



NJTESOL/NJBE, Inc.

NJ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/NJ Bilingual Educators



TO: Members of the New Jersey State Board of Education  
FROM: NJ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/ NJ Bilingual Educators  
(NJTESOL/NJBE)  
RE: Perkins Grant and Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment  
RE: December 4, 2019

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On behalf of NJTESOL/NJBE, a professional organization for those concerned with the needs of Emerging Bilingual students, better known as English Learners, we want to comment on the current iteration of the Perkins V grant and the accompanying Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA). Our membership is comprised of educators and administrators dedicated to the instruction of English learners (ELs) at all levels of public and private education. Our interests include classroom practices, research, curriculum development, funding, employment and socio-political concerns.

The Perkins V grant and the CLNA provide a unique opportunity for New Jersey to be in the forefront of developing bilingual candidates across career and technical fields in addition to addressing the special needs of our growing population of Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE). This grant and the CLNA can “marry” the CTE programs and career academies to the existing opportunity to earn a Seal of Biliteracy which ultimately increases the marketability of our students in this global economy. This grant also builds the capacity to level the playing field and add more equitable opportunities for a vulnerable population who heretofore have been almost exclusively closed out of these specialized programs.

New Jersey is positioned to capitalize on the connection between CTE programs and the Seal of Biliteracy. The Seal of Biliteracy is achieved by demonstrating proficiency in English and one or more other languages. Over 100 districts are now participating with over 5,000 students who received this Seal in 2018-2019. However, the link to the Career and Technical programs has not been constructed. We urge districts to include World Language and ESL/bilingual staff in the needs assessment so they can build this pathway for all students in career and technical programs. The health, law enforcement and teacher education fields are a few careers in dire need of bilingual candidates, evidenced in these latest headlines:

- “Latest career high school in San Antonio is medical – and has a dual language program.” (San Antonio Express News, Dec. 2019)
- “It took a legal fight, but bilingual Milwaukee cops now appreciated for communication role.” (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Nov. 2019)
- “Bilingual Teachers Are in Short Supply. How Can Schools Cultivate Their Own?” (Ed Week blog, March, 2019).

The last question is one that the career academies can help to answer. NJTESOL/NJBE also encourages districts to ensure that English Learners are provided a pathway to earn the Seal of Biliteracy. For districts implementing teacher academies, the need for bilingual teachers is critical and this is an avenue to “cultivate our own.” Our teacher education programs need to build partnerships with these academies and actively recruit these candidates.

At the same time county academies and district programs need to examine the “gatekeeping” admissions process that ultimately excludes these students. Requiring a certain standardized test score and an admissions test that does not allow accommodations permitted on NJSLA forecloses English Learners from the opportunity to benefit from a career academy. The following graphs from the NJ School Performance Reports are an example of the demographics in many county academies. We are missing an opportunity of building on linguistic capital of these students.

### Allied Health Academy

Student Group	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Female	63.3%	62.2%	62.0%
Male	36.7%	37.8%	38.0%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	5.4%	4.3%	2.4%
Students with Disabilities	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
English Learners	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Homeless Students		0.0%	0.0%
Students in Foster Care		0.0%	0.0%
Military-Connected Students		0.0%	0.0%
Migrant Students		0.0%	0.0%

### Academy of Law and Public Safety

Student Group	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Female	46.4%	46.3%	38.0%
Male	53.6%	53.7%	62.0%
Economically Disadvantaged Students	13.1%	15.9%	20.3%
Students with Disabilities	13.1%	2.4%	17.7%
English Learners	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Homeless Students		0.0%	0.0%
Students in Foster Care		0.0%	0.0%
Military-Connected Students		0.0%	0.0%
Migrant Students		0.0%	0.0%

Moreover, New Jersey has experienced a tremendous influx of Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE). Since October 2014, 12,650 students have been placed in New Jersey schools (Office of Refugee Settlement, 2019). These students’ education has been disrupted. As a result, they are often lacking in foundational math and literacy skills in their first language and need specialized support to improve their chances for a successful future. Simultaneously, they would definitely benefit from a trade or technical program. Many students work in restaurants yet cannot be enrolled in a culinary arts program. They may be working with relatives in one of the trades but cannot attend a vocational program. These students are flying under the radar and as a state, we need to address their needs. By including the stakeholders who work with this population in the CLNA, the district or county program can better craft a quality program for this underserved and often invisible group.

Executive Mercer County Superintendent Yasmin Hernandez-Manno is developing a pilot program in conjunction with the Mercer County Vocational School. This is a model which needs to be replicated throughout the 21 counties. Many local districts have a handful of SIFE so they do not have the requisite capacity to provide a viable program for these students. However, a county response would benefit all districts within the county and these students would be better prepared for college or the workforce.

Perkins V Grant and the CLNA offer the perfect opportunity for the New Jersey Department of Education to advocate for this specialized population. All districts should be mandated to include the English Learner and Seal of Biliteracy stakeholders to participate in the creation of the CTE programs offered at the district and county levels. All programs should examine the entrance criteria to ascertain how to better afford access to these awesome career gateways. All programs

should create pathways to achieve a career or technical certificate plus a Seal of Biliteracy. In this way, we are including all students and ensuring that **all** our children are College and Career Ready.

## References

San Antonio Express News <https://www.expressnews.com/news/education/article/Latest-career-high-school-in-San-Antonio-is-14867847.php>

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/2019/11/27/milwaukee-police-embrace-bilingual-skills-but-took-legal-fight/2214498001/>

Ed Week [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2019/03/bilingual\\_teachers\\_shortage.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2019/03/bilingual_teachers_shortage.html)

New Jersey Department of Education School Performance Reports

<https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/SearchForSchool.aspx>

Office of Refugee Settlement <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/unaccompanied-alien-children-released-to-sponsors-by-state>