



High School Pathways for Bilingual Education Teachers Meets State Educational and Workforce Goals

IDRA Testimony for House Bill 2168, submitted by Lizdela Piñón, Ed.D., to the Texas House Public Education Committee, April 4, 2023

Dear Chair Buckley and Honorable Members of the Committee:

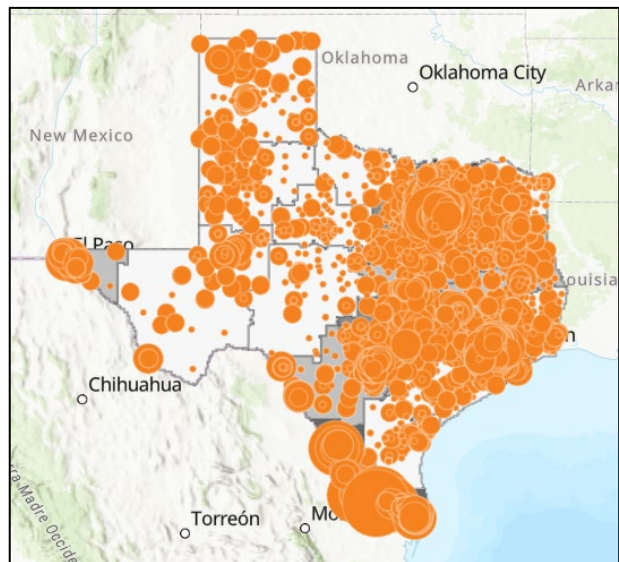
My name is Dr. Lizdela Piñón and I am the bilingual education associate at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

IDRA supports HB 2168 as it aligns high school programs of study with strategies to address Texas’s acute teacher shortage in bilingual/ESL education.

Texas’ Bilingual Teacher Shortage Spans 30 Years and Impacts the Entire State

Texas has maintained a shortage of certified bilingual education and ESL teachers for over 30 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Texas serves over 1.1 million emergent bilingual students and the greatest share of emergent bilingual students of any state at 21% of public school students. Yet, we continue to struggle to recruit, train, certify and retain bilingual educators in Texas schools across the state (IDRA analysis; Latham Sikes & Villanueva, 2021).

This bill provides an official program of study for prospective bilingual, ESL and Spanish-language teachers to address our teacher shortage. By expanding early career options for bilingual education, high school students can envision careers that build on their bilingualism and biliteracy and meet critical state workforce needs.



Bilingual/ESL Teacher Shortages in Texas – IDRA Map. Circles range in size to indicate shortage of .77-30 (small) to between 60-70 teachers (large).

Texas Must Include Incentives to Address the Bilingual Education/ESL Teacher Shortage

This bill aligns K-12 education to career pathways with meaningful incentives. Importantly, HB

2168 provides critical financial assistance to prospective bilingual, ESL and Spanish language educators. We know postsecondary affordability is often a barrier to capable, bilingual Texans who are interested in pursuing a career as a certified educator. The total certification exam fees for bilingual educators are nearly double those required for general education certifications.

The proposed financial incentives toward tuition assistance, certification exam fees, and placement support build on recommendations from both the Texas Education Agency's Teacher Vacancy Task Force Report (TEA, February 2023) and the new State Strategic Plan for Emergent Bilingual students (TEA, January 2023).

Texas cannot properly serve the one in five students who are emergent bilingual students without quality, certified bilingual educators. HB 2168 provides the early career exposure, training and necessary financial incentives to address our longstanding bilingual teacher shortage.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, contact Lizdelia Piñón, Ed.D. at lizdelia.pinon@idra.org, or Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., at chloe.sikes@idra.org.

Resources

IDRA. (2023). Bilingual/ESL Teacher Shortages in Texas – IDRA Map, online.

<https://idra.news/TxMapTeacherShortage-BE/ESL>

Latham Sikes, C., & Villanueva, C. (2021). Creating a More Bilingual Texas: A Closer Look at Bilingual Education in the Lone Star State. IDRA & Every Texan. <http://idra.news/BilingualTx>

TEA. (January 2023). SB 560 Emergent Bilingual Strategic Plan. Texas Education Agency.

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/sb-560-emergent%20bilingual-strategic-plan.pdf>

TEA. (February 2023). Teacher Vacancy Task Force Final Report. Texas Education Agency.

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/tvtf-final-report.pdf>

U.S. Department of Education. (2021). Teacher Shortage Areas, online database. <https://tsa.ed.gov/#/reports>

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by leading policy analyses and advocacy; dynamic teacher training and principal coaching; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; and innovative student, family and community engagement.