

Guidance: Hosting an International Teacher On a J-1 Visa

Definitions

Culture Shock: the physical and emotional discomfort experienced when integrating into a culture with different values, perceptions, cultural norms and beliefs.

Host Institution: the local educational agency (LEA) where the international teacher will be teaching.

International Teacher: an appropriately qualified teacher coming from another country to teach in the United States.

J-1 Visa: for individuals approved to participate in work exchange visitor programs and who will be returning to their country of origin.

J-2 Visa: issued for spouses and dependents (unmarried children under the age of 21) of J-1 exchange visitors who accompany or later join the J-1 holder in the United States.

Sponsors/Agency: approved by the U.S. Department of State and are authorized to screen and select prospective international teachers based on the criteria established by the U.S.

Government ([22 CFR Part 62](#)) and to issue the Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status. They are responsible for providing international teachers with pre-arrival information and an orientation. In addition, they are required to monitor activities throughout the exchange program. Sponsors can include U.S. government, academic, research and private sector organizations.

Working with International Teachers

International teachers should be afforded the same treatment as American teachers in professional learning, support to be successful, salary and benefits, safe and sanitary working conditions, a manageable teaching load and adequate time for planning built into their daily schedule, etc. International teachers also need additional support and empathy as they acclimate their life to a new culture, professional system and educational system. The educational system includes niche vocabulary, practices and perspectives. International teachers will be constantly learning the language and culture both in the professional and social settings. They will experience waves of culture shock over the course of their stay. Creating a network of support will help an international teacher be successful. When working with international teachers, individuals are encouraged to:

- Explain things slowly using simple terms. Avoid “teacher-ese.”
- Encourage international teachers to ask questions.
- Be patient with the international teacher’s English skills. It will take time for them to adjust to new vocabulary, slang, accents, etc.
- Actively involve the international teacher in school and community activities.
- Try to see the situation from the international teacher’s cultural perspective.

Getting Started

In order to hire international teachers pursuant to [N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.14](#) Limited certificate for noncitizen teachers, LEAs must request a letter of no contest / no objection from the Commissioner of Education through the Executive County Superintendent naming the sponsor/agency the district would like to work with to hire teachers from abroad. The district's letter to the Executive County Superintendent must include the following information:

- Demonstrate evidence of an inability to locate a qualified teacher with the required certification for each position; and
- Indicate which sponsor/agency, including name of contact and address, they would like to work with to hire an international teacher.

Evidence of inability to locate a qualified teacher may include the following:

- Job postings with certification requirements;
- Multiple attempts at outreach or recruitment attempts;
- Interviews; or
- Number of applications received and screened.

Selecting a Sponsor

[N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.14\(f\)](#) advises considering the following when selecting a sponsor:

- Evidence of U.S. State Department authorization to sponsor J-1 visas;
- Description of the program;
- Orientation materials and procedures;
- References from other state agencies;
- Demonstration of prior experience in noncitizen teacher recruitment and placement; and
- Description of the process by which your organization determines the noncitizen teacher's U.S. bachelor's degree equivalency, college teacher preparation equivalency, authorization to teach, oral language proficiency, and successful teaching experience.

The U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA J-1 Visa Program has a searchable [database of all Designated Sponsor Organizations](#) for international teachers. Please note: it may be useful to search by a neighboring state (Pennsylvania, Delaware or New York) to find possible sponsors who can work in New Jersey. Costs, supports and experiences vary across all U.S. Department of State approved sponsor organizations.

International Teacher Requirements

International teachers are expected to meet the [N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.14](#) requirements. They include:

- Completion of at least a bachelor's degree or the equivalent as determined by a Department-approved international credentials evaluation service. To be approved by the Department, the credentials evaluation agency must be NACES approved.
- Completion of an academic major in the subject to be taught. International teachers hired to teach world languages are exempt from this requirement.
- Achievement of the GPA requirement. If graduating on or after September 1, 2016, cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 when a GPA of 4.00 equals an A. If graduating before September 1, 2016, cumulative GPA of at least 2.75 when a GPA of 4.00 equals an A.
- Completion of an educator preparation program in the home country as determined by a Department-approved international credentials evaluation service, or international agency or government of the candidate's country of origin.
- Certification to teach in the candidate's country of origin.
- A minimum of three years of successful full-time teaching experience in the subject area to be taught. International teachers hired to teach world language shall present evidence of three years of successful full-time teaching experience in any subject area.
- If teaching world language, the international teacher must demonstrate oral proficiency in their native language as certified by the sponsor.
- Complete a department-approved, nationally recognized test assessing the ability to speak, read, and write the English language at the Advanced Low proficiency.
- Sign a notarized noncitizen oath to support the Constitution of the United States.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a limit to the number of international teachers a district can hire?

No. Districts will need to demonstrate an inability to locate a qualified teacher with the required certification for each position. Evidence of inability to locate a qualified teacher with the required certification includes multiple attempts to post and interview for a position.

Does the New Jersey Department of Education require school districts to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Education Offices of another country in order to host an international teacher?

No. However, some foreign Education Offices may require an agreement.

Where can an LEA obtain a letter of no contest or no objection?

LEAs must a) demonstrate to the Executive County Superintendent an inability to locate a qualified teacher with the required certification for the position and b) indicate to the Executive County Superintendent which sponsor, including name of contact and address, they would like to work with to hire an international teacher.

Sponsors and LEAs will receive a letter of no contest or no objection from NJDOE based on the recommendation made by the Executive County Superintendent to NJDOE.

Who should an LEA reach out to if they have questions about [N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.14](#) Limited certificate for noncitizen teachers?

The local County Office of Education can provide more information about the requirements of [N.J.A.C 6A:9B-5.14](#).

Can an international teacher's contract be extended beyond three years?

No, pursuant to [N.J.A.C 6A:9B-5.14](#).

Is the New Jersey Department of Education an approved J-1 sponsor?

No.

Can a school district be a sponsor?

Yes. You can learn more about this process from the [U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA J-1 Visa Program](#).

Can an individual on an H1B visa be certified under [N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.14](#) Limited certificate for noncitizen teachers?

No. This certification is only for individuals on a J-1 visa.

Once an LEA has established a relationship with a sponsor, does an LEA need to request a letter of no contest / no objection for each position?

Yes. An LEA must request and obtain a letter of no contest/no objection that covers each individual certificated position that the LEA intends to have an international teacher fill, after having demonstrated that they were unable to locate a qualified teacher with the certification for the position, as required by [N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.14\(b\)](#). An LEA may request letters of no contest/no objection for each position individually, or they may request them together in one letter which specifies each certificated position.