
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2056 **Hearing Date:** June 3, 2026
Author: Alvarez
Version: February 18, 2026
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Ian Johnson

Subject: Teachers: exchange programs: local educational agencies.

SUMMARY

This bill revises and recasts the World Language Teacher Exchange and Recruitment Law of 1963 by expanding authorized teacher exchange and recruitment activities to include county offices of education and charter schools, expressly authorizing exchanges with Mexico, removing specified state-level administrative responsibilities, and authorizing designated visa sponsors to facilitate placements of teachers from Mexico in California schools for cultural exchange purposes.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the World Language Teacher Exchange and Recruitment Law of 1963.
- 2) Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt rules and regulations under which teachers employed by California school districts may exchange positions with teachers in schools in other countries for periods of one year or less.
- 3) Requires exchange arrangements to be made through the California Department of Education (CDE), in cooperation with teacher exchange programs administered by agencies of the federal government.
- 4) Authorizes participating school districts to grant leaves of absence to certificated employees participating in exchange programs and to employ replacement teachers during the period of exchange.
- 5) Provides that certificated employees participating in exchange programs retain specified rights and benefits, including retirement system membership rights and accumulated leave benefits.
- 6) Authorizes governing boards to enter into agreements and take actions necessary to carry out teacher exchange programs.

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Revises and recasts the World Language Teacher Exchange and Recruitment Law of 1963.
- 2) Expands authorized participation in teacher exchange and recruitment activities to include county offices of education and charter schools, in addition to school districts.
- 3) Expressly authorizes teacher exchanges and recruitment activities involving Mexico.
- 4) Removes the requirement that the SBE adopt rules and regulations governing teacher exchanges.
- 5) Removes the requirement that the CDE administer exchange arrangements or coordinate those arrangements with federal teacher exchange programs.
- 6) Eliminates the existing one-year limitation on teacher exchanges.
- 7) Authorizes, rather than requires, the adoption of regulations governing exchange and recruitment activities.
- 8) Requires any regulations adopted to authorize visa sponsors designated by the United States Department of State to sponsor teachers from Mexico for placement in school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools for purposes of cultural exchange.
- 9) Makes conforming and technical changes to update statutory references and terminology throughout the article.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “AB 2056 constitutes a bold and transformative legislative response to the persistent difficulties facing California’s bilingual education and English learner programs. 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. With over 1.1 million English Learners in California’s public schools, the inclusion of Mexican teachers is not just beneficial but essential for cultivating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. This initiative not only aims to bridge the critical gap of bilingual teachers—particularly in subjects such as math, science, and special education—but also enhances the educational experience by fostering global education and cultural exchange.

“The proposed bill also seeks to enhance cultural exchange opportunities. Numerous teachers from Mexico have expressed interest in participating as

temporary educators in California. Beyond the professional benefits of program participation, these educators are afforded the opportunity to observe and engage with California's cultural environment. It also expands the range of opportunities, allowing local educational agencies, including school districts and county offices of education, to decide whether to participate in bringing a temporary international teacher from Mexico for cross-cultural exchange."

- 2) ***Modernizing a largely dormant statutory framework.*** The World Language Teacher Exchange and Recruitment Law of 1963 was enacted at a time when formalized teacher exchange programs were more centrally coordinated through state and federal agencies. Existing law still contemplates a state-directed structure in which the SBE adopts regulations, and the CDE administers exchange arrangements in coordination with federal programs. In practice, however, many modern international educator exchange programs operate through direct partnerships between local educational agencies (LEAs) and federally designated visa sponsors. This bill updates statute to better align with the current operational reality of international teacher recruitment and exchange programs.
- 3) ***Addressing ongoing bilingual teacher workforce challenges.*** California continues to experience staffing shortages in bilingual education and world language instruction. Teacher shortages have been particularly acute in dual language immersion programs and in schools serving large populations of English learners. LEAs have increasingly explored international recruitment pipelines, particularly with Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, as one strategy for addressing persistent workforce shortages. By expressly authorizing exchanges and recruitment activities involving Mexico and permitting placements facilitated through designated visa sponsors, this bill seeks to provide greater statutory clarity for these arrangements.
- 4) ***Shift from state-level administration to local flexibility.*** This bill substantially reduces the formal role of the SBE and the CDE in administering exchange programs. Rather than requiring statewide regulations and department-administered arrangements, the bill moves toward a more decentralized framework in which LEAs may work more directly with exchange organizations and visa sponsors. Supporters may argue that this approach provides greater flexibility and reduces unnecessary state administrative involvement. However, the shift also raises broader questions regarding consistency, oversight, and accountability across programs that may operate differently from one LEA to another.
- 5) ***Bill is similar to measure vetoed last year.*** AB 833 (Alvarez, 2025) would have required that the rules and regulations adopted by the SBE under which teachers employed by LEAs and charter schools may exchange positions with teachers in schools in other countries authorize J-1 visa sponsors designated by the United States Department of State, in addition to the CDE, to sponsor teachers from Mexico for placement in California LEAs to promote cultural exchange. That bill was vetoed by the Governor 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.”

This bill is substantially similar to AB 833, but additionally removes the requirement that exchanges be made through the CDE and removes the department’s authority to administer the program; eliminates the requirement that exchanges be limited to one year or less; states that exchanges with teachers from Mexico may help provide California pupils with access to bilingual instruction and assist LEAs in meeting bilingual education needs; and removes the authority for the department to accept federal grants for the program. As a result, this bill arguably moves even farther away from the traditional conception of a short-term cultural exchange program and more directly frames the program as a workforce strategy for addressing bilingual teacher shortages. The Committee may wish to consider whether those objectives are appropriately aligned with the historical purpose and federal structure of J-1 cultural exchange programs.

SUPPORT

Alameda County Office of Education
Association of California School Administrators
California Association for Bilingual Education
California Charter Schools Association
San Diego Unified School District
Santa Clara County Office of Education

OPPOSITION

None received

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