

GOVERNOR'S VETO
AB 833 (Alvarez)
As Enrolled September 8, 2025
2/3 vote

SUMMARY

Authorizes local educational agencies (LEAs), in addition to the California Department of Education (CDE), to sponsor teachers from Mexico under the J-1 visa program, for placement in California LEAs in order to promote cultural exchange, and requires the CDE to annually report on the program.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires that the rules and regulations adopted by the SBE under which teachers employed by California LEAs may exchange positions with teachers in schools in other countries for a period of one year or less authorize J-1 visa sponsors designated by the United States Department of State (DOS), in addition to the CDE, to sponsor teachers from Mexico for placement in California LEAs to promote cultural exchange for both of the following purposes:
 - a) To foster cross-cultural understanding by allowing Mexican teachers to share their knowledge, traditions, and teaching methodologies with pupils and educators in California; and
 - b) To provide participating teachers with firsthand experience in the United States education system, strengthening international collaboration and encouraging mutual appreciation of diverse educational approaches and cultural perspectives.
- 2) Defines, for purposes of this program, LEA to include a school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school.
- 3) Requires the CDE, by December 31, 2026, and annually thereafter, to report to the relevant policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature on the exchanges conducted pursuant to the World Language Teacher Exchange and Recruitment Law of 1963, including, but not limited to, the number of teachers participating in the program, disaggregated by their home country, grade level and subject matter, and hosting LEA.

Governor's Veto Message

This bill directs the State Board of Education to update California's teacher exchange program regulations to allow entities authorized by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor teacher exchanges with other countries, including Mexico.

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.

COMMENTS

Federal and state law authorizes exchange visitor teacher program. Since 1961, the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (the Fulbright-Hayes Act), has authorized teacher exchanges between the U.S. and other countries, using federal exchange visitor visas known as J-1 visas. According to the CDE, the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program is to promote:

- 1) Cross-cultural exchanges;
- 2) Understanding and respect between California teachers and foreign teachers;
- 3) Professional growth opportunities for teachers of California and foreign countries; and
- 4) Interest in international studies and cross-cultural awareness.

The DOS designates public and private entities to act as exchange program sponsors. J-1 nonimmigrants are sponsored by an exchange program that is designated as such by the DOS.

According to the CDE, a visiting teacher can remain in CDE's program for a program 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 of migrant agricultural workers.

Memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the CDE and Mexico's Secretariat of Education.

According to materials provided by the author, the CDE interprets a 2004 MOU between California and Mexico's Secretariat of Education to make it the exclusive sponsor of teachers from Mexico under the exchange visitor program. According to correspondence between Mexico's Secretariat of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), the Secretariat "[sees] no issue with Mexican teachers partnering with any U.S. DOS-designated sponsor for their participation in J-1 programs, including, but not limited to, the exchange program operated by the CDE. By offering this flexibility, we aim to broaden the range of opportunities available to Mexican educators, enhancing their professional growth and allowing more schools and students across California to benefit from their expertise."

According to the author, as a result of the CDE serving as the sole sponsor of teachers from Mexico, a small number of Mexican teachers (ranging between 8 and 21 during the years 2017-18 and 2023-24) are sponsored to teach in California each year.

This bill would authorize California LEAs and charter schools to serve as sponsors in addition to the CDE, thereby increasing the number of foreign teachers who could serve in California schools. The Assembly may wish to consider that this bill could significantly expand the number of teachers exchanged with Mexico, from less than 20 annually to many thousands.

According to the Author

"AB 833 represents a bold and transformative step in addressing California's persistent teacher shortages, particularly in the vital areas of bilingual education and high-demand subjects. By mandating exchanges with Mexico, this groundbreaking legislation unlocks access to a pool of exceptionally qualified 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. Furthermore, AB 833 emphasizes accountability through annual reporting on the program's impact, ensuring that California builds strong educational partnerships with Mexico to better serve its diverse student population."

Arguments in Support

The San Diego County Office of Education writes, "Since 1986, when the U.S. Department of State designated CDE as a sponsor for the Exchange Visitor Program, the Teacher Exchange Program has been instrumental in bringing credentialed teachers from abroad to California on J-1 visas. These educators have played a critical role in supporting bilingual and bicultural education, particularly in classrooms with high numbers of English learners. However, the current arrangement lacks scalability, leaving many students in need of bilingual or bicultural teachers without access to these vital educational opportunities.

AB 833 (Alvarez) would expand exchanges with Mexico, which would help address the shortage of qualified bilingual educators and strengthen cultural and educational ties between California and Mexico. By increasing the limited number of Mexican teachers sponsored by CDE, we can better serve our diverse student population and ensure they receive the high-quality, culturally responsive education they deserve.

AB 833's requirement for CDE to report annually to the relevant policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature, beginning by Dec. 31, 2026, is a critical step toward improving the program's transparency and effectiveness. These reports will provide valuable insights into the number of foreign teachers participating in the program, its impact on bilingual education, and areas for improvement. This data-driven approach will help ensure the program meets the needs of California's students and schools."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, the CDE estimates General Fund costs of \$430,000 each year to hire additional staff necessary to administer the expanded version of the teacher exchange program and prepare the annual report required by the bill.

VOTES

ASM EDUCATION: 9-0-0

YES: Muratsuchi, Hoover, Addis, Alvarez, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Patel

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-1-1

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO: DeMaio

ABS, ABST OR NV: Tangipa

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

UPDATED

VERSION: September 8, 2025

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FN: 0002145