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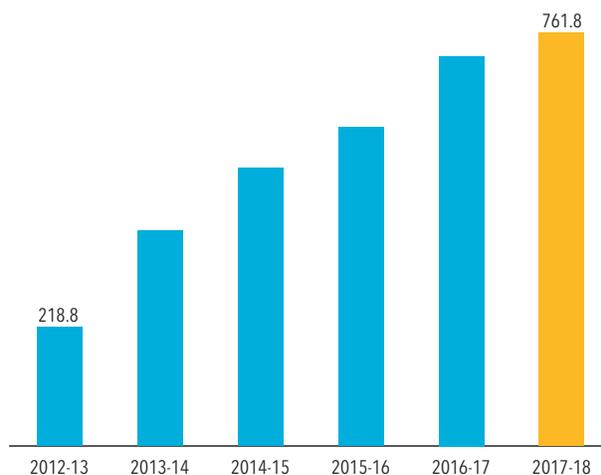
## California’s Bilingual Opportunity: Meeting the Demand for Bilingual Education Teachers to Help Students Achieve Biliteracy

Nearly 2.6 million California K-12 public school students (41.8%) bring a linguistic asset with them to school every day: [living in homes where a language other than English is spoken](#). A majority of these students (1.4 million) demonstrate English proficiency during their school years. But students’ home language skills are often neglected at school and that means many do not receive the [state biliteracy designation on their high school diplomas](#) that could benefit students as they apply for higher education and employment opportunities. California can change this trend of overlooking the language assets of its K-12 students by increasing its supply of adequately trained bilingual education teachers who can help students become biliterate. Increasing the number of bilingual education teachers in California’s classrooms would help improve students’ futures and play an important role in meeting the demand for bilingual workers and boosting the state’s competitiveness in an increasingly globalized economy.

While California has taken some important steps in recent years to help bilingual students achieve biliteracy, the state faces significant challenges in meeting the need for adequately trained bilingual education teachers who can support these students. Voters ended restrictions to bilingual programs by approving Proposition 58 in November 2016. The following year the State Board of Education adopted the [California English Learner Roadmap](#) and the Legislature established the [Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program](#). In that time, the demand for bilingual education teachers has grown – as it has every year since 2012-13 when school districts estimated hiring close to 220 bilingual education teachers. By 2017-18, that number had increased by nearly 250%, to an estimate of roughly 760.

### Demand for K-12 Bilingual Education Teachers Has Increased in California Every Year Since 2012-13

School District Estimates of Full-Time Equivalent Teacher Hires for the Following School Year



Source: California Department of Education

The shortage of adequately trained bilingual education teachers adds to the challenge of increasing demand.<sup>1</sup> One way to assess that shortage is to look at the number of teachers who have been authorized to teach bilingually in recent years, which pales in comparison to the number of K-12 students who live in homes where languages other than English are spoken. Specifically, a large imbalance exists between 1) the number of students who live in homes where one of the top 10 languages is spoken and 2) teachers who earned an authorization to teach in those languages from 2008-09 to 2017-18. For example, while Spanish-speaking teachers earned the largest share of bilingual authorizations during this period, the number of students who lived in Spanish-speaking homes in 2017-18 was substantially higher, resulting in a ratio of more than 250-to-1. The ratio for most other languages was even more imbalanced: more than 2,000-to-1 for students from Vietnamese-speaking homes, nearly 3,200-to-1 for Filipino-speaking homes, and more than 6,800-to-1 for Arabic-speaking homes.

## Demand for K-12 Bilingual Education Teachers Outstrips Supply in California

Language	Students From Homes Where a Language Other Than English Is Spoken	Bilingual Authorizations Issued From 2008-09 Through 2017-18	Student-to-Bilingual Authorization Ratio
Spanish	2,037,851	7,909	257.7
Vietnamese	80,612	38	2,121.4
Mandarin	65,170	339	192.2
Filipino	51,148	16	3,196.8
Cantonese	47,632	91	523.4
Arabic	34,117	5	6,823.4
Korean	34,493	155	222.5
Punjabi	22,315	1	22,315.0
Russian	20,875	4	5,218.8
Armenian	17,975	27	665.7

Note: A bilingual authorization authorizes teachers to deliver instruction in languages other than English and does not include teaching intern credentials, permits, and waivers.

Source: California Department of Education and California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

The bilingual education teacher shortage is a significant obstacle preventing California students from achieving biliteracy. To address this shortage, policymakers can take additional steps to encourage people to become bilingual education teachers, support and retain them, and diversify the languages that those educators are prepared to teach. For example, the Legislature should extend and increase the modest \$5 million provided for the Bilingual Teacher Professional Development Program, funding that will run out in 2020. Policymakers should also create systems to track and report students who receive the State Seal of Biliteracy and use this information to recruit, and diversify the languages of, bilingual education teachers, incentivize and prioritize career and technical education funding that creates pathways for bilingual educators, and increase the number of universities offering programs that authorize bilingual education teachers.

The language assets of California's K-12 students present key opportunities. Increasing the supply of adequately trained bilingual education teachers is necessary to leverage those opportunities so more students can achieve biliteracy and the state can meet the demands of an increasingly globalized economy.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the shortage of bilingual teachers see the 2017 [survey](#) conducted by Californians Together.

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