

ISBE Resources for Recruiting and Retaining Multilingual Educators

Teacher Vacancy Grant – Community of Practice Meeting
February 18, 2026

Matt Rogalski, VIT Program Coordinator
Multilingual / Language Development Department

VIT Program Overview

- Introduction
- International partners
- Requirements for teacher applicants and host districts

ISBE's role in VIT Program

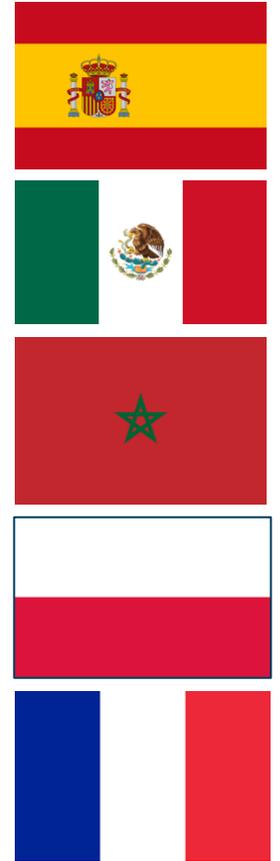
- ISBE has been designated by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) as an Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor since 1999.
 - Allows ISBE to facilitate J-1 visa process for Visiting International Teachers (VITs).
 - ISBE issues immigration document Form DS-2019, maintains records in federal “SEVIS” database, and advises VITs and host districts on J-1 visa regulations.
- Partnerships
 - Maintain IGAs and provide programmatic support to host school districts.
 - Recruit qualified teachers through established international partner organizations.
 - Match VITs for interviews with participating host school districts based on fit with teaching credentials.
- Screening and licensure
 - Proactive screening in collaboration with international partner organizations that all applicants meet J-1 visa requirements and will qualify for an Illinois educator license.
 - Guide VITs through application process for Educator License with Stipulations – Visiting International Teacher Endorsement (ELS-VIT).

VIT program numbers

- ISBE currently sponsors 302 J-1 VITs in Illinois; limited to sponsoring no more than 155 new VITs each year.
- 182 new VIT candidates recruited with our international partner organizations for SY 2025-26.
- 98 accepted offers from 29 different school districts:
 - 96 from Spain
 - 1 from Morocco
 - 1 from Mexico
- 38 districts requested interviews, and all 38 were matched with at least one candidate to interview.
- 2 new school districts hosting an ISBE VIT for the first time.

International partners

- **Spain:** Spanish Ministry of Education
- **Mexico:** Medina-Ramos Global Education Group
- **Morocco:** Teachers of English Association of Morocco (TEAM)
- **Poland:** Polish Ministry of Education
- **France:** Academic Region of Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes



Teacher eligibility requirements

- J-1 Exchange Teacher Program requirements are federal regulations administered by DOS ([22 CFR 62.24](#)).
 - Must be qualified to teach at primary and/or secondary level in home country.
 - Must have 2+ years full-time teaching experience and be working as a teacher at time of application. Exception for those completing a graduate degree if they have 2+ years experience within the last 8 years.
 - Have a degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree (or higher) in education or a field related to the content area in which they intend to teach.
- ELS-VIT licensure
 - Endorsed for ESL, Bilingual and World Language in the language of instruction from teacher preparation program(s).
 - Additional grade level and content area endorsements based on teacher's foreign credential evaluation.
 - ELS-VIT is valid for five years and is non-renewable. VITs repeating program must apply for PEL or ELS-TBE.
- ELS-VIT requirements
 - [ISBE-approved foreign credential evaluation](#) (i.e. WES, ECE, etc.)
 - Proof of English proficiency
 - Cambridge English Assessment: CEFR level B2 or higher
 - TOEFL before 1/21/26: Reading - 18; Listening - 17; Speaking - 20; Writing – 17; TOEFL after 1/21/26: score of 4 or higher in each section (updated score range now 1–6).
 - [Global Seal of Biliteracy](#) with working fluency level or higher in English
 - Degree with English major or where primary language of instruction was English
 - [Form 73-03F – Application for VIT Endorsement](#)
 - Hiring district completes and submits to ROE

Host district responsibilities

- Must sign intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with ISBE prior to participating in program.
 - Email exchangeteachers@isbe.net to inquire about process.
- Interview VIT candidates and offer an appropriate teaching position in grade levels PK–12.
 - DOS requires that J-1 teachers are full-time teachers of record. Pre-K teachers can only teach in language immersion programs (dual-language).
 - Compensation must be commensurate with teacher’s experience and academic background in accordance with district salary scale as with any other licensed teacher.
- Detailed onboarding that explains all relevant benefits and salary deductions (TRS, taxes, insurance).
 - Ensure teachers comply with standard background checks and employment history screening.
 - In consultation with teacher’s union, address how union matters relate to VITs.
 - Thorough training on professional code of conduct and expectations.
 - Provide teacher mentorship and professional development opportunities.

Host district responsibilities

- Upon VIT's first arrival, provide transportation from airport and temporary housing for at least seven days.
 - We encourage additional local support during first weeks, especially in assisting with transportation.
 - Other support commonly requested: applying for SSN, long-term housing resources, where to bank, where to purchase a car and get a driver's license, cell phone and internet providers, etc.
- Maintain contact with ISBE VIT program staff throughout the entire program duration of any VIT placed in the district.
 - Must inform ISBE within five days of any employment-related changes, issues, or concerns.
 - Updating ISBE on voluntary resignations and non-renewals.
 - VIT program staff available year-round to collaborate and support host district.

Program costs

- **ISBE costs:** ~\$4,000 sponsor redesignation fee paid to DOS every two years.
- **Host district costs:**
 - Transportation from airport for VIT's first arrival to Illinois.
 - Temporary housing for their first week.
 - If they choose to request a program extension for two additional years after VIT's third year, \$367 fee paid to DOS per extension.
- **VIT costs:**
 - ISBE licensure application fee (\$150) and license registration fees (\$60).
 - SEVIS fee (\$220) and J-1 visa application fee (\$185) paid to relevant U.S. federal agencies (DHS/DOS).
 - English proficiency exam and foreign transcript evaluation (est. \$300–\$500).
 - VITs pay for their airfare, long-term housing, and other typical cost-of-living expenses during their stay in Illinois.

Other J-1 exchange teacher programs in Illinois

- Two school districts have their own J-1 sponsor designation from DOS: Chicago and Peoria Public Schools.
- There are also [third-party J-1 sponsor organizations](#) that may place exchange teachers in Illinois.
 - These programs are typically supported by teacher application fees and may also include fees for host schools/districts
 - Sponsors require a letter of no objection from ISBE.
- These districts must sign a separate IGA; screening and licensure are district's responsibilities. Districts may host both ISBE and third-party VITs.
- All J-1 exchange teachers in Illinois are eligible to apply for ELS-VIT licensure.



Multilingual / Language Development Department Resources

- Licensure pathways
- Credentials to support ELs / Bilingual Education
- Resources to “grow your own”

Pathways to Licensure: Bilingual Education

Are you looking to fill a vacant bilingual position in your school? You may have an educator in your school or district who is already qualified to fill the position! The requirements below outline the most common credentials that educators earn to work in a bilingual setting.



Professional Educator License (PEL) Requirements

Option 1 – Hold a PEL + bilingual education endorsement (target language) + endorsement for the content area for the grades to be taught

Educator License with Stipulations (ELS) Requirements

Option 1 – ELS-VIT + passing score on the English Language Proficiency test

Option 2 – ELS-TBE + bilingual education endorsement in target language

Link: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Bilingual-Ed-Lic-Pathway-Sept21.pdf>

PEL credentials to support ELs

- **ESL Endorsement** (PreK – 12)
 - May provide services via pull-out or collaboration (push-in or co-teach).
 - A content area and/or grade level endorsement required in order to be "teacher of record."
- **Bilingual Endorsement** (PreK – 12)
 - May teach in bilingual education programs in the teacher's endorsed grade levels.
 - May provide collaborative services (push-in or co-teach) in content-specific bilingual courses.
 - A content area endorsement is required in order to be "teacher of record" in content-specific bilingual courses.

Provisional credential to support ELs

ELS-TBE

Educator License with Stipulations – Transitional Bilingual Education

- Candidate must hold a Bachelor's Degree, pass a language proficiency test, and submit application to ISBE.
- Candidate may teach:
 - Transitional Bilingual Education PreK–12
 - ESL Education PreK-6
- Candidate has 5 years to complete necessary coursework to earn a PEL.
 - ESL and/or Bilingual Education Endorsements as well as any necessary content area/grade level endorsements must be earned if candidate wishes to continue teaching in this specialty.

Resources to “grow your own” multilingual educators

- [Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy \(SOBL\)](#)
 - Award given to graduating high school students who have demonstrated a high level of proficiency in English and at least one language other than English.
 - Waive the target language exam requirement to [become a bilingual or world language educator](#).
- [Global Seal of Biliteracy](#)
 - Similar credential to SOBL for college students and professionals. Not affiliated with ISBE, but accepted for ISBE licensure at “working fluency” level or higher. See website for details and cost.
- [ISBE-accepted foreign credential evaluations](#)
 - Not just for VITs! Provides U.S. equivalency for degrees earned in other countries.
- Survey district staff, BPAC, school community for multilingualism and/or interest in becoming educators.
- Explore different staffing arrangements (i.e. co-teaching, push-in, pull-out services).
- Provide PD and/or tuition reimbursement for current staff to add endorsements to PEL.
- Funding solutions (i.e. Title III, EL-EBF, braiding funds)

Questions?

Matt Rogalski

VIT Program Coordinator

exchangeteachers@isbe.net

Multilingual / Language Development Department

multilingual@isbe.net