



# Addressing the Bilingual Teacher Shortage

Daniela Torre Gibney

Hannah Kelly

Sara Rutherford-Quach

Jennifer Ballen Riccards

Carrie Parker

*This brief is the second of a four-part series that focuses on bilingual education, bilingual educators, and addressing the bilingual teacher shortage in contexts across the United States. This research was commissioned by the New Jersey State Department of Education, which is committed to providing quality bilingual education to its linguistically diverse student population.*

Many specialized subject areas face shortages of teachers who can fill positions, and bilingual education is no exception. More than half of states nationwide are experiencing bilingual teacher shortages, and the states with the most acute shortages are those that provide bilingual education to the greatest numbers of English learners. **In this brief, we share strategies that can help mitigate bilingual teacher shortages and provide considerations for state and district leaders who are interested in addressing these shortages.**

### **Citation:**

This publication is in the public domain. While permission to reprint is not necessary, reproductions should be cited as:

Torre Gibney, D., Kelly, H., Rutherford-Quach, S., Ballen Riccards, J. & Parker, C. (2021). *Addressing the bilingual teacher shortage*. CCNetwork.

The content of this brief was developed under a grant from the Department of Education through the Office of Program and Grantee Support Services (PGSS) within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), by the Region 4 Comprehensive Center at Policy Studies Associates under Award #S S283B190047. This contains resources that are provided for the reader's convenience. These materials may contain the views and recommendations of various subject matter experts as well as hypertext links, contact addresses, and websites to information created and maintained by other public and private organizations. The U.S. Department of Education does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information included in these materials. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, enterprise, curriculum, or program of instruction mentioned in this document is intended or should be inferred.

## Bilingual teacher shortage

Across the United States, many districts find that they are in short supply of bilingual teachers. More than half of states nationwide are experiencing bilingual teacher shortages, with shortages most acute in states that provide bilingual education to the greatest numbers of English learners.

### Three main drivers account for teacher shortages:

1. obstacles recruiting, training, certifying, and retaining teachers (i.e., a leaky teacher pipeline)
2. inadequate compensation or incentives, and
3. poor working conditions.<sup>i</sup>

Policy solutions that mitigate these drivers include implementing reforms aimed at strengthening the teacher pipeline, providing additional financial incentives to teachers working in shortage areas, and improving the working conditions of current teachers. In Exhibit 1, we provide examples of specific programs and policies some states and districts have adopted to reduce existing shortages.

### Exhibit 1. Overview of three evidence-based approaches to address teacher shortages

Approach	Example Strategies
<p><b>Strengthening the Teacher Pipeline</b></p> <p>Strategies using this approach aim to increase the number of people entering the teaching profession, beginning as early as middle school, and decrease the number of people who leave the profession before completing their training and being hired as a teacher of record.<sup>ii</sup></p>	<p><b>Grow Your Own (GYO) programs</b></p> <p>GYO programs identify and support educators (including paraprofessionals and teachers without a current bilingual endorsement), students (in middle school, high school, or college), and community members (including parents, military, and career-changers) who are interested in teaching to complete the certification process.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> The Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) in Chicago works with local public schools to identify promising paraprofessionals and parents and then partners with local teacher preparation programs to offer teacher education classes in Logan Square elementary schools.<sup>iii</sup></p> <p>The College of New Jersey and Rowan University host urban education summer programs for high school students interested in the teaching profession. Students in the programs receive classroom experience through internships and hands-on learning.<sup>iv</sup></p>
	<p><b>Residency programs</b></p> <p>Teacher residency programs model themselves after medical residencies and can attract non-traditional teaching candidates. Candidates obtain classroom experience while taking teacher preparation classes and often earn a full teaching certification within 2 years.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> The Boston Teacher Residency places teacher candidates in schools and provides them with instruction, professional support, stipends, and free tuition if they commit to teaching in the city of Boston for three years after graduating.<sup>v</sup></p>
	<p><b>Teacher induction and mentorship programs</b></p> <p>These programs provide individualized instructional support for new teachers, usually from veteran teachers or leaders. Programs typically</p>

Approach	Example Strategies
	<p>consist of establishing regular check-ins between new teachers and mentor teachers or administrative staff, providing additional feedback to new teachers, and providing additional planning or classroom support.<sup>vi</sup></p> <p><b>Example:</b> The New Teacher Center works with schools and districts across the country to support new and beginning teachers through induction and mentorship. Their programs have demonstrated positive impacts on teacher practice.<sup>vii</sup></p>
<p><b>Providing Financial Incentives</b></p> <p>Financial incentives aim to attract teaching candidates to hard-to-staff schools and content areas, such as bilingual education, and to retain teachers once they accept in-demand positions.<sup>viii</sup></p>	<p><b>Salary schedule modifications/diversified pay and retirement benefit waivers</b></p> <p>Salary schedule modifications and other benefits can incentivize current teachers to earn a bilingual endorsement and fill a bilingual teaching position.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Salary enhancements and bonuses</b></p> <p>Monetary incentives, in the form of salary enhancements, bonuses, or stipends are often used to attract and retain bilingual teachers, particularly in impacted districts.<sup>ix</sup></p> <hr/> <p><b>Scholarships, tuition subsidies, or loan forgiveness</b></p> <p>Non-salary monetary incentives can improve bilingual teacher retention and attract new bilingual teachers.</p> <hr/> <p><b>In-kind incentives</b></p> <p>In-kind incentives, such as housing assistance or subsidized meals, can provide needed support while teachers complete requirements for a bilingual endorsement.</p>
<p><b>Improving Working Conditions</b></p> <p>Strategies that involve improving working conditions for bilingual teachers can serve both as an incentive for bilingual teachers to enter the profession and as a strategy to minimize attrition.<sup>x</sup></p>	<p><b>Provide sufficient resources</b></p> <p>Adequate instructional resources can be a challenge for bilingual teachers, particularly for those teaching languages other than Spanish. Ensuring access to necessary curricular resources in their target language can be a strong incentive.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Allow for teacher collaboration and autonomy</b></p> <p>Greater collaboration and autonomy can decrease on-the-job stress, which may help reduce bilingual teacher attrition.<sup>xi</sup></p> <hr/> <p><b>Provide training for leaders and all staff on bilingual education</b></p> <p>Providing professional support and investing in bilingual teachers strengthens the structure of bilingual programs within schools.<sup>xii</sup></p>

## Considerations for addressing the bilingual teacher shortage

States, districts, and schools often decide to offer bilingual education in an effort to increase equity, celebrate and honor the multicultural and linguistic diversity of their student body, and enrich the local community by building a multilingual population.<sup>xiii</sup> Bilingual education is an effort to cultivate the whole child and is best implemented by tapping into the assets of the whole

community. Below we offer considerations for how state and district policy makers can discover and use the talents of the local population to understand and apply appropriate policy levers for addressing a local bilingual teacher shortage.

- **Identify community assets:** Tapping into diverse communities to develop bilingual educators leverages existing skills and can help schools cultivate an inclusive school environment.<sup>xiv</sup> When identifying community assets, state or district leaders can consider the following:
  - **What populations may be positioned to succeed in bilingual educator roles?** These may include existing teachers, paraprofessionals, bilingual and biliterate middle and high school students, undergraduates, former military, and/or members of the community.
  - **What types of supports would these populations need to pursue and complete their bilingual endorsement?** Supports may be financial, programmatic, logistical, instructional, or related to mentorship. For example, paraprofessionals who need to maintain a steady income while pursuing their credential may benefit from logistical and financial support to complete their credential and endorsement.
- **Assess needs at the district level:** Needs related to the bilingual teacher shortage may vary by district. Districts can use what they learn from a needs-assessment to identify the types of bilingual educators that they need now and in the future. Needs-assessments can also pinpoint whether their educator shortage is a result of issues with the teacher pipeline, inadequate financial incentives, or unfavorable working conditions. A needs-assessment can document:
  - the languages students speak;
  - the number of language groups with more than 20 students as well as the total number of students within each language group;
  - the number of students forecast to speak each language in 5 and 10 years;
  - the current bilingual teacher supply (by language); and
  - the major obstacles that contribute to the teacher shortage locally, including policies, assessments, and fees related to earning a bilingual endorsement and co-requisite teaching certificate.
- **Establish strong partnerships:** Supports and incentives for recruiting and retaining new bilingual educators should be part of a holistic rather than a stand-alone initiative. Creating a holistic solution to a teacher shortage requires that all of the institutions that new teachers are involved with—from the preparation program to the school district that hires them—work together to provide seamless support.
- **Explore external sources:** Some states facing bilingual teacher shortages have turned to external teacher pools, often recruiting native speakers from their home countries.<sup>xv</sup> When considering the possibility of external sources, reflect on:
  - Advantages and disadvantages of recruiting bilingual educators from other states, territories, or nations; and
  - Community connections that districts can leverage to help recruit bilingual educators from outside the state.

## Endnotes

---

- <sup>i</sup> Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *National Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP Bulletin*, 86(631), 16–16+.
- <sup>ii</sup> Education Commission of the States. (2016, May). *Mitigating teacher shortages: Alternative teacher certification*. <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Mitigating-Teacher-Shortages-Alternative-Certification.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> Skinner, E. A. (2010). Project nueva generación and grow your own teachers: Transforming schools and teacher education from the inside out. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 37(3), 155–167. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23479503.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5fc702f6836e9cd11a42cf2f8279800c>
- <sup>iv</sup> New Jersey Department of Education. (2009). *New Jersey's teacher equity plan*. <https://www.nj.gov/education/title1/archive/hqs/nclb/equity.pdf>
- <sup>v</sup> Boston Teacher Residency. (n.d.). <https://www.bpe.org/boston-teacher-residency/>
- <sup>vi</sup> Ingersoll, R., Smith, T. (2004). Do teacher induction and mentoring matter? *NASSP Bulletin*, 88 (638), 28–40.
- Ingersoll R., Strong M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81 (2), 201–233.
- <sup>vii</sup> New Teacher Center. (n.d.). <https://newteachercenter.org/our-solutions/>
- <sup>viii</sup> Education Commission of the States. (2016, May). *Mitigating teacher shortages: Financial incentives*. <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Mitigating-Teacher-Shortages-Financial-incentives.pdf>
- <sup>ix</sup> Houston Independent School District. (2019). <https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/69109>
- <sup>x</sup> Brown, K. M., & Wynn, S. R. (2009, January). Finding, supporting, and keeping: The role of the principal in teacher retention issues. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 8(1), 37–63. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15700760701817371>
- <sup>xi</sup> Pearson, L. C., & Moomaw, W. (2005). The relationship between teacher autonomy and stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 29(1), 38–54. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ718115.pdf>
- <sup>xii</sup> Batt, E. G. (2008, spring). Teachers' perceptions of ELL education: Potential solutions to overcome the greatest challenges. *Multicultural Education; San Francisco*, 15(3), 39–43. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ793903.pdf>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Hanover Research. (2016, April). *Strategies for addressing critical teacher shortages*. Arlington, VA: Hanover Research.
- <sup>xiv</sup> New Jersey Department of Education. (2017, June). *Thread: An approach for recruitment & retention of bilingual professionals*. <https://www.nj.gov/education/bilingual/resources/thread/THREAD.pdf>
- <sup>xv</sup> Fee, J. F. (2011). Latino immigrant and guest bilingual teachers: Overcoming personal, professional, and academic culture shock. *Urban Education*, 46(3), 390–407.