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UNVEILING CALIFORNIA'S GROWING BILINGUAL TEACHER SHORTAGE:

Addressing the Urgent Shortage, and
Aligning the Workforce to Advances in
Pedagogy and Practice in Bilingual Education

By: Vickie Ramos Harris and Araceli Sandoval-Gonzalez

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ABOUT CALIFORNIANS TOGETHER

Californians Together is a statewide advocacy coalition of powerful organizations from all segments of the education community including teachers, administrators, board members, parents and civil rights non-profit groups. Member organizations come together around the goal of better educating 1.4 million English Learners by improving California's schools and promoting equitable educational policy. Californians Together aims for an educational system that is funded and structured so every child will have full access to a high quality 21st century education and will graduate from our public schools fully bilingual and prepared for success in college and career and full civic participation.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Vickie Ramos Harris has 18 years of experience advocating for English Learners (ELs) in California, Boston, and New York City, bringing a "community-based policy making" lens to her work for education equity and social justice in early childhood (ECE), K-12 and EL education. She has led and supported research, program design, community engagement and local, state and federal advocacy, policy and implementation, including transitional kindergarten legislation and state and school district budget investments for ECE. She is a consultant, an English Learner Leadership and Legacy Initiative Fellow, and is the Associate Director of Education Policy at Advancement Project California.

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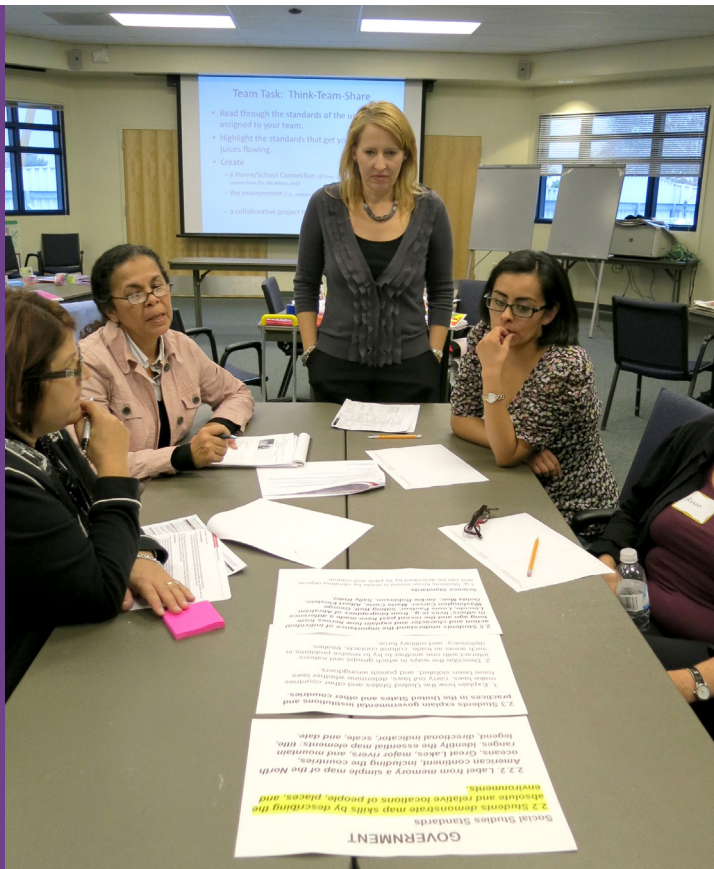
This report can be found and downloaded online at: <https://www.californianstogether.org>.



INTRODUCTION

Like many states across the nation, California is at the onset of a teacher shortage. Policymakers, educational leaders and advocates are working to develop innovative strategies and approaches to retain existing teachers and to attract the next generation of the workforce. And while the overall teacher shortage is of great concern, the bilingual teacher shortage is even more severe.

In November 2016, California voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 58, a state ballot initiative that creates more opportunities for students to become bilingual and biliterate. It passed with 73.5% of the vote and was supported across all 58 counties.¹ This wide support reflects the high regard that families, business leaders and the public at large hold for the educational, cognitive and economic advantages of bilingualism for its citizenry. However, California has seen a massive decline in teachers with bilingual authorizations since the passage of Proposition 227, a 1998 state ballot initiative that enacted major restrictions on bilingual education and severely curtailed its availability across the state. This shortage needs to be remedied expediently to ensure the education system can catch up to and align with the strong evidence about the powerful impacts of bilingual education on student outcomes.



BENEFITS OF BILITERACY & URGENCY FOR TEACHER SUPPORT

Research over the past two decades has provided strong evidence that the human brain is capable of successfully learning and managing two or more languages from birth and that bilingual language development provides cognitive and social benefits. Neuroscience shows that the brain is most receptive to language learning in the earliest years of life and that a child's home language is central to socio-emotional development, the development of English proficiency and overall academic achievement.⁷ Moreover, studies show that students in bilingual programs outperform their monolingual peers—whether they are native English speakers, African American students, students of low socioeconomic status, or English Learners—and that these programs can help to close the achievement gap.⁸ In February 2017, this research was confirmed by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.⁹

While science makes it clear that bilingual education offers a powerful approach that yields strong academic success for all students, including English Learners, California's policies and practices are not yet aligned with the research. The state is currently developing a California English Learner Roadmap that will set comprehensive educational policy in alignment with state priorities and research will include biliteracy as a goal. The roadmap will provide guidance materials to support implementation at the local level by: articulating basic foundational principles; highlighting evidenced-based practices and promising models; citing research and legal foundations; and bridging to Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) priorities. This English Learner roadmap will provide an important foundation to build upon in retooling the bilingual workforce with the most current biliteracy pedagogical advances, within the context of the Common Core, the next generation of content standards, and updated policies in early childhood. State leadership is paramount.

SEVERE DECLINE OF BILINGUALLY AUTHORIZED EDUCATORS IN CALIFORNIA

California is home to the nation's largest population of children learning English in addition to their home language (English Learners): about 1.4 million in our K-12 system,² which includes 32% of kindergartners and nearly 60% of children ages birth to five.³ Prior to the passage of Proposition 277, roughly 30% of English Learners were served in bilingual classrooms, and a decade later, participation declined to under 5%.⁴ Over time, this decline led to an acute reduction of teachers with bilingual authorizations, from 1,200 to 1,800 teachers annually in the mid to late 1990s to just 700 teachers in 2015-16.⁵ Consequently, today only 30 of 80 teacher preparation institutions offer programs for bilingual authorization.⁶

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KEY FINDINGS

A SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA'S BILINGUAL TEACHER SHORTAGE



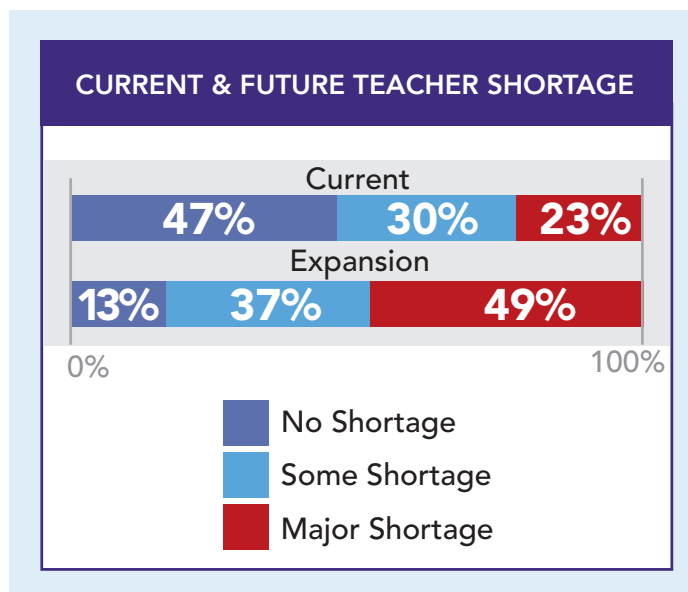
To better understand California's bilingual teacher shortage, Californians Together partnered with the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California Teachers Association (CTA) and California Federation of Teachers (CFT) to survey educators statewide. In Spring 2017, these partners surveyed California districts and teachers to assess the extent of the bilingual teacher shortage and to garner insight from the education field in order to address key issues. Data from the survey is reflected as an aggregate of all district and teacher responses.

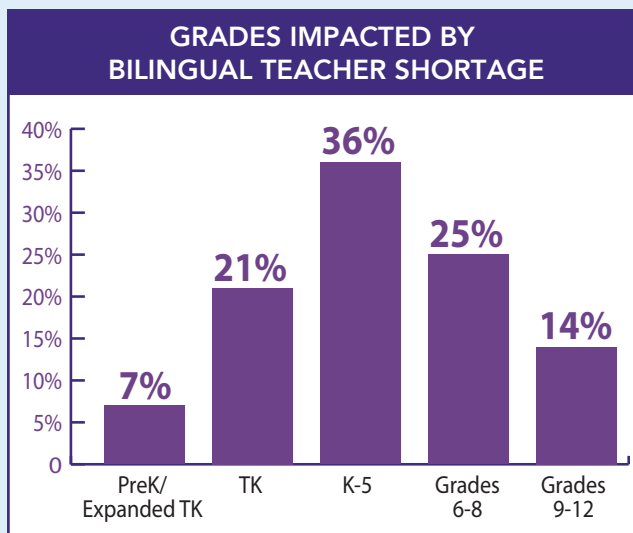
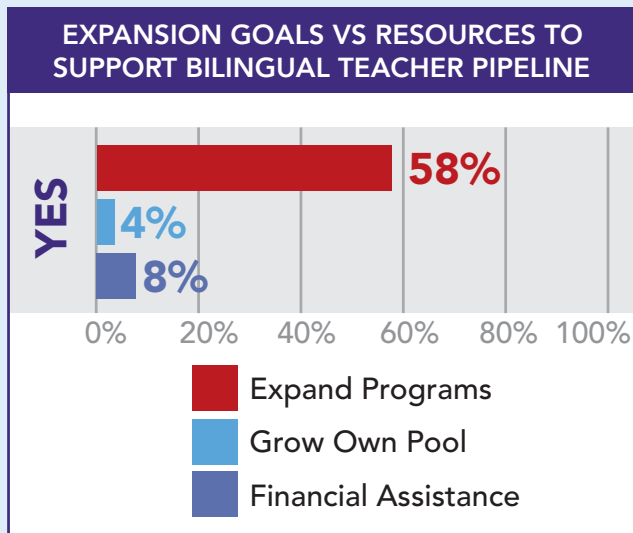
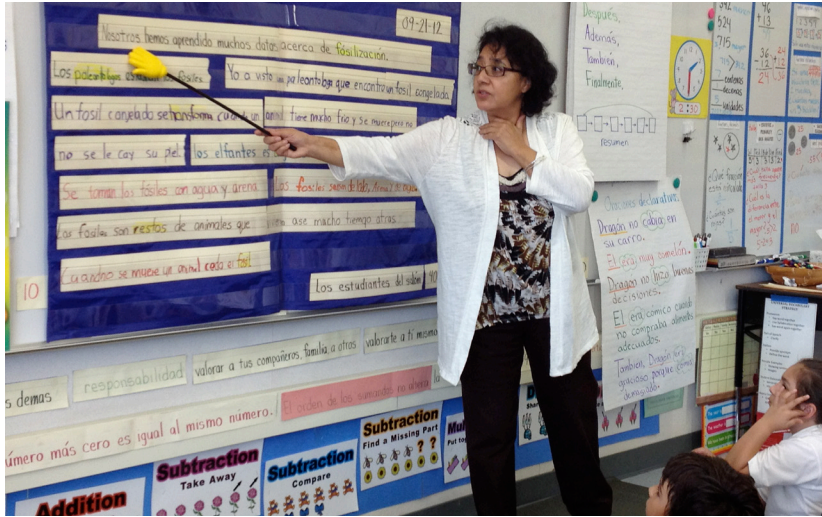
The district survey done in partnership with ACSA reflects the 111 districts and charter schools that responded, which represent 39% of English Learners in the state. The vast majority (61%) were K-12 districts, 37% were K-6 or K-8 districts, and 4% were high school districts. Roughly 15% reported offering preschool programs and 6% offer Expanded Transitional Kindergarten. The districts represent the geographic diversity of California, including urban and rural districts, and well as a range of district sizes.

MAJORITY OF DISTRICTS CURRENTLY FACE A BILINGUAL TEACHER SHORTAGE

The survey results show that a majority of school districts are currently facing a shortage across their current programs.

- School districts are providing a range of bilingual programs: 27% offer dual language programs, 21% provide World Language programs; 21% have Advanced Placement programs; 13% offer Native Speakers classes; 12% provide Transitional Bilingual Education programs; 5% have Developmental / Maintenance bilingual programs; and 3% offer language-infused career tech programs.
- One of the challenges the districts reported was the shortage of bilingual teachers for these programs. About 53% of school districts reported a shortage, and 23% characterized this as a major shortage.

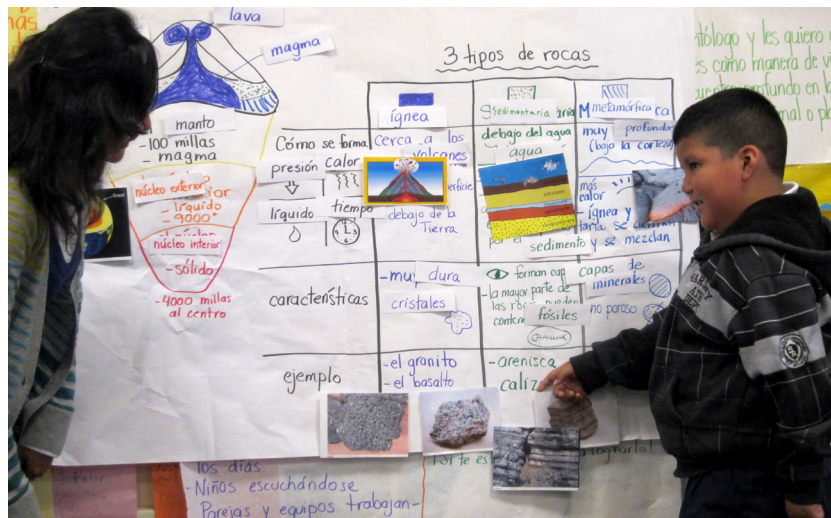




SHORTAGE THREATENS FUTURE BILINGUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

When considering the demand for bilingual programs and the lack of infrastructure, this shortage will only continue to grow and increase in severity if no actions are taken. This shortage threatens the future of bilingual education opportunities across the state.

- While most districts (58%) have plans to expand bilingual education opportunities in the future, an overwhelming majority (86%) reported facing a shortage of bilingual teachers as a hurdle to realizing those plans. Half of these districts say they expect a major shortage, and overall districts anticipate the shortage will primarily impact early childhood and elementary school levels.
- Despite these plans to expand language programs and the growing teacher shortage they are facing, few districts actually have plans or a formal system in place to remedy this shortage. Only four districts employed strategies to “grow their own” bilingual teachers, and eight districts reported offering some type of financial assistance.
- District initiatives to build a supply use the following strategies:
 - incentive programs including extra pay, stipends, opportunities to participate in bilingual authorization courses, and tuition reimbursement;
 - intern programs with support to complete a credential or alternative credentialing programs;
 - early pipelines for high school students and instructional assistants; and
 - partnerships with institutions of higher education and career technical programs.



POTENTIAL BILINGUAL WORKFORCE: THOUSANDS OF EXISTING TEACHERS

There are a substantial number of teachers who are fluent in another language who could serve in bilingual settings, if given support. Therefore, it is vital that state leadership take action to support the professional development of this potential bilingual workforce.

- A survey of districts representing 39% of California's English Learners have roughly 8,650 teachers with bilingual authorizations.
- Districts reported that 69% of teachers with bilingual authorizations are currently teaching in English only programs. Which means, within these districts there are almost 6,000 teachers who could be available to teach in bilingual programs if provided with additional training.
- Based on the nearly 3,000 bilingual teachers who responded, 31% were fluent in another language but were not bilingually certified. Therefore, there are at least 900 teachers who are well positioned to obtain their bilingual authorization.
- When adding the 6,000 bilingually certified teachers currently in English-only classrooms to the 900 bilingual teachers who do not yet have their bilingual authorization, there are close to **7,000 teachers who could serve in a bilingual setting**. This is almost 10 times as many teachers who received their bilingual authorization from the Commission on Teacher Credentialing in 2015-16.
- The vast majority (92%) of the bilingually authorized teachers across these 111 districts speak Spanish, and other teachers are fluent in at least 15 additional languages.

BILINGUAL TEACHERS WHO NEED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

6,000       

Bilingually Authorized Teachers in English Only Classes

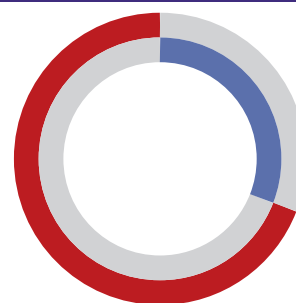
900  

Bilingual Teachers Without Authorization

6,900        

Total Bilingual Teachers Who Need Professional Development

BILINGUAL AUTHORIZATION STATUS OF TEACHERS FLUENT IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE



31%
No Language
Authorization

69%
Have Language
Authorization

PLACEMENT OF TEACHERS WITH BILINGUAL AUTHORIZATION

69%



English Only

29%



Bilingual

2%



Not Specified

ADDRESSING THE BILINGUAL TEACHER SHORTAGE



The teacher survey developed in partnership with CTA and CFT resulted in responses from approximately 4,580 teachers (preschool through higher education), of which nearly 3,000 were bilingual teachers in early education through twelfth grade classrooms. Survey responses from thousands of California teachers provide a picture of possible steps to facilitate this transition and remedy the shortage.

- Just over half of the 2,921 bilingual teachers qualified to serve in language programs are currently placed in these programs. Therefore, there is a pool of teachers who, with support, could and would begin to serve in bilingual language programs in the short term.
- The vast majority of teachers (78%) reported speaking Spanish, and among this group, a total of 38 languages were represented.
- Most of those teachers (82%) who are not currently placed in bilingual settings report a willingness to teach in bilingual classrooms if supported to prepare for these settings.

INVESTING IN THE BILINGUAL WORKFORCE VIA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

After hearing from over 100 districts, as well as thousands of teachers, it is evident that educators need substantial support to get caught up on the current research, pedagogy and best practices for effective instruction in bilingual classrooms. Types of supports they named include:

- professional development in biliteracy pedagogy and methods;
- opportunities to strengthen their own target language skills;
- bilingual materials;
- paid coursework and tuition to obtain bilingual certification and opportunities to attend conferences for their own continuing education;
- coaching, collaboration and paid planning time; and
- training in cultural awareness and cultural proficiency, and support in working with families.

GROWING THE WORKFORCE VIA RECRUITMENT AND INCENTIVES

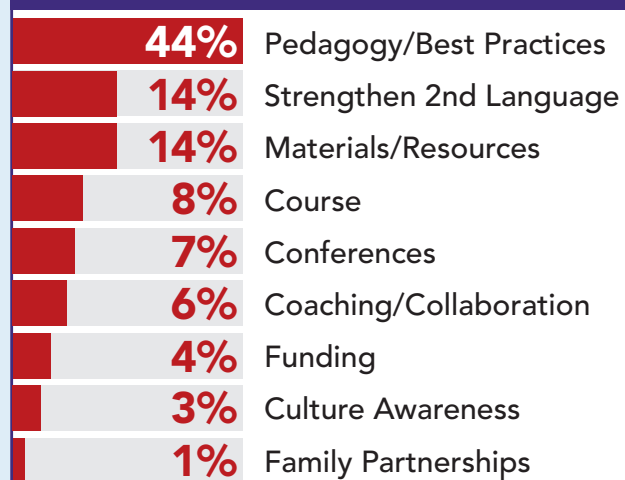
Beyond the pool of bilingual teachers who need some support to move into bilingual settings, additional forms of recruitment, pipeline development, and incentives will be needed. District leaders and teachers shared their recommendations for growing the teacher workforce through recruitment strategies and compelling incentives that support teachers in transitioning to bilingual settings.

- Districts identified their bilingual paraprofessionals and their own students with multiple language skills as other candidates to recruit and support to become bilingual authorized teachers.
- Teachers identified various motivational incentives for serving in language programs; however, compensation was by far the most named recommendation (52%), which included pay scale differential, bonuses, stipends, loan forgiveness and a per diem. About 22% of the roughly 1,200 teachers who gave recommendations listed funding for professional development, such as paid training days, workshops and coursework.
- Other ideas included alleviating the teacher load, such as fewer class periods, lower class size, translation support, more preparation time, block periods and planning days, release time and support from teacher aides. Other teachers called for bilingual resources such as literature and classroom libraries with books and materials in the languages they are teaching in.
- A number of teachers noted that support and appreciation would boost morale and respect for their hard work, as would administrative support for the language programs.



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The benefits of biliteracy, and the strong evidence behind it, is proving to drive greater public demand for bilingual education. It is evident that many districts plan to expand opportunities to respond both to what the science shows is good for student achievement and to the growing public demand. The bilingual teacher shortage will only become more severe. It is also clear that while California works to build systems at the state and local levels to develop a teacher pipeline, there is a bilingual workforce currently teaching in English only classrooms (preschool through 12th grade) that can be supported to transition to bilingual settings. Below are policy recommendations that can be explored at the state and local levels.

STATE LEVEL

- Establish “Professional Development Consortia” to respond to the professional development needs identified by early childhood through 12th grade teachers.
- Incentivize development of regional cohort programs or partnerships (e.g. county level, in partnerships with higher education, etc.) that support teachers in obtaining bilingual authorization.
- Waive fees for current native speakers of other languages to apply for and receive their bilingual authorization.
- Recruit future bilingual teachers from the over 126,000 students who graduated high school with a Seal of Biliteracy and are currently in college.
- Develop a pathway for bilingual paraprofessionals to become teachers with bilingual authorizations.
- Ensure that the California English Learner Roadmap policy and guidance materials promote investments in building a teacher workforce with the skills, competencies and authorizations to deliver quality bilingual programs.
- Work with teacher preparation programs at UC, CSU and private universities to expand the number of universities offering bilingual certification along with credentialing.
- Work with CSU, community colleges and private universities with early care and education (ECE) preparation programs to ensure early educators have a foundation in language development and developmentally appropriate dual language education pedagogy.
- Ensure that new career, technical education (CTE) funding for school districts is used to incentivize and prioritize “Bilingual Teacher” academies for preschool to 12th grade teachers.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Identify the district’s existing bilingual teacher workforce who, with support, are willing to transition to bilingual classrooms.
- Address the professional development needs of bilingual teachers willing to transition to bilingual classrooms with Local Control Funding Formula dollars.
- Establish ongoing professional development supports for preschool to 12th grade teachers that supports articulation, alignment and collaboration, such as professional learning communities, classroom coaching and observation, and co-teaching and articulation models.
- Provide professional development for district and site administrators, who will lead expansion and development of new bilingual programs, to be well versed in the benefits and advantages of quality programs that yield high levels of bilingualism and biliteracy, and equip them to dispel the myths that past policy has promulgated.
- Work with bargaining units to identify diverse incentives for teachers in bilingual classrooms.

CONCLUSION

With the strong research base that shows the powerful impact of biliteracy for all students, the overall evidence of the benefits of bilingualism and the overwhelming support for Proposition 58, California must take the necessary steps to ensure access to bilingual programs for all students, and ensure these efforts begin with early care and education, when children are most receptive to language development. School districts also need to build greater articulation between early childhood and early elementary to ensure alignment across these systems, which will lead to greater academic success and high levels of biliteracy.

Districts have told us very clearly that they plan to expand opportunities for language programs and that the bilingual teacher shortage will only grow. This district sample shows that there are well over 7,000 teachers who can be ready to step into bilingual classrooms, but they must be given additional support. California's bilingual teachers need professional development on the current and most effective instruction, the evidence-based teaching pedagogy and promising practices. It is critical that policymakers and education leaders prioritize and invest in our bilingual teacher workforce. As a state, we must develop innovative strategies to support school districts and incentivize teachers to meet the fast-growing demand for bilingual education that yields academic success and prepares all California students for today's interconnected, interdependent global economy.



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