



# Bilingual Teacher Shortages in California: A Problem Likely to Grow

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The passage of Proposition 58 in November 2016 removes restrictions on bilingual education programs for California's English Learner (EL) students, allowing California school districts to more easily create or expand bilingual and immersion programs. Proposition 58 amends and removes key components of Proposition 227 that, when passed in 1998, severely limited the extent to which schools could offer bilingual education. Now, schools and families have greater latitude to seek bilingual education, which will likely lead to increased demand for teachers with bilingual authorizations. Teachers in bilingual programs must be fluent in both English and the second language of instruction, as well as pedagogically skilled to support language acquisition and academic content mastery. Teacher shortages pose a unique challenge in this context. As districts and schools attempt to create or expand bilingual programs, they will have to vie for an already limited supply of fully prepared teachers, in addition to recruiting teachers with bilingual authorizations.

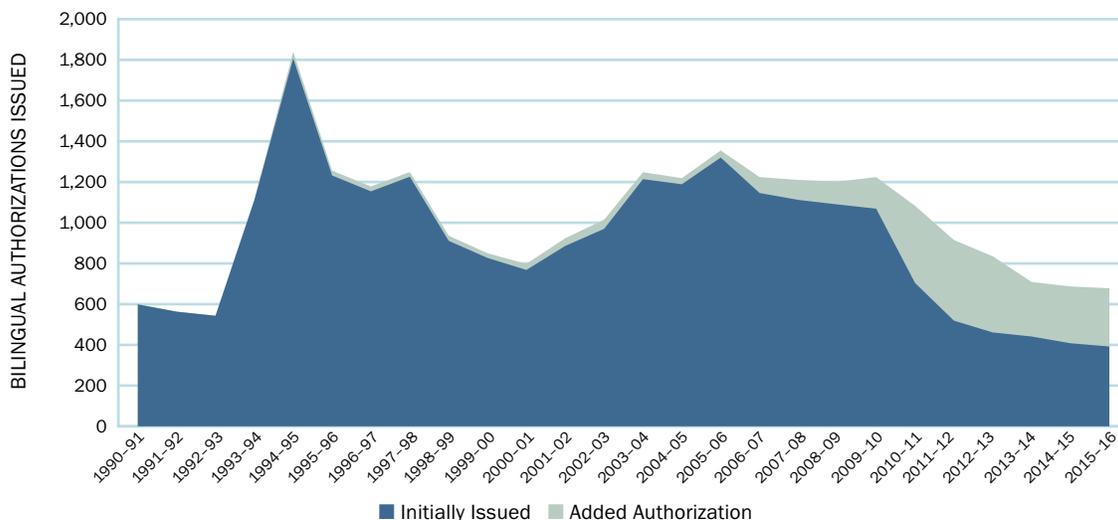
## Bilingual Education Trends

- **There are 1.4 million English Learners in California, or about one in five students.**<sup>1</sup> Before the passage of Proposition 227, about 30% of ELs were served by bilingual programs. A decade later, the number of EL students served by bilingual programs decreased to just 5%.<sup>2</sup> English learners are impacted by bilingual teacher shortages as well as shortages in special education, in which they are overrepresented by nearly 30%.<sup>3</sup>
- **Few teacher preparation institutions offer bilingual authorization training programs.** After the passage of Proposition 227, bilingual teacher preparation programs were greatly reduced across the state.<sup>4</sup> In 2009, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing approved a set of standards that would allow teachers to pursue bilingual authorization through multiple routes, with both coursework and examination options,<sup>5</sup> likely contributing to a greater share of bilingual authorizations being issued to existing teaching credentials than to new teaching credentials (see Figure 1). Currently, only 30 teacher preparation institutions offer bilingual authorization training programs, compared with over 80 that grant secondary and elementary teaching certifications (see Figure 2).<sup>6</sup>
- **California authorizes fewer than half the number of new bilingual teachers than it did when bilingual education was at its peak in the mid-1990s.** At its peak, California granted over 1,800 bilingual authorizations in 1994–95. Even after the passage of Proposition 227, California issued over 1,200 bilingual authorizations a year between 2003–04 and 2009–10. Since then, there has been a steady decline in new bilingual authorizations, with fewer than 700 teachers authorized in 2015–16.

Despite the fact that bilingual education was seriously hampered in California for nearly two decades, districts already report shortages of bilingual education teachers. In a fall 2016 survey of more than 200 California school districts, 14% reported shortages of bilingual teachers.<sup>7</sup> Now that Proposition 58 allows for the expansion of bilingual programs, these shortages are likely to grow. In other high-demand fields like math, science, and especially special education, schools are filling vacancies with underprepared teachers at an alarming rate.<sup>8</sup> The same should not be so for bilingual education. Research shows that English Learners in well-implemented bilingual programs outperform ELs in English immersion programs in every subject by middle or high school and are more likely to achieve at or above grade level.<sup>9</sup> A review of the research on bilingual education shows that bilingual students also experience cognitive, social, and economic advantages.<sup>10</sup> They have better focus, memory, and problem-solving skills; a better sense of self; better relationships with their parents; and are more likely to graduate high school and go to college than their monolingual peers. However, successful program models require well-prepared teachers, and teacher shortages can undermine the programs' effectiveness. In anticipation of a growing need for qualified bilingual education teachers, state policymakers should consider strategies for increasing the supply of these teachers in the near and long term.

These can include service scholarships that support training for those who will teach in high-need fields for several years; one-year residency programs that train teachers in apprenticeships linked to credential coursework in urban or rural districts where they pledge to stay and teach; and incentives to keep strong teachers in high-need fields who would otherwise retire.

**Figure 1**  
**Bilingual Authorizations Issued 1990–91 to 2015–16**

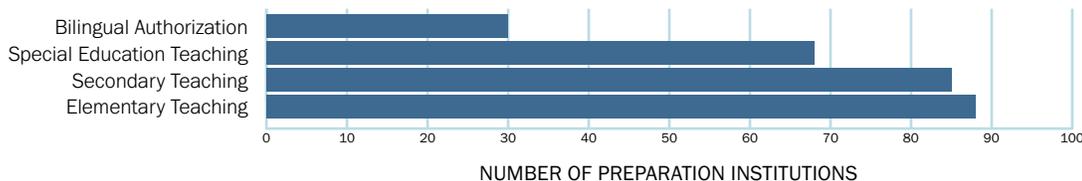


Note: Initially issued bilingual authorizations are those issued on a new teaching credential. Added authorizations are those that have been issued on an existing credential.

Source: Data provided by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing by request.

**Figure 2**  
**Few California Institutions Offer Bilingual Teacher Training**

*Institutions with state-approved, active educator preparation programs*



Source: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Data available at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/reports/data/app-edu-prep-prog.html>.

## Endnotes

- California Department of Education DataQuest, <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>, (accessed 12/20/16).
- Legislative Analyst's Office. Proposition 58. <http://www.lao.ca.gov/bal-lot/2016/Prop58-110816.pdf> (accessed 12/13/2016).
- In 2012–13, English Learners made up approximately 27.8% of students enrolled in special education (California Task Force on Special Education 2015 Report) and 21.6% of total student enrollment (California Department of Education DataQuest, <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>, accessed 12/27/16).
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