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Bilingual School Staff Who Want to Teach Face Bureaucratic, Financial Barriers

By Corey Mitchell on January 24, 2017 11:50 AM

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Multilingual paraprofessionals—an untapped talent pool that could help address the nation's shortage of bilingual K-12 educators—face bureaucratic, financial, and linguistic barriers that make it tough to earn teaching credentials, a new report concludes.

According to the study from New America's Dual Language Learners National Work Group, more than 30 states and the District of Columbia have reported shortages of bilingual, dual immersion, and English-as-a-second-language teachers. As districts try to meet the needs of their increasingly diverse schools, the demand for these educators has become crucial: an estimated **10 percent of public school K-12 students are English-language learners.**

New America released the report, "Teacher Talent Untapped: Multilingual Paraprofessionals Speak About the Barriers to Entering the Profession," roughly six months after unveiling a study that outlined how the paraprofessionals could help address the shortage.

The 42-page paper shares the stories and struggles of paraprofessionals in Minneapolis, Orange County, Calif., San Antonio, Seattle, and the District of Columbia who are prime candidates to fill these vacancies, but can't.

With job titles like paraeducator, teaching assistant, and instructional aide, the educators spoke of facing obstacles such as rigid teacher licensure standards and low pay, which makes it tough to afford the cost of going back to school.

Not content to just lament, the educators also offered potential solutions to the problem, including making teaching exams available in languages other than English and developing alternative teacher licensure programs.

To continue the work on this topic, New America intends to study grow-your-own programs in two metropolitan areas—Minnesota's Twin Cities and Seattle— they visited in this study to "learn more about their design, implementation, challenges, and outcomes."

Here's a look at the study:

[Teacher Talent Untapped](#) by [corey_c_mitchell](#) on Scribd

