

Date of Hearing: April 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2056 (Alvarez) – As Introduced February 18, 2026

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill expands the teacher exchange program participation eligibility to additional local educational agency (LEA) types and authorizes LEAs that are United States Department of State (DOS) designated J-1 visa sponsors, in addition to the California Department of Education (CDE), to sponsor teachers from Mexico.

FISCAL EFFECT:

No new state costs.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

By opening the opportunity for supporting exchanges with Mexico, this groundbreaking legislation unlocks access to a pool of exceptionally qualified temporary educators who bring rich expertise in Spanish-language instruction and culturally relevant teaching methods.

2) **Background. *Exchange Visitor Teacher Program.*** Since the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (the Fulbright-Hayes Act), federal law has authorized teacher exchanges between the U.S. and other countries, using federal exchange visitor visas known as J-1 visas. The DOS designates public and private entities to act as exchange program sponsors. According to the CDE, a visiting teacher may remain in the CDE's program for a period not to exceed three years unless a specific extension of one or two years is authorized. Visiting teachers must meet the qualifications for teaching in California's public schools and must pass the first year's probation with the designated school district or charter school in order to remain for an authorized five-year program period. The CDE also operates a summer migrant education exchange program, in which teachers from Mexico serve in summer programs for students who are children or dependents of migrant agricultural workers. CDE staff coordinate the Teacher Exchange Program through an MOU with each country and participating LEAs must sign an agreement of collaboration with the CDE to employ an exchange visitor teacher.

Sponsorship of Mexican Teachers Limited to the CDE. Historically, the CDE has interpreted existing law and MOUs the CDE has with both Mexico and Spain to authorize

CDE as the sole sponsor of teachers from either country under the exchange visitor teacher program. This bill authorizes all California LEAs to serve as J-1 visa sponsors for teachers from Mexico under the program, in addition to the CDE, which may increase the number of foreign teachers who could serve in California schools.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 833 (Alvarez) of 2025 is substantially similar to this bill. The Governor vetoed the bill with the following message:

This bill is unnecessary as there is no statutory barrier to expanding program sponsorship for teachers from other countries, including Mexico, to California. Federal law does not require a single exclusive sponsor. Further, the author's stated goal is to help fill persistent educator shortages, which is contrary to the program's purpose to promote cross-cultural understanding and short-term professional growth opportunities.

Analysis Prepared by: Aaron Heredia / APPR. / (916) 319-2081