Advancing Achievement Through Biliteracy

Brief #1: Statewide Trends in Bilingual Teacher Supply, Demand, and Assignment in California

February 2026

California's Global 2030 initiative sets forth ambitious goals for statewide bilingualism and biliteracy to advance student learning. Critical to achieving these goals is a strong and growing bilingual teacher workforce. This brief provides key findings from WestEd's 2025 analysis of publicly available statewide data on supply and demand for California's bilingual teacher workforce. These findings can inform statewide recruitment and retention efforts that support expansion of bilingual instructional programming.

Bilingual programs deliver proven benefits, but bilingual teacher shortages limit their expansion in California. Findings from WestEd's 2024 analysis of English Learner programs in California pointed to the importance of strengthening the bilingual teacher workforce through improved data systems, strategic planning, and pipeline investments. This brief examines bilingual teacher workforce supply and demand trends based on publicly available statewide data. The analysis finds that California has made notable progress toward its Global 2030 goal of 2,000 new bilingual authorizations each year. However, limitations in public statewide data make it challenging for state and local leaders to assess the return on their investments in the bilingual teacher workforce.

Why Study the Supply and Demand of Bilingual Teachers in California?

The benefits of bilingual programs and bilingual teachers are clear.

Research demonstrates that bilingual instructional models are among the most effective strategies for improving literacy and long-term academic outcomes both for students who are Multilingual Learners and for monolingual students (Porter et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2024). Moreover, a recent parent survey indicates strong demand for bilingual education, with families recognizing the academic, cultural, and economic benefits of developing bilingualism (Williams et al., 2025).

While bilingual programs can benefit all students, the evidence is particularly compelling for students designated as English Learners; they tend to experience long-term benefits in English language development and other academic improvements (Steele et al., 2017; Umansky & Reardon, 2014; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). And yet, researchers, practitioners, and community members have raised important concerns about equitable access to these programs for students who are English Learners.[1]

California's ambitious bilingual education goals depend on a clear understanding of bilingual teacher supply and demand.

The Global California 2030 initiative aims to capture the benefits of biliteracy through expanded access to bilingual education, measured by growth in students achieving the State Seal of Biliteracy and increases in bilingual programs and teachers (California Department of Education [CDE], 2019). *Realizing this vision requires a strong and sustainable bilingually authorized (BLA) teacher workforce*.

Having public data on bilingual teaching staff and bilingual programs is critical to expanding the supply of BLA teachers. While much of this information is collected—locally, statewide, or both—relatively little information is accessible publicly. If made accessible, these data can reveal both the challenges to and opportunities in expanding the supply of these teachers and expanding access to bilingual programs.

> This is the first brief in the Advancing Achievement Through Biliteracy series. To learn more about state policy levers for building the workforce behind bilingual programs, see the second brief.

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[1] For example, a recent report by the Century Foundation (Williams et al.,2025) highlights the complexity of providing a strong, integrated bilingual program while also ensuring equitable access to these programs for students who are English Learners.

This brief presents findings from an analysis of historical staff data from 2013–14 to 2018–19 and of Multilingual Learner enrollment data, as well as projections of future trends.[2] The analysis illuminates what can and cannot be understood through public data about bilingual education and the bilingual teacher workforce. Specifically, the following key findings emerge from this analysis (see Key Findings Summary box).

Key Findings Summary

1. California has made notable progress toward its Global 2030 goal of 2,000 new bilingual authorizations each year, though the impact on access to bilingual education is unclear.

1a. Annual BLA attainment has increased in recent years.

1b. Notably, this growth in BLA attainment occurred despite educator preparation program enrollment and completion trends being flat.

1c. However, it is unclear whether the increasing BLA attainment expanded California's capacity to deliver bilingual instruction, especially given the declines in the statewide supply of BLA teachers occurring during this period.

2. Limitations in public statewide data preclude state and local leaders from assessing the return on their investments in the bilingual teacher workforce.

2a. California's publicly available data lack critical indicators of bilingual teacher supply, including the number and assignment of BLA teachers, as well as data on bilingual programs and the students they serve.

2b. The statewide share of BLA teachers declined between 2013–14 and 2018–19, despite the noted growth in BLA attainment, underscoring the need for more current public data.

2c. Although Multilingual Learner enrollment is declining, bilingual teacher demand is persistent and complex—and California cannot strategically address this demand without comprehensive program data.

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[2] For more on the analysis methods, see the Methodology box at the end of this brief.

Findings From Statewide Analysis

1. California has made notable progress toward its Global 2030 goal of 2,000 new bilingual authorizations each year, though the impact on access to bilingual education is unclear.

1a. Annual BLA attainment has increased in recent years.

Between 2014–15 and 2023–24, new bilingual authorizations per year grew from 816 to 1,902 (Figure 1). This growth coincided with the Global California 2030 initiative announced in 2019 and a range of state investments in expanding the bilingual teacher supply.

Figure 1. Between 2014–15 and 2023–24, Annual New Bilingual Authorizations Grew

Note. Authors' analysis of the Other Teacher Supply: Bilingual Authorizations dashboard published by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) for the school years 2014–15 through 2023–24, downloaded November 2025.

1b. Notably, this growth in BLA attainment occurred despite educator preparation program enrollment and completion trends being flat.

Over the same period that BLA attainment was growing steadily, enrollment in educator preparation programs (EPPs) overall was essentially flat, fluctuating modestly year to year. Likewise, EPP completion was relatively flat, growing only slightly on net from 11,000 to 12,000, despite earlier gains that dropped off after 2020–21 (Figure 2).

According to a recent analysis by Public Profit, the state's supply of bilingual authorization EPPs grew slightly in recent years—a finding that helps explain why BLA credential attainment increased steadily despite flat enrollment and completion in EPPs overall (see callout box).

A recent analysis by Public Profit found that the number of bilingual authorization EPPs in California grew modestly between 2019–20 and 2024–25. This was driven by growth in Spanish language programs (Blom & Wolitzer, 2025).

**Figure 2. Earlier Gains in EPP Completion Dropped After 2020–21**
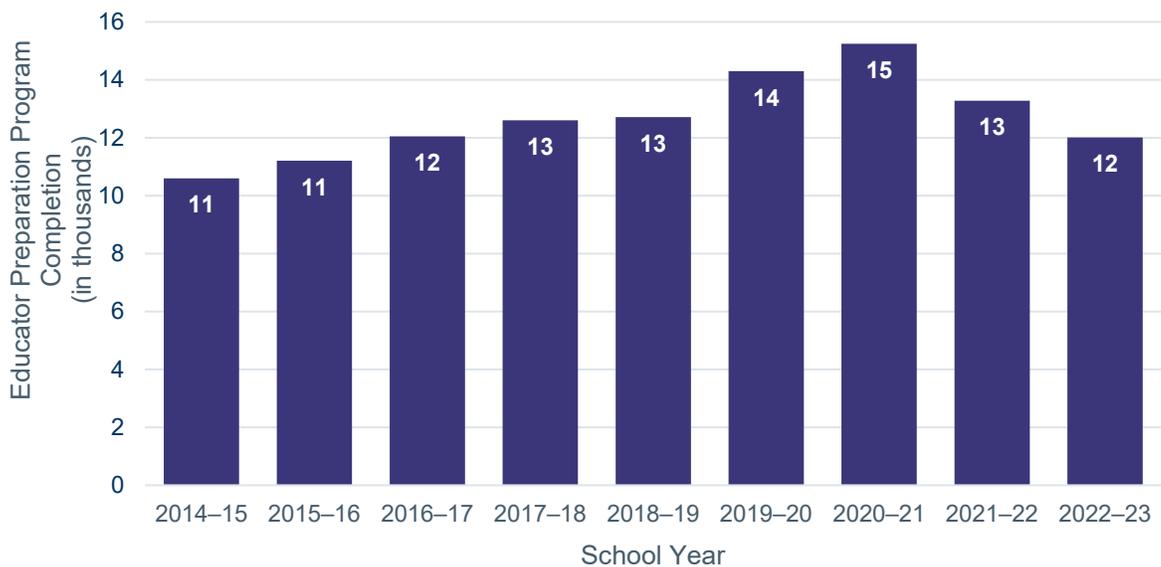
Note. Authors' analysis of teacher Title II annual report data published by the California CTC for the school years 2014–15 through 2022–23, downloaded July 2025.

1c. However, it is unclear whether the increasing BLA attainment expanded California's capacity to deliver bilingual instruction, especially given the declines in the statewide supply of BLA teachers occurring during this period.

While the growth in bilingual authorization EPPs and attainment is encouraging, the extent of its impact remains unclear. For example, the number of new authorizations per year is still relatively small—only about 5 percent of all new English Learner authorizations annually.

Further, available public data do not even track whether newly authorized teachers enter California's public education system, let alone teach in bilingual programs. Without data on the total number of BLA teachers, it is unclear whether new authorizations represent new growth, replacement of teachers who have left the system, or something else.
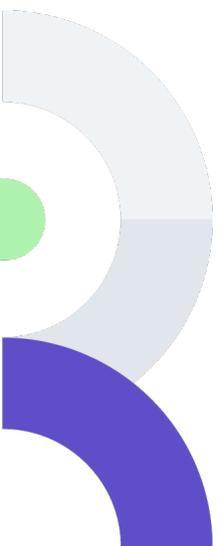
2. Limitations in public statewide data preclude state and local leaders from assessing the return on their investments in the bilingual teacher workforce.

2a. California's publicly available data lack critical indicators of bilingual teacher supply, including the number and assignment of BLA teachers, as well as data on bilingual programs and the students they serve.

California's publicly reported data about the bilingual teacher supply are fragmented across multiple agencies, formats, and time periods (Table 1). Some indicators are readily available for recent years, others have not been updated since 2018–19, and others—such as teacher vacancy, or the retention and mobility of teachers working in the system—are not systematically reported at all. Accessing the information that is available requires navigating and combining information from multiple online tools and downloadable files from different state agencies.

Often the information is collected from local education agencies that must prepare the information for submission to the state, but it is not available publicly. However, as was revealed through a recent regional BLA workforce planning pilot, local capacity to use these data strategically varies widely, further limiting workforce planning. More information about this regional pilot is available in the second brief in this series.

Without coherent and accessible data on bilingual teacher supply, California regional and local education leaders cannot engage as effectively in strategic workforce planning or evaluate whether investments in bilingual teaching are yielding results.

Table 1. Data Availability by Key Measures of Teacher Supply and Demand

Data metric	Statewide data: Publicly reported in database	Statewide data: Time horizon availability
Educator preparation		
• Enrollment and completion numbers for BLA educator programs	Yes (CTC)	Most recent year only (no trend data)
• New BLA and English Learner authorizations	Yes (CTC)	2013–14 to present
Educator workforce		
• Number and characteristics of teachers serving English Learners, including BLA credential status	Yes (CDE)	2012–13 through 2018–19 only
• New BLA teacher hires	No (CDE reports for "ML Educators," not BLA-specific)	Most recent year only (no trend data)
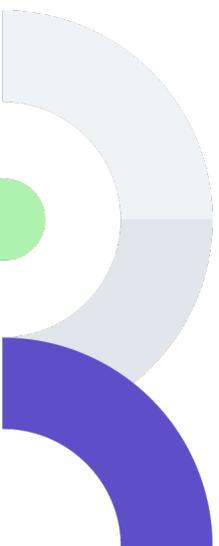
Data metric	Statewide data: Publicly reported in database	Statewide data: Time horizon availability
• Annual counts of BLA teachers	Yes (CDE)[a]	2012–13 through 2018–19 only
• BLA teacher misassignment data	Yes (CTC)[b]	2020–2023
• Credentialing institution for current teachers	No	N/A
• Retention and mobility	No	N/A
Student enrollment and bilingual programs		
• English Learner and Fluent English Proficient enrollment trends	Yes (CDE)	2011–12 to present
• Student enrollment (including demographics) in bilingual programs	No	N/A
• Student-to-staff ratios for bilingual programs	No	N/A
• Number of schools with multilingual instruction	Yes (CDE)	Most recent year only (no trend data)
• Type of bilingual program models in operation	No	N/A

[a] The CTC reports more recent data on educator counts by classroom setting but does not disaggregate for bilingual settings. [b] The CTC and the CDE report misassignment data. The CTC disaggregates for bilingual classroom settings. The CDE does not disaggregate for BLA credentials. See the CTC's definitions.

2b. The statewide share of BLA teachers declined between 2013–14 and 2018–19, despite the noted growth in BLA attainment, underscoring the need for more current public data.

From 2013–14 to 2018–19, the share of teachers in California with a bilingual authorization dropped from 7.4 to 6.7 percent (Figure 3). This decline, while slight, occurred as new bilingual authorizations per year grew from around 800 to around 1,350 (Figure 1).

This indicates that gains in attainment over this period failed to expand the statewide bilingual teacher workforce. Unfortunately, public data limitations prevent determining whether this trend continued after 2018–19, a critical gap when assessing the impact of investments in recent years.
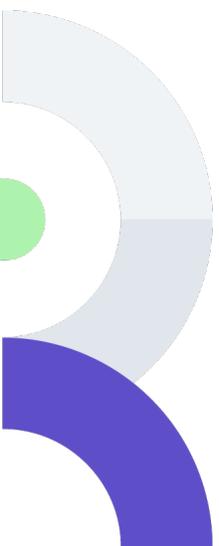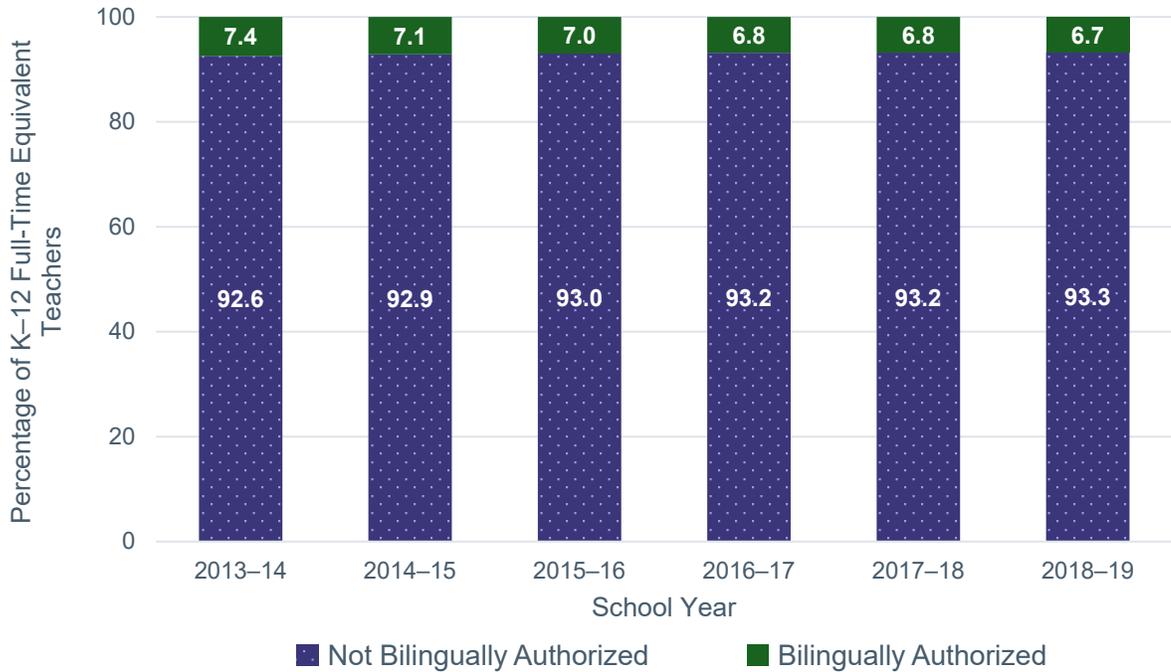
Figure 3. The Statewide Percentage of Active BLA Teachers Dropped Slightly From 2013–14 to 2018–19

Note. More recent data than are presented here are not yet available.

2c. Although Multilingual Learner enrollment is declining, bilingual teacher demand is persistent and complex—and California cannot strategically address this demand without comprehensive program data.

Statewide declines in overall student enrollment are led by the population of students who are Multilingual Learners, and further analysis of this population by language suggests that these declines are driven by Spanish-speaking students (Figure 4). Specifically, the enrollment of Spanish-speaking Multilingual Learners statewide declined about 23 percent from 2011–12 to 2024–25, while non–Spanish-speaking student enrollment was essentially flat.

Enrollment projections over the next 5 years, grounded in the assumption that historical trends will persist, suggest that year-over-year declines among non–Spanish-speaking students may grow but remain small relative to Spanish-speaking students.[3]

These trends are more complex than just declining numbers—they reflect California's growing linguistic diversity. As the Multilingual Learner population becomes more distributed across multiple languages, equitably launching or expanding bilingual programs becomes

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[3] Additional information about the enrollment projection methods is included at the end of this brief.

increasingly complex. School districts must recruit teachers with a wider range of skills, often for smaller programs that are as a result harder to staff and sustain.

This complexity is consistent with findings from a recent analysis by Public Profit. The researchers found that even as the number of bilingual programs grows, English Learner participation in these programs is declining (see callout box). Crucially, however, this insightful analysis relied on nonpublic data about the number of and enrollment in bilingual programs.

A recent analysis by Public Profit found that the supply of bilingual programs grew modestly from 2019–20 to 2024–25, especially dual language immersion programs.[4] And yet, the analysis also found that the number of English Learners per program declined nearly 40 percent over the same time period (Blom & Wolitzer, 2025).

Figure 4. Declines in Multilingual Learner Enrollment Statewide Are Driven Primarily by Spanish-Speaking Students
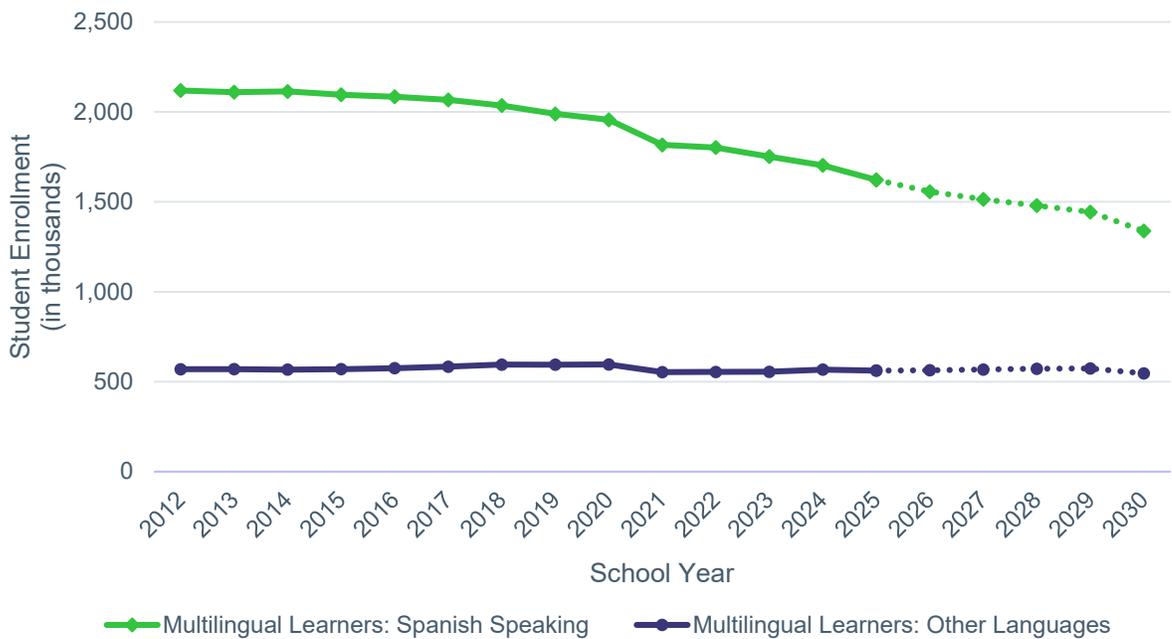
Note. Authors' analysis of English Learner and Fluent English Proficient by grade and language data published by the CDE for the school years 2011–12 through 2024–25, downloaded January 2025 and September 2025, respectively.

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[4] Dual language immersion programs are defined according to the CDE definition found at
https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/multilingualedu.asp.

Policy Considerations

California's vision for improving literacy and academic outcomes through increased bilingualism and biliteracy requires a strong and sustainable BLA teacher workforce. But the state cannot assess its return on investment in strengthening the bilingual teacher workforce without comprehensive workforce data, and the current public workforce data systems are fragmented and incomplete.

Modernizing educator workforce data systems would enable the state to generate actionable insights on bilingual and other teacher shortage areas and to understand and strengthen the impact of workforce investments.

This modernization would include expanding the availability and utility of publicly available, state-level workforce and program data, including, for example, the following kinds of data:

- the total number of active BLA teachers alongside new bilingual authorizations to track whether credentialing translates to additional capacity in the workforce

- BLA teacher characteristics, such as linguistic skills and race/ethnicity, retention rates, geographic distribution, and classroom assignments

- the number of bilingual program offerings, their locations, and the characteristics of students enrolled in these programs

Connecting the complementary data collected and maintained by different state agencies (i.e., the CDE, the CTC) and annually reporting these data in combination can improve the usefulness of these data for informing state and regional recruitment and retention strategies.

These improvements to available data would be vital to enabling the state to monitor progress toward its goals around student bilingualism and biliteracy.

Methodology

This brief relies upon descriptive analyses of bilingual teacher supply and demand, combining historical staff data analysis with student enrollment analysis and projections.

Historical Staff Data Analysis

To prepare this brief, the research team integrated multiple data sets from the CDE's downloadable data website, including individual-level teacher records and course-level assignment files. The researchers linked data using unique identifiers for individuals and classes within a given school and year and then aggregated to school, district, and state levels to examine trends over time.

Approach to Projecting Enrollment

The brief's projections assume that historical enrollment patterns will continue. The researchers used county-level grade progression ratios based on rolling 3-year averages to project year-over-year changes between grades, with each projection year updating these averages dynamically. The research team estimated kindergarten enrollment using birth-to-kindergarten ratios, with county population shares serving as proxies for birth distributions.

The research team created projections for four distinct student groups based on language and English proficiency status (Spanish-speaking versus non–Spanish-speaking, and English Learner versus Fluent English Proficient).

Model validation showed strong accuracy, with state-level mean absolute percent errors below 3.5 percent for all groups—well within the customary 10 percent benchmark for enrollment projections.

Analysis Limitations

These methods cannot capture all factors influencing teacher supply and student enrollment, including policy changes, economic shifts, or migration patterns. Additionally, state-level trends may obscure significant regional variation. What appears as uniform statewide decline may reflect growth in some communities and sharp drops in others, with patterns varying across urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

Additional information about the study methodology and findings is available upon request from the authors.

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