CCNETWORK Regional Comprehensive Center Northwest

International Teacher Recruitment 101

A BASIC OVERVIEW FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Background

School districts in Alaska have long faced challenges with recruiting and retaining teachers, especially in rural and remote communities. To address this shortage, some school districts in Alaska, including Kodiak Island Borough School District and Lower Yukon School District, have leveraged international recruitment of teachers, particularly from the Philippines, to staff their schools. To support international teacher recruitment, the Alaska State Legislature passed a resolution to support and encourage continued recruitment and retention of international educators on J-1 and H-1B visas in the state, recognizing this as one component of a broader workforce development strategy. However, for districts that are unfamiliar with international recruitment, the process can feel complex and confusing.

Together with *The Visa Process* tip sheet and the *Cost, Capacity, and Compliance* tip sheet, this brief is intended to support district leaders during early-stage decision-making and to develop a foundational understanding of the international recruitment process.

Tip Sheet Overview

This tip sheet is designed to provide an overview of international teacher recruitment. It is intended for districts that have little or no prior experience with international recruitment and are seeking foundational information to support early decision-making. The tip sheet outlines the basic stages of the international recruitment process and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of districts and their partners. It is not intended to serve as legal guidance or a step-by-step implementation manual. Instead, its purpose is to help districts build a shared understanding of the process so they can ask informed questions, assess readiness, and determine whether international recruitment aligns with their staffing needs and capacity.

In this tip sheet, you can find:

Overview of six suggested steps for international recruitment

A matrix for understanding the roles and responsibilities within the district and across partners, and a blank template for district use

A checklist that can be used to complete the six steps

Overview of the International Recruitment Process

International teacher recruitment is a multi-stage process that typically unfolds over many months. While the exact steps, timelines, and responsibilities may vary by district, partner, and visa type, most international recruitment efforts follow a similar sequence outlined below. *From initial planning to teacher onboarding, international recruitment may take 9 to 18 months, depending on district readiness, licensure requirements, and visa processing timelines.* Many stages overlap, but delays in any one stage can affect the overall timeline. By understanding each stage in advance, districts can set realistic expectations, coordinate internal staffing, and plan responsibly for international teacher recruitment.

Below is a high-level overview of the typical stages, from early planning through teacher onboarding.

STEP 1. EVALUATE YOUR DISTRICT'S READINESS

ESTIMATED TIMELINE: 1–3 MONTHS

Districts should assess whether international recruitment aligns with their staffing needs and internal capacity. This planning phase is critical and often determines whether later stages proceed smoothly.

Activities during this stage often include:

- Identifying recurring or hard-to-fill vacancies
- Determining which subject areas or schools may be appropriate for international hiring
- Reviewing state licensure requirements for internationally educated teachers
- Assessing internal capacity related to human resources, onboarding, and ongoing support
- Considering budget implications, including recruitment fees and support costs

STEP 2. SELECT A PARTNER ORGANIZATION OR PROGRAM

ESTIMATED TIMELINE: 1–2 MONTHS

Most districts work with an external recruitment partner or participate in an established international teacher program, such as the Exchange visitor (J) visa programs, which Alaska participates in Appendix A includes a roles and responsibilities matrix that clarifies who is responsible for what and helps districts understand the limitations of partners.

Activities during this stage often include:

- Selecting the right partner or program that aligns with district needs and capacity
- Defining clear roles and responsibilities between the district and partner or program with regular communication channels
- Reviewing recruitment models and program structures
- Understanding the services provided by partners and the responsibilities retained by the district
- Reviewing contracts, fees, and timelines
- Vetting organizations and confirming alignment with district hiring goals and policies

TIPS TO IDENTIFY PARTNERS

- **Districts can find designated sponsor organizations for J-1 visas through BridgeUSA from the State Department. Organizations can place anywhere in the U.S., but some are local to Alaska.**
- **Districts can connect with local employers who have hired with an H-1B visa through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) H-1B Employer Data Hub to learn more about their partners.**

STEP 3. RECRUIT AND SCREEN CANDIDATES

ESTIMATED TIMELINE: 2–4 MONTHS

Once a partner or visa program is selected, districts should identify a source country and begin screening for qualified teachers who meet both program requirements and district hiring criteria. While recruitment partners often manage much of this work, districts remain responsible for final hiring decisions and should provide the selected recruitment partners with district guidelines that align to district needs.

Activities during this stage often include:

- Sourcing candidates from other countries
- Reviewing education, training, and teaching experience
- Conducting interviews and reference checks
- Matching candidates to district vacancies

STEP 4. BEGIN LICENSURE AND CREDENTIAL REVIEW

ESTIMATED TIMELINE: 2–6 MONTHS (OFTEN OVERLAPS WITH STEP 3)

Licensure and credential review is often one of the most time-intensive stages, as international candidates must meet Alaska teacher licensure requirements before they can begin teaching. Alaska offers emergency teacher certification, which foreign-trained teachers can obtain if they meet the minimum requirements and have district sponsorship.

Activities during this stage often include:

- Evaluating foreign transcripts and credentials
- Identifying any gaps in licensure requirements
- Submitting applications to Alaska DEED
- Monitoring licensure approval timelines

STEP 5. BEGIN VISA AND IMMIGRATION PROCESS

ESTIMATED TIMELINE: 3–6 MONTHS (VARIES BY VISA TYPE)

The visa process determines when a teacher is legally authorized to work in the United States. This stage involves federal immigration requirements and is subject to processing timelines that are largely outside district control. Because visa timelines can affect start dates, districts often need to plan for flexibility in onboarding and placement.

Activities during this stage often include:

- Preparing and submitting visa applications
- Obtaining required approvals
- Receiving authorization for teachers to enter the United States and begin employment

STEP 6. COORDINATE ARRIVAL, ONBOARDING, AND INDUCTION

ESTIMATED TIMELINE: 1–3 MONTHS (WITH ONGOING SUPPORT)

Once teachers arrive in the United States, districts should shift their focus to onboarding and support. This stage is critical for teacher success and retention. Although recruitment may be complete at this point, a district's responsibilities continue throughout the teacher's employment period.

Activities during this stage often include:

- Supporting arrival logistics and orientation
- Completing employment and compliance requirements
- Providing district and school-based onboarding
- Offering ongoing induction and professional support

Conclusion

Are you ready to explore international teacher recruitment? If so, review Appendix B for the District Readiness Checklist. This tool helps districts self-assess readiness to engage in international recruitment and encourages informed decision-making.

Appendix A. International Teacher Recruitment: Roles and Responsibilities Matrix

This matrix outlines the primary roles and responsibilities of the key actors involved in international teacher recruitment. It is intended to help districts understand which tasks may be supported by external partners and which responsibilities remain with the district, even when working with a recruitment partner or program. While recruitment partners, Alaska DEED, and federal immigration authorities each play important roles, the school district remains responsible for hiring decisions, licensure compliance, onboarding, working conditions, and ongoing monitoring throughout a teacher's placement.

Not all actors have responsibilities in every activity listed. Letters in the matrix indicate primary and supporting roles, and responsibilities may vary depending on the district's partnership agreement. The **Notes/Description** column provides additional context about how responsibilities are typically carried out and where roles may differ based on the program structure.

We offer an example plan that a district can reference, but a blank matrix on the subsequent pages is provided for districts to customize roles and responsibilities based on their local context.

LEGEND

P - Primary responsibility
S - Supporting role
N - Not typically responsible/not applicable
M - May vary depending on partnership agreement

Function/Activity	School District	Recruitment Partner	Alaska DEED	Federal Immigration Authorities	Notes/Description
Workforce planning and staffing needs	**P**	**N**	**N**	**N**	District identifies vacancies and determines positions suitable for international recruitment
Partner or program selection	**P**	**N**	**N**	**N**	District selects partner or program and defines scope of services

Function/Activity	School District	Recruitment Partner	Alaska DEED	Federal Immigration Authorities	Notes/Description
Candidate sourcing	**N**	**P**	**N**	**N**	Partner identifies and recruits candidates internationally
Candidate screening and interviews	**P**	**P**	**N**	**N**	Partner conducts initial screening and coordination; district participates and makes final hiring decisions
Final hiring decision	**P**	**S**	**N**	**N**	District issues offers and employment contracts
Credential and transcript collection	**P**	**P**	**N**	**N**	District ensures required documentation is collected; partner assists with gathering and organizing documents
Licensure and certification approval	**P**	**N**	**P**	**N**	Districts assist and track progress of candidates as candidates log into the TEACH AK system to submit applications; DEED reviews and approves licenses
Visa sponsorship or coordination	**P**	**S**	**N**	**N**	District coordinates sponsorship role, as applicable; partner assists or serves as sponsor (program-dependent)
Visa adjudication and approval	**N**	**N**	**N**	**P**	USCIS reviews and approves visa applications
Employment eligibility and start date	**P**	**S**	**N**	**N**	District confirms eligibility before employment begins; partner provides support
Onboarding and orientation	**P**	**S**	**N**	**N**	District leads onboarding, induction, and HR processes; partner provides support

Function/Activity	School District	Recruitment Partner	Alaska DEED	Federal Immigration Authorities	Notes/Description
Payroll and employment administration	**P**	**N**	**N**	**N**	District manages payroll, benefits, and HR records
Ongoing compliance monitoring	**P**	**S**	**N**	**P**	District monitors employment and visa-related obligations; partner provides support; USCIS enforces immigration requirements
Professional support and retention	**P**	**S**	**N**	**N**	District provides mentoring, induction, and ongoing support; partner may offer supplemental support
Communication with teachers	**P**	**P**	**N**	**N**	District is primary point of contact for employment matters; partner supports communication related to program logistics

INTERNATIONAL TEACHER RECRUITMENT. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MATRIX

Districts may use the template below to define roles and responsibilities based on their partnership agreement, program model, and local procedures. Not all actors will be involved in every activity. The legend below is one way to organize roles and responsibilities. Districts can use the template in whatever way fits their needs, including for notes and comments.

LEGEND

P - Primary responsibility

S - Supporting role

N - Not typically responsible/not applicable

M - May vary depending on partnership agreement

Function/Activity	School District	Recruitment Partner	Alaska DEED	Federal Immigration Authorities	Other
Workforce planning and staffing needs					
Partner or program selection					
Candidate sourcing					
Candidate screening and interviews					
Final hiring decision					
Credential and transcript collection					
Licensure and certification approval					
Visa sponsorship or coordination					
Visa adjudication and approval					
Employment eligibility and start date					
Onboarding and orientation					

Function/Activity	School District	Recruitment Partner	Alaska DEED	Federal Immigration Authorities	Other
Payroll and employment administration					
Ongoing compliance monitoring					
Professional support and retention					
Communication with teachers					

Appendix B. District Readiness Checklist: International Teacher Recruitment

Use this checklist to determine whether your district is prepared to move forward with international teacher recruitment. Not every item must be fully complete before proceeding, but districts should have a plan for each area before beginning the process. The checklist is organized to align with the stages described in this guide. Consider consulting with an immigration attorney to discuss options and ask questions about international recruitment as part of evaluating your district's readiness.

STEP 1. EVALUATE YOUR DISTRICT'S READINESS

- ☐ We have persistent or recurring vacancies that have not been filled through domestic recruitment efforts.
- ☐ We have identified specific subject areas, grade levels, or schools where international recruitment may be appropriate.
- ☐ We understand why international recruitment is being considered and how it fits into our broader workforce strategy.
- ☐ We have identified the staff members who will be responsible for coordinating international recruitment across HR, licensure, and school leadership.
- ☐ We have the internal capacity to manage timelines, documentation, and coordination with external partners.
- ☐ District leadership understands that international recruitment is a multi-month process, not a short-term hiring fix.
- ☐ We have reviewed state licensure and certification requirements for internationally educated teachers.
- ☐ We understand how licensure review timelines may affect hiring and start dates.
- ☐ We have considered budget implications, including recruitment fees and additional support costs.

STEP 2. SELECT A PARTNER ORGANIZATION OR PROGRAM

- ☐ We understand the different recruitment partners or visa programs available.
- ☐ We have selected a partner or program that aligns with district needs and capacity.
- ☐ We have defined roles and responsibilities between the district and partner or program.
- ☐ We understand which tasks will be handled by the partner and which will remain the district's responsibility.

- ☐ We have reviewed contracts, fees, and timelines.
- ☐ We have confirmed that the program aligns with district hiring policies and goals.

STEP 3. RECRUIT AND SCREEN CANDIDATES

- ☐ We understand the qualifications required for internationally recruited teachers.
- ☐ We have a plan for reviewing a candidate's education, credentials, and experience.
- ☐ We are prepared to participate in interviews and final hiring decisions.
- ☐ We have identified how candidates will be matched to district vacancies.
- ☐ We understand that the district is responsible for final hiring decisions.

STEP 4. BEGIN LICENSURE AND CREDENTIAL REVIEW

- ☐ We have reviewed Alaska licensure requirements for internationally educated teachers.
- ☐ We understand the documentation needed for licensure applications.
- ☐ We have a plan for submitting applications to Alaska DEED.
- ☐ We have a process for tracking licensure status and approvals.
- ☐ We understand that licensure timelines may affect hiring and start dates.

STEP 5. BEGIN VISA AND IMMIGRATION PROCESS

- ☐ We understand the general visa options available for hiring international teachers.
- ☐ We understand that visa approvals are controlled by federal authorities.
- ☐ We recognize that visa timelines may affect teacher start dates.
- ☐ We understand our role in the visa process and the role of the partner or sponsor.
- ☐ We have planned for possible delays or changes in immigration timelines.
- ☐ We have considered how visa duration limits may affect staffing continuity.

STEP 6. COORDINATE ARRIVAL, ONBOARDING, AND INDUCTION

- ☐ We have a plan for supporting teacher arrival and transition to the district.
- ☐ We are prepared to complete employment eligibility and onboarding requirements.
- ☐ We have planned district and school-based orientation.

- ☐ We are prepared to provide mentoring, induction, and professional support.
- ☐ We understand that ongoing support is critical for retention and program success.
- ☐ We have identified the staff members who will be responsible for ongoing communication and support.

REFLECTION

Based on this checklist, what areas does the district need to address before moving forward with international teacher recruitment?

Notes

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