

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Report Form

Instructions:

Please send an electronic copy of the Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers final completed report by June 30, 2021 to Grants.PELSB@state.mn.us.

Report components:

- Coversheet
- Teacher Mentorship & Retention of effective Teachers Program Narrative – Please describe how you have strengthened and/or supplemented your existing mentorship and retention efforts and how the awarded funds allowed you to do this work. Additionally, describe any specific work done to support teachers new to the profession or district, including teaching residents, teachers of color, teachers who are American Indian, teachers in license shortage areas, teachers with special needs, and/or experienced teachers in need of peer coaching. Finally, using the methodologies outlined in the “Progress Monitoring” portion of your original proposal, evaluate the effectiveness of the funded work.
- Program Data – Please provide data from the year funded by the grant. Please also describe how grant funding has impacted the data from the most recent reporting year. You are welcome to include graphs.
- Additional Reporting Requirements – Please provide information on any additional funding that was used to support mentorship and retention efforts. Districts and schools must also provide information on retention strategies that were developed as a part of the grant program.
- Teacher Mentorship & Retention of effective Teachers Grant Funds Expenditure – Please list all awarded funds, differentiating between funds spent and funds yet to be spent this fiscal year. Fill in the “method of progress monitoring” and “data” columns based on the information in sections VI of your proposal.

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Report

Grantee Information

Legal Name of Applicant Organization **The Wildflower Foundation**
Total Grant amount: **\$17,000**
Category we applied for: **A coalition of schools, teachers or non-licensed educators**

Identified Official with Authority

Name of official with authority to sign	Daniela Vasan
Title	Partner
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Primary Program Contact

Name of program contact	Daniela Vasan
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Program Narrative

On behalf of the Wildflower Equity Initiative (WEI), we are grateful for the opportunity to partner with PELSB to develop and strengthen our retention, leadership, and recruitment efforts to support Black, Indigenous, and Teachers of Color across the Wildflower Schools.

The WEI, in conjunction with Wildflower Schools in MN, addresses the opportunity gap in three ways; 1) By supporting licensed Montessori teacher leaders in opening authentic Montessori schools, embedded intentionally within historically marginalized communities. 2) By increasing the number of licensed Montessori-trained teachers of the global majority who are leading in Wildflower Schools, and 3) By forging a pathway for undergraduate students of color to gain exposure to the teaching profession and pursue Montessori Education as a viable career pathway.

Ultimately we are increasing the pipeline of teachers of color, helping professionals of color join the teaching profession, creating the conditions for teachers of color to stay in the teaching profession, and empowering teachers of color as leaders.

The focus of our work centered on implementing the Wildflower Equity Initiative's first cohort approach to the school startup journey. We intend to support emerging Teacher Leaders from all racial backgrounds, however, in this first cohort, and in the wake of George Floyd's murder, we made a conscious choice to center the Black community as participants in the program. This pathway supported four Montessori trained emerging Teacher Leaders through the three phases of the startup journey; Exploration, Planning & Startup. Through the cohort structure, we intentionally built a community of support and accountability among the emerging Teacher Leaders while simultaneously providing mentorship stipends to the teacher leaders providing advice and guidance through the exploration and planning panels. We also carried forward funds from our FY20 application where we provided coaching and professional development for teachers supporting their leadership, retention, and professional growth.

The FY21 grant from PELSB provided mentorship stipends for two Teacher Leaders of color to support the cohort of emerging Teacher Leaders through the advice panels of their exploration and planning albums. We anticipate carrying forward \$16,070, which we intend to use for additional mentorship stipends as experienced teachers provide guidance and advice to emerging Wildflower teachers.

The Wildflower School model centers around teacher-led, autonomous schools. We were able to also provide stipends to our Teacher Leaders which provided compensation for their ideas, mentorship, and time. We compensated two experienced teachers who are serving as mentors for all four of our WEI cohort members. Mentor teachers were paid a stipend of \$60/hour for their work.

Of the funds carried forward from FY20 to FY21, we provided stipends to five interns from the Dougherty Family College. We maintained our commitment to compensate the interns for their time. Teacher Leaders partnered with the interns to determine the best way to support each other while also navigating the challenges of school closures and the pandemic.

Lirio Montessori supported two interns, one student in their first year and one student in their second year of the program. Both **Cosmos (formerly Acorn) Montessori** and **Sweet Pea Montessori** supported one intern and split mentorship duties between two teacher leaders.

In terms of strengthening our mentorship and retention efforts, this partnership created the opportunity to expand our internship program and mentorship opportunities in the program's second year. More data is included in the subsequent section to acknowledge the strength and growth of our program.

Analysis of Data Progress Monitoring

Below are the four progress monitoring components we outlined in the Wildflower Equity Initiative's proposal.

1. Retention of BIPOC Teacher Leaders; Survey data from fellows and interns

Among the WEI cohort, three of the four participants have decided to move forward with opening a Wildflower school. We understand this process is deeply personal and the person best situated to make this decision is the teacher leader. The three WEI cohort participants have built strong relationships and decided to open a school together-Starflower Montessori. The emerging Teacher Leaders are actively looking for a shop front or space they can transform into a Montessori learning environment and expect to open in North Minneapolis. We anticipate they will open a school in FY22.

The Teacher Leaders who provided advice will remain advice givers for the Starflower team. We will provide mentorship stipends for advice givers and teacher mentors as we reestablish the internship program for the 2021-2022 school year.

Since we carried forward funds, we are including this summary of our work with the Dougherty Family College interns: We retained all four -100%- of our Interns throughout the year. Regarding the second year interns, 100% intend to declare teaching as their major, and have increased interest in becoming Montessori trained and certified. One of the two interns in their first year intend to declare teaching as their major while the second intern is open to the idea but not yet ready to commit. Interns reported feeling respected, affirmed and empowered as members of the school community in addition to feeling as though they were able to have a direct impact on students through their work, and vice versa.

2. Retention and Preparedness

We have supported three BIPOC cohort members on a pathway to open, teach, and lead in a Montessori school. The other fellow who had decided not to open a Wildflower school is still pursuing the possibility of opening an education-related program in North Minneapolis. We continue to believe in her work and will continue to share our resources and tools, as needed.

3. We will summarize the data gathered and utilize the results to learn and adapt as leaders and mentors in order to improve our process and approach.

Regarding the cohort, we have experienced significant benefits from this approach. The emerging Teacher Leaders are able to build community and accountability. From a facilitation perspective, we are able to be more strategic with our partner capacity since the emerging Teacher Leaders are able to engage with the content together and learn from each other. An additional benefit is that the cohort participants can see each other as knowledge holders rather than depending exclusively on Wildflower partners. We find this approach to be so effective that other Wildflower regions are adopting the cohort structure as the primary way to prepare emerging Teacher Leaders to open Wildflower schools.

Similar to the preceding section, since a portion of our carry forward funds were allocated to the internship program, we are including our learnings below:

Overall, considering both qualitative and quantitative data, the Wildflower Equity Initiative experienced tremendous success with our programming. Several elements that led to this success include intentionally pairing experienced teachers with interns. Teacher Leaders were able to support interns as guides while also supporting the needs of the students and administrative tasks required of being leaders. We prioritized engaging BIPOC Teacher Leaders first as mentors and ensured they were fairly compensated for their leadership, ideas, and more. As we move forward with our program, we will intentionally invite schools

in their second year or beyond to participate as intern host sites.. A school's founding year is challenging and we want to ensure interns have a stable and strong experience.

We partner with Montessori training centers such as the Montessori Center of Minnesota to provide free teaching assistant training. This helps interns understand the basic practices, approach, and philosophy of Montessori pedagogy. We look forward to continuing to offer this resource to interns in their first or second year.

We believe the regular check-ins between mentors and interns ensures expectations are clear with on-going reflection and also creates an opportunity to build strong, thoughtful relationships.

Based on our current results, we believe the internship and mentorship programs are strong and anticipate expanding these programs.

4. We will use formative data based off of the check-ins with mentor teachers about performance, individual goals, and daily attendance

This section is most relevant to the funds carried forward from FY20:

The Wildflower community is inclusive at its core, and through the Wildflower Equity Initiative, we lean even more intentionally on relationships and cultural relevance to shape the experience of our Interns and Mentor Teachers. There is a strong community and great potential at each school site, for mentors and interns alike to engage in community. In addition, both are invited to participate in our larger Community of Practice, where we share collective knowledge, build community, and share resources. This unique aspect of our educational design, combined with financial incentives for Interns and Teacher Leader's bolstered their participation within the Community of Practice. This increased investment in our charter-the Minnesota Wildflower Montessori School (MWMS)- and Wildflower as a whole has strengthened our work, and helped to increase the level of trust and transparency in our collective work.

There were zero reported disciplinary incidents on behalf of Mentor Teachers, and zero 'tensions' or grievances on behalf of Interns. Mentors and interns shared nearly 100% attendance for the semester.

We launched the WEI cohort program in 2020. This opportunity has helped us prepare to scale and prepare for more interns and cohort members for 2021-2022.

The funding also provided the opportunity to host four student interns (two of whom began during the spring semester of 2020). Through our surveys and formative data collected 75% of interns intended to declare Education majors and are interested in pursuing Montessori credentials. This is significant because the interns were either undecided or interested in a different career path prior to starting their internship program.

Teacher Mentorship & Retention of Effective Teachers Grant Program Data

Please provide the total expected numbers and percentages of total participants for each of the following groups that your program will involve. Numbers may reflect teachers in multiple categories being counted more than once. Each category's percentage is of the total number of teachers being mentored under this grant.

Table 1: Total number of teachers new to the profession or district that received mentoring as a result of this grant.

We used this resource to confirm teacher shortage areas: <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/mPg.cfm?pageID=2294>

Teachers Mentored Using Grant Funding	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black	White	Other
Tier 3 Teachers new to the profession or district						
Tier 2 new to the profession or district						
Tier 1 teachers new to the profession or district						
Teaching residents*				4		
Teacher in license shortage areas				4		
Teachers with special needs						
Experienced teachers in need of peer coaching						
Total: All teachers supported by grant funding				4		

*Teaching residents are those in a special in-service induction program, usually with a reduced instructional loads during the first year of employment and additional mentoring and/or professional development. For the purposes of this grant, residents are not pre-service candidates seeking initial licensure in their field and participating in a PELSB-approved residency program or student teachers completing other licensure programs.

Table 2: Total number of mentors who were paid stipends under this grants for providing mentorship to teachers.

Mentor Demographics	Paid a stipend as part of a larger mentorship program	Paid an additional stipend
American Indian or Alaskan Native		
Asian or Pacific Islander		
Hispanic	1	
Black	1 (pending 2 more teacher leaders to send invoices)	
White		
Other		
Total	2	

Additional Reporting Requirements: Retention Strategies

Per Minn. Stat. § 122A.70, a school district that receives a grant must negotiate additional retention strategies for teachers who are of color or who are American Indian in their beginning years of employment, such as financial incentives for working in the school/district for at least five years or providing collegial support through teacher placement. Please describe the strategies your organization developed.

A typical Wildflower school consists of two teachers serving 20-30 students in a single classroom environment. In addition to teaching in the classroom, teachers also manage finance, marketing, and operations. Handling all facets of school is very empowering; it leads to inspiring leaders and conceptually consistent schools. Each Teacher Leader must have Montessori credentials and commit to teaching Montessori with high-fidelity. They are also fully autonomous to make decisions needed for their community of students and families.

We believe these structures and approaches -autonomous teachers, highly trained with high quality Montessori pedagogy, administrative responsibilities- are critical for retention. Teachers do not need to leave the classroom to gain leadership experience. They lead on a smaller scale while remaining deeply connected to the community and classroom.

We also offer equity related training such as Embracing Equity to support the on-going development of Black, Indigenous, and Teacher Leaders of Color and white allies. This development honors both the individual's needs and provides a community of practice or cohort approach. In the coming year we will partner with the 228 Accelerator to further develop our understanding and implementation of EquityxDesign and community centered decision making.

Additional Funding

Please list any and all additional funding you used to support teacher mentorship and retention efforts. Specify if these funds were used to support teachers new to the profession or district, including teaching residents, teachers of color, teachers who are American Indian, teachers in license shortage areas, teachers with special needs, and/or experienced teachers in need of peer coaching.

The amounts below reflect the project budget for the entire fiscal year. We are including funding sources and funds utilized during the grant period from July 2020-June 2021.

Mentorship & Retention efforts

Amount	Purpose	Funder
20,000	Funds were directed to general operating costs associated with establishing the fellowship program.	Sauer Family Foundation
70,000	Funds were directed to supporting the WEI cohort and establishing the fellowship program	Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of MN
110,000	General operating --salaries for staff co-leading the WEI cohort (both planning and implementing the process)	Various funders from the St. Paul and MN Foundation

Grant Funds Expenditure

Table 3:

Amount	Description of Use of Funds	Primarily Used for:	Methods of Progress Monitoring	Data
Funds spent \$930	Mentor Stipends	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment	Teacher Leader retention Retention in mentorship program	100% retention, especially within BIPOC teachers 100% retention with interest to expand offering to next year's internship cohort
Funds carried forward into FY21 and spent \$6130 \$1090 Total: 7,220	Coaching/PD	<input type="checkbox"/> Retention <input type="checkbox"/> Induction	Formative data from check-ins End of semester surveys	qualitative data on experience (see Narrative) Quantitative data-100% retention in program 75% intent to declare Education major

We anticipate carrying forward \$16,070 into FY22 from the remaining FY21 balance.