In order to continue the program and collect more data on its effectiveness and encourage the investment of resources from LEAs including time, money, and personnel to innovate according to the spirit of the legislation- an ongoing funding stream is needed to support longer-term, more sustainable designs by LEAs.

SECTION 2: THE BUSINESS CASE

(Required for all requests)

The Problem:

Early indicators on the success of this program are very promising. In order to collect more accurate, and actionable data, the program needs to be in place for a longer period of time.

Extending the pilot program in an ongoing manner will allow trend lines of both qualitative and quantitative data to become more visible, allowing for accurate decision making for legislators as to the expansion of this initiative. Having this funding source be year to year gives LEAs pause in investing in innovative ideas and discourages some from participating at all.

- Make adjustments to verbiage and dates that allow for an extension of the program from two years to four years.
- Extend the repeal date to allow time to assess and consider the data, allowing for decision making about continuation or expansion.
- Add language that permits LEAs who are currently in the program to have priority for continuation, before accepting any new applicants, thus providing that longer timeframe for data collection.

Teacher retention is a critical component of an effective education system. Highly qualified, and experienced teachers, consistently provide the best outcomes for students. Teacher leadership opportunities not only encourage teachers to stay in the profession, but also grow the skills of teacher leaders and those they serve by leading from the classroom.

The MASTER grant is organized to provide strong administrative support for teachers seeking leadership and growth opportunities.

The Source:

This program originated with the legislature wanting to incentivize teacher leadership, promote teacher retention systems, and create conditions for great teachers to remain in the classroom where they can make the most impact on students rather than move to district or administrative positions as the only way to be promoted or increase their salary levels. The only opposition to this program has been that some LEAs are finding it difficult to dedicate the resources to participate because of the lack of long-term funding.

Projected Results:

These measures could include:

- Educator surveys - requesting information on this program's impact on their own practice
- Teacher Retention statistics could be used to measure effectiveness, but the broadness of allowable expenses and proposals could make it difficult to evaluate this in a standardized way

Note: In order to meaningfully continue the program and collect more data on its effectiveness, this request seeks the same amount of funding, but ongoing. A longer timeline is required to collect teacher retention and student growth data to determine the overall effectiveness of the initiative.

Consequence of Inaction:

The MASTER Program will come to an end in June of 2027 when funding is exhausted. While early evidence from current grant participants is promising, it may be difficult to make decisions about continuation without additional data.

Evidence & Data:

As the program has currently only been in place two years, the data is predominantly baseline data at this time, hence the request to extend the program and the timeline to be ongoing so that data can be collected for decision making.

During the first year of the pilot, grants were awarded to 30 LEAs, including 20 charter schools and 10 districts. In the second year, all of the initial LEAs continued in the program and there was funds to add an additional eight LEAs.

The next cohort will completely consist of new applications and be a competitive review cycle that will be based on the merit of the proposal and priority won't necessarily be given for those who have applied for funds in years past.

Funded Activities from the previous cycle:

Mentoring and New Teacher support:

Structured Mentoring Frameworks: Funding master teachers to provide weekly, classroom-based guidance to new, developing, and early-career educators on instructional practices, classroom management, and student engagement.

Mentor Endorsement Training: Compensating experienced educators to participate in and complete formal state mentoring endorsement courses and modules.

Comprehensive Teacher Onboarding: Developing reusable orientation materials and facilitating structured onboarding weeks to smoothly integrate new hires.

Student Teacher Supervision: Providing stipends to teachers who act as mentors for student teachers and practicum students, strengthening the educator pipeline.

Alternative Licensure Guidance: Funding master teachers to provide specialized, multi-year mentorship to paraprofessionals and new teachers undergoing alternative licensure pathways (such as the APPEL program).

Instructional Coaching and Peer Observation

Guided Coaching Cycles: Funding teacher leaders to conduct targeted classroom observations, identify foundational teaching practices, and provide direct, supportive peer feedback.

Model Teacher Programs: Pairing highly qualified educators with volunteer peer teachers to engage in mutual, structured observations and debriefs that model effective teaching.

Dedicated Substitute Coverage: Providing funding for classroom substitutes so that master teachers can leave their classrooms to observe and coach their peer mentees during the school day.

Specialized Content Coaching: Designating "Master Teachers" in specialized subject areas that lack dedicated district specialists (such as Art, Social Studies, and Physical Education) to ensure all teachers receive targeted support.

Evidence-Based Coaching Frameworks: Leveraging specific instructional resources (like the Get Better Faster framework) to systematically guide coaching and teacher development.

For the complete report, see [this Research Brief](#) compiled through interviews from participating LEAs compiled by WestEd.

SECTION 3: FUNDING, OFFSETS, & EFFICIENCIES

*(Complete **only** if your request involves financial resources or proposing budget cuts)*

Financial Ask:

(If a field does not apply, enter \$0).

- **FY 2027 Ongoing Requested:** \$2.4 million per year
- **FY 2027 One-Time Requested:** \$0
- **Proposed Offsets / Savings:** \$0

The Offset Strategy:

Paid Professional Hours could be re-allocated or lumped in with the new expectation to fund specific teacher leadership efforts.

Future Obligations:

Does this request create multi-year scale-up costs or ongoing maintenance obligations?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe: It would require funds to be encumbered for this purpose every year and demand that USBE take more of a support role in helping to provide structures for LEAs to consider ways to use the funds that yield the intended result and meaningfully encourage positive innovative ideas. In addition to the extra money, USBE staff would be actively involved in consulting with LEAs to plan, sustain, and build teacher leaders as aligned with our strategic plan.

Itemized Budget Request:

(Please detail how the funding will be utilized across the following categories).

	FY 2027 (Current)	FY 2028 (proposed)
TOTAL REQUESTED	\$2.4 Million	\$2.4 Million (ongoing)

New USBE FTEs Requested: 0 (Enter number of new FTEs)

Can current FTEs be assigned these responsibilities? Explain.

Yes - this duty can be handled through the Effective Outcomes Team. I anticipate the Effective Outcomes Coordinator, who oversees Mentoring and Coaching could lead this effort.

If no FTEs are required, explain.

We can use existing staff (see above)

Performance Measures:

The Legislature requires clear, data-driven metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of newly funded programs. Please suggest 1 to 2 specific, measurable outcomes that can be used to track the success of this funding item if it is approved.

- Educator Retention data - would require tighter parameters on the grant to ensure that the retention is tied to the initiative LEAs are implementing

- Student Outcomes (increased test scores, attendance, or other specific metric LEAs measure)- would require those goals to be included in the grant proposal and the evidence tied directly to practice.

Both of these metrics respect the broad latitude LEAs have in determining how they can use these funds, but in order to show causation, there would need to be more expectation in the application itself to ensure what is measured is tied to the proposal.

SECTION 4: POLICY & STATUTE

(Complete only if your request involves changing or eliminating Utah State Code)

Code Sections Affected:

[53F-5-222](#). Mentoring and Supporting Teacher Excellence and Refinement Pilot Program.

Suggested Legislative Solution:

Create an ongoing funding stream so that LEAs can invest in longer-term solutions that can be funded beyond one year.

Safeguards:

The current legislation does not differentiate between the size of the LEA, and the amount of funding received. Thus a very small LEA (such as a charter or rural area) may receive the same amount of funding as a very large LEA.

For the purposes of data collection within the program, this allows us to learn about the impact of different funding levels across different LEAs. If this program is expanded and continued beyond a pilot status, this difference should be considered and addressed.