

# WASHINGTON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

WEA is partnering with SubSchool as part of a statewide initiative to support Emergency Substitute Teachers.

## CASE STUDY

Post-pandemic, schools across Washington are relying more heavily on substitute teachers, and employing more subs who don't have teaching certifications. Seeing an urgent need to prepare these subs to lead classrooms, Washington's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) granted funding to the Washington Education Association (WEA), who in turn partnered with SubSchool, to create a statewide system of resources and support.

Under the leadership of Annie Lamberto, Special Populations Program Coordinator at WEA, the [Emergency Substitute Teacher \(EST\) Support Project](#) was born. Annie reflected on the beginning of this initiative, "Although WEA has extensive content and resources to support teachers, we immediately recognized that these wouldn't meet a substitute's needs. Given the time sensitivity in launching this project, we opted to look for the right partner who could provide the right resources and counsel to achieve our goals. The right partner was - and is - SubSchool. SubSchool not only aligned with our values, but also brought a wealth of evidence-driven expertise to the program. We viewed the partnership as a foundation that we could rapidly build upon."

WEA sponsors SubSchool memberships for ESTs across Washington state. With SubSchool, subs can complete role-specific professional learning through self-paced courses and live, virtual events. Annie is most proud of the subs' engagement and feedback: "The sub response has been amazing and incredibly positive. There's not one complaint, and what we hear more than anything is the benefit of practical application. Subs can apply what they learn to the classroom immediately, while building a sense of real community. Most importantly, subs feel like there is a space for them, and they are all learning together."

For Annie, building this sense of belonging for substitute teachers is critical. SubSchool has helped WEA to design and facilitate gatherings where subs can learn and connect with their peers. Through WEA's project, ESTs have the opportunity to attend virtual workshops, local SubCommunity gatherings, and regional Substitute Academies. Annie shared, "I can't even explain the appreciation of subs for the coaching sessions. Subs become emotional in trying to describe it because they feel so seen and understood."

As part of this effort, WEA also recognized the importance of convening, developing, and celebrating the HR team members who manage subs, and engaged SubSchool to help design and facilitate these events.



### ANNIE LAMBERTO

Special Populations Program Coordinator

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Annie explained, “We recently co-hosted a convening for HR leads who manage substitute teachers - and the feedback was off the charts. We saw this immediate ‘Aha!’ moment where HR leads leaned into a community where they could connect, vent, and most importantly, learn from. We were absolutely grateful for SubSchool’s support and insights in part of making this event such a success. We’re hosting four convenings, across the state of Washington, this year - and SubSchool will be there for all of them.”

Washington’s support of its uncredentialed substitute teachers is not only groundbreaking, but impactful for subs, in all districts. As Annie describes, “Our districts work hard to support substitute teachers, and knowing that this is a statewide program, subs feel like we are collectively paying attention to their individual needs...Our SubSchool experience is causing us to re-evaluate and explore substitute teacher membership in WEA, and how we can bring sustainability and long-term support to every single person leading classrooms throughout the state.”

The support for ESTs not only enhances subs’ ability to have an impact today, but it also builds the teacher pipeline for tomorrow. Annie explained, “As we look to diversify our teaching workforce and strengthen our substitute and teacher pipeline, we recognize that our substitute pool demographics are much more diverse than our certificated teacher population. There is an incredible opportunity to remove historical marginalization and support a racially diverse population of educators who could become high-impact teachers.”

Overall, Annie is grateful for the support and capacity that SubSchool has been able to provide. “The team behind SubSchool is just fabulous - really amazing. What really makes the difference is our value alignment, and how supportive and service-oriented they are at each step of the way,” she said.

The state of Washington and WEA’s investment in substitute teachers demonstrates the value and efficacy of preparing every educator to lead classrooms. The time has come for all states to invest in scalable, systemic solutions to bolster, retain, and develop their substitute teacher workforce.

To learn more, visit  
**[substantialclassrooms.org](https://substantialclassrooms.org)**  
or email us at  
**[info@substantialclassrooms.org](mailto:info@substantialclassrooms.org)**

See SubSchool  
in action:



## FEEDBACK FROM WEA SUBSTITUTES



*I learned that I am not alone in my experiences with substituting. I also learned that I have much to offer as a sub and should not sell myself short.*



*I learned to be flexible, compassionate and open-minded. Also, I feel more confident after viewing all the valuable information, suggestions and strategies to start subbing!*

HOW WAS IT?

9.0 / 10

WILL YOU USE IT?

9.2 / 10