Growing Renton Educators to Accelerate Teaching (GREAT)

Frequently Asked Questions

University Partnerships

Who are the university partners?
During the 2026-27 school year, GREAT will partner with Central Washington University, City University of Seattle, Western Washington University, and Bellevue College. The program at Bellevue College is focused on individuals who do not yet hold a bachelor's degree and is in direct partnership with Central Washington University's alternative-certificate program. Western Washington's program is focused on EL and Bilingual educators.

How do I get in touch with the university partners?
We encourage you to reach out directly to our partners at their contact information below to indicate your interest in their program, receive additional information based on your specific need, and your intent to apply for GREAT.

- City University of Seattle – Melissa Meyers, myersm@cityu.edu
- Central Washington University – Jenny Dechaine - soe@cwu.edu
- Western Washington University – Beth Dillard, dillare@wwu.edu
- Bellevue College - Dr. W. Orcajo, w.orcajo@bellevuecollege.edu

Application Deadlines & Requirements

When are the application deadlines?
Each university has their own application deadlines, depending on the program you choose. The application deadline to be considered for RSD's GREAT program for the 2026-27 school year is **April 24, 2026**. GREAT applications will open on **March 16, 2026**.

How do I get into the program?
All interested individuals must submit an application and be selected for the RSD GREAT program. Individuals must then be **accepted and enrolled** into an RSD university partner program with City University, Central Washington, Western Washington University or Bellevue College.

What does the GREAT application require?
Applicants must complete a GREAT application. The application requires a letter of interest, information regarding the university program that the applicant has been accepted or applying to, and a letter of recommendation and a reference from the applicant's current principal.

Prior to program acceptance, individuals must submit a plan of program completion outlining their pathway to certification including expected graduation date and plan for student teaching. This plan must be approved by both HR and the building principal.

Program Length

How long is the program?

Depending on the pathway that you choose, GREAT supports cohort members to the finish line of the certification process. We anticipate this will take most people between 1-2 years.

GREAT Program Degree Options

What degrees are accepted for consideration to be admitted into GREAT?

Associate's Degree:

You have a transferable Associate's Degree and need a Bachelor's + teaching certificate

Bachelor's Degree:

You have a Bachelor's Degree and only need your teaching certificate

What types of funding are available through GREAT?

- **The Developing Educator Workforce Gran**t provides funds for candidate conditional loan scholarships and program, district, and mentor supports.
- **The New Schools Venture Fund Grant** provides last dollar aid to paraprofessionals of color working to obtain their teacher certification. The money can be used to fill any funding gaps (tuition, sub release time) after financial aid grants and scholarships are applied so that participants exit their programs debt free.

Eligibility for GREAT

Who is eligible for GREAT?

Only current RSD paraeducators who are assigned to direct student support roles (i.e. ML, ILC, RLC, 1:1) are eligible.

What endorsement areas are supported by GREAT?

Starting with the 2026-27 school year, GREAT will only support paraeducators seeking endorsement in the following areas:

- Special Education (K-12)
- Multilingual or Bilingual Education (K-12)
- Elementary Education (K-6)

I am not a paraeducator, am I eligible for GREAT?

No. However, if you are interested in the GREAT program, we strongly encourage you to apply for a paraeducator position that qualifies for the program. Please reach out directly to human resources at human.resources@rentonschools.us for a current list of open positions that qualify for the program and to be connected directly with the hiring managers for these roles.

I am a RESP member, but not in a paraeducator role. Am I eligible for GREAT?

No. However, if you are interested in the GREAT program, we strongly encourage you to apply for a paraeducator position that qualifies for the program. Please reach out directly to human resources at

human.resources@rentonschools.us for a current list of open positions that qualify for the program and to be connected directly with the hiring managers for these roles.

I am a current paraeducator and already enrolled in a certification program. Do I qualify for GREAT?
Maybe. You must be currently accepted and enrolled in a program with one of our partner universities (Central Washington University, Western Washington University, City University of Seattle), and continuing that program into the fall of 2026. You must still complete the GREAT application and be accepted into the GREAT cohort for the 2026-27 school year.

How many people will be accepted to GREAT?
We anticipate a cohort of up to four (4) individuals in this cohort.

Financial Support
What kind of financial support does GREAT offer during the program?

- **Pay & benefits**
  - Individuals selected for the GREAT program continue in full-time paraeducator positions and retain benefits and pay while attending classes
- **Release time/Student Teaching**
  - GREAT cohort members receive a total of up to 10 days of release time for internships, and trainings when needed
- **Books, fees, etc.**
  - GREAT does not pay the cost of books, testing, or any associated fees
- **Employment after GREAT**

GREAT participants receive up to 10 days of release time for internships and trainings when needed, and will be guaranteed a certificated teaching position with RSD in a high-needs school or subject for the 3 years following successful completion of the program.

Will GREAT pay all of my tuition?

GREAT offers two types of funding for accepted applicants:

- **The Developing Educator Workforce Gran**t provides funds for candidate conditional loan scholarships and program, district, and mentor supports.
- **The New Schools Venture Fund Grant** provides last dollar aid to paraprofessionals of color working to obtain their teacher certification. The money can be used to fill any funding gaps (tuition, sub release time) after financial aid grants and scholarships are applied so that participants exit their programs debt free. This means students must complete the FAFSA and work with university partners to apply any available university funding toward tuition. Once these processes are complete, GREAT will provide any additional tuition support that might be needed. *This aid may be combined with the DEWG grant scholarship.*

Does GREAT offer paid leaves of absence to complete student teaching?

No. GREAT participants must be able to complete the majority of their student teaching/internship hours within their current assignment. HR will work with GREAT applicants to identify a plan of program completion to confirm that paras are able to complete student teaching without financial impact.

Will GREAT pay for my Master's Degree?
No. The district commits to supporting GREAT program participants through certification. At this time, GREAT does not provide financial support for master's or doctoral degree programs.

Employment after GREAT

Am I guaranteed a position in Renton once I complete my program?
Yes. GREAT program participants are guaranteed a teaching position in a high-needs position in the district that matches their endorsement area once they complete their certification. The district considers the following to be "high-needs positions" for the purpose of employment after GREAT:

- Special Education (K-12)
- Multilingual or Bilingual Education (K-12)
- Elementary Education (K-6)

GREAT does not guarantee an interview, location and/or grade level. GREAT program participants are encouraged to apply to vacant positions and engage in the interview process if there are roles that they are excited about, or participants can choose to wait for district placement. Placements will be confirmed by August 1st of each year, if not before.

Am I guaranteed a teaching position in my current school?
No. GREAT does not guarantee position location. We encourage participants to discuss their desire to remain in their current location with their building principal.

What happens if I end up not wanting to continue teaching after my first year?
GREAT participants sign an agreement committing to three years of full-time certificated teaching the district after program completion. Individuals who do not complete this commitment may owe the district financially what the District has paid in last dollar aid towards the participant's costs.