



**New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE)
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**NYSABE Position Statement on New York's Bilingual Educator Shortage
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There are currently 245,570 multilingual learners/English language learners enrolled in school in New York State ([New York State Education Department \[NYSED\], 2024](#)), comprising 10% of the total school population. New arrivals comprise 182,810 (74%) of all multilingual learners, and the state has received unprecedented numbers of newcomers since August 2022.

For well over two decades, school districts in New York State have faced devastating bilingual educator shortages, resulting in stark outcomes for multilingual learners; these students have the lowest high school graduation rates of all students in New York and in the United States as a whole, as well as the highest dropout rates. The longtime bilingual educator shortage has recently been compounded by the pandemic and the arrival of many newcomers, and has prevented school districts from offering the full range of language learning and related services they are mandated to provide for multilingual learners by New York State Commissioner's Regulations Part 154.

The New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) recently conducted a survey of its membership to gather information about how schools and school districts across New York State have responded to new arrivals, and to identify any challenges that have arisen. Over 70% of respondents stated that the shortage of bilingual educators is the main challenge schools face in their efforts to welcome new arrivals in New York schools. This was followed by the shortage of other bilingual staff such as bilingual counselors, school psychologists, and paraprofessionals (57%). When asked how to address the challenges that have arisen as schools work to meet the needs of new arrivals, the top response was "hire additional bilingual teachers." Factors identified as contributing to the bilingual educator shortage include lack of funding to support tuition and other costs of attaining bilingual educator certification, rigid certification requirements, and a need for more programs to prepare bilingual educators - particularly at the undergraduate level, as most educators will remain within their first area of certification.

For example, according to a report by the Independent Budget Office, just half of the schools that enrolled newcomers in New York City last fall had a *single* bilingual educator on staff; and, bilingual education remains at the top of the list of teacher shortage areas and is listed as one of four high need subjects by New York City Public Schools. Many schools in Districts 30 and 24, which have received the largest numbers of new arrivals, would like to open new bilingual education programs or expand existing ones, but are unable to do so due to the bilingual educator shortage. Moreover, bilingual classes are most likely to be taught by an uncertified educator.

Likewise, in Syracuse, approximately 7% of multilingual learners are enrolled in bilingual education programs and the bilingual educator shortage has posed challenges for expansion efforts - especially this year, as Syracuse works to open a new bilingual education middle school program.

In Western New York, the population of multilingual learners is on the rise, with some school districts experiencing increases of over 200%. Despite this increase in numbers, there continues to be a shortage of bilingual teachers, resulting in a decline in bilingual programs. For example, Buffalo Public Schools recently had to close a bilingual program due to these shortages.

In spite of the ample base of research showing that multilingual learners in bilingual programs will typically outperform their peers in English-only programs and experience a range of academic, cognitive, linguistic, and socioemotional benefits from bilingual education, only a small minority of multilingual learners in New York schools are currently enrolled in bilingual education programs (New York State Education Department, 2024). Without the educators needed, schools are unable to provide sufficient bilingual programs.

Recommendations

In response, we call upon New York State legislators and education policymakers to address long-standing bilingual educator shortages and prioritize significant investments for multilingual learners to ensure that our children and youth have the opportunities they deserve and to which they are entitled by law. Specific efforts to address the bilingual educator shortage include:

- Securing funding for tuition support to enable students to complete bilingual educator preparation programs, and providing financial support for institutions of higher education to open new undergraduate degree programs in bilingual education;
- Forming a committee of key educational stakeholders to review certification requirements for bilingual educators, including reciprocity for initial base

certificates, pathways for immigrant students, and expansion of valid base certificates for the bilingual extension;

- Increasing recruitment efforts, offering incentives for attaining bilingual educator certification, and creating a bilingual educator pipeline; and
- Supporting the [2024 Policy Platform of NY-AFFIRMS](#), a statewide coalition of diverse educators and community-based organizations focused on the needs of Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLLs/ELLs) and their families; NYSABE is a founding member of NY-AFFIRMS. This platform calls upon legislators to Invest \$6.8 million for a five-year Bilingual Educator Pipeline Pilot Program that would fund institutions of higher education to open new bilingual educator preparation programs and prepare 380 certified bilingual educators and bilingual special education teachers, starting in Buffalo and New York City as well as Long Island in the second year, with opportunities for expansion to other regions across New York State.