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CONSEJERÍA DE EDUCACIÓN  
EN ESTADOS UNIDOS  
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ACCIÓN  
EDUCATIVA  
EXTERIOR

## ***VISITING TEACHERS FROM SPAIN PROGRAM*** **EMBASSY OF SPAIN**



### **The Visiting Teachers from Spain Program**

The Visiting Teachers from Spain Program is an international cooperation initiative between the education authorities of Spain and the United States.

The program is promoted by the Education Office of the Embassy of Spain in the United States in collaboration with Departments of Education and school districts in more than 30 states. More than 10,000 Spanish visiting teachers have participated in our program during the past 35 years.

This program enables school districts, as well as private and charter schools, to hire highly-qualified native Spanish speakers to teach at K-12 level.

Teachers will come on a J-1 Cultural Exchange Visa, valid for up to three years. Extensions for a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years are possible. Teachers' contracts are renewed on a yearly basis provided they have a positive evaluation and they continue in good standing to maintain their J-1 visa status.

Participating districts employ these teachers in accordance with state regulations and policies and pay them according to their experience and certification level.

At the end of the program, visiting teachers are expected to return to Spain to complete the cultural exchange sharing their experiences at their schools.

### **Reasons to hire visiting teachers from Spain**

- ⇒ They foster knowledge and appreciation of similarities and differences between the United States and Spain.
- ⇒ They provide school communities with a diverse, multicultural atmosphere, increasing global awareness and understanding.
- ⇒ They support the teaching of the Spanish language and the implementation of dual language and multicultural education programs.
- ⇒ The program brings highly-qualified experienced teachers to the education and lives of American students.



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### Who sponsors the Visiting Teachers from Spain Program?

- ⇒ In many states the Department of Education (DoE) sponsors the J-1 visa teachers need to participate in the Exchange Visitor Program.
- ⇒ In other states school districts/charter schools engage the services of private agencies (authorized by the corresponding DoE) to sponsor teachers' J-1 visas. These agencies will require school districts to pay an initial and annual fee for each teacher. Some of the agencies are Amity Institute, Cordell Hull Foundation, Global Indiana, Participate Learning, etc.
- ⇒ The sponsoring institution or agency designates a Responsible Officer who administers the program under the supervision of the Department of State (DoS). <https://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/Education>

### Teachers' requirements

Teachers must comply with the following requirements established by the DoS:

- \* Meet the required qualifications for teaching in primary or secondary schools in Spain.
- \* Have a minimum of two years of teaching experience.
- \* Satisfy the standards of the state in which they will teach.
- \* Enter the United States for purpose of teaching full time at a primary or secondary accredited educational institution.
- \* Possess sufficient proficiency in English.
- \* Submit clean background checks.

### Licensing

Visiting teachers receive a teaching credential or authorization from the Departments of Education involved while in the program.

### Requirements to host a visiting teacher

School districts/charter schools must be willing and able to provide their visiting Spanish teachers with:

- \* A secure, fulltime one-year-long teaching position (as a teacher of record – NOT as an assistant).
- \* A position appropriate to the educational and intercultural objectives of the program.
- \* Salary and benefits commensurate with their education and experience.
- \* Assistance getting settled in an affordable and safe living situation.
- \* Strong mentoring throughout the academic year.
- \* Rich cross-cultural learning experiences, including flexible opportunities to experience American culture outside the classroom setting.



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### Spanish Education Office's responsibilities

The Education Office of Spain in the United States screens candidates and verifies their credentials and experience in order to provide a group of highly qualified candidates that meet the requirements of the Departments of Education and hiring school districts and charter schools.

Professional logistics service at the recruitment event in Madrid are provided to all parties involved.

The Education Office of Spain provides ongoing support to school districts, charter schools and visiting teachers during their term.

### School districts and schools' responsibilities

- ⇒ The Education Office of Spain requests that host districts and schools assist the visiting teachers upon their arrival. The sooner teachers get settled in the community, the faster they can focus on their work. School districts and schools can assist visiting teachers in:
  - \* Securing a Social Security number.
  - \* Arranging for the visiting teacher to be fingerprinted and having background checks completed.
  - \* Completing and submitting their online application for the Visiting International Teacher License.
  - \* Settling in house, driving license, car, opening a bank account, identifying local doctors, schools for their children, etc.
- ⇒ During the school year it is very important that school districts and schools provide:
  - \* A strong mentoring program (detailed below).
  - \* An appropriate and manageable workload.
  - \* The support that might be required (functioning optimally).
  - \* High visibility of administrators (frequent drop-in visits during the first week or two of classes).
  - \* Frequent observations with positive, constructive and easily understandable feedback by all observers.
- ⇒ Visiting teachers should teach Spanish or other subjects in Spanish.
- ⇒ If your visiting teacher is struggling in any way, alert the Responsible Officer and the Education Advisor in your area immediately and intervene positively to assist the teacher.
- ⇒ We strongly recommend school districts to report to the Responsible Officer and the Education Advisor without delay any infraction of the law or the educator code of conduct that is allegedly committed by a visiting teacher. Please, ensure that the teacher-receives due process in the event an alleged violation of the law or educator code of conduct is made.
- ⇒ Education Advisors and Responsible Officers are likely to visit schools hosting visiting teachers on a yearly basis, especially when they host newly arrived teachers. Principals and district administrators are requested to facilitate these monitoring visits.



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### **Teachers' responsibilities**

- ⇒ Teachers are responsible for their travel expenses to and from Spain, as well as their accommodation expenses.
- ⇒ Medical insurance coverage with the following minimum benefits:
  - \* Medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness.
  - \* Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000.
  - \* Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$50,000.
  - \* A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness.
- ⇒ Apart from that, visiting teachers should comply with J-1 visa requirements:
  - \* Providing a formal letter of participation from an appropriate partner school in Spain.
  - \* Planning and organizing two cross-cultural activities and submitting a formal, annual report to their Responsible Officer in the spring documenting both activities.

### **Orientation workshops**

Visiting Teachers from Spain receive orientation in different phases during their stay in the program:

- \* Pre-departure orientation in Spain or on-line (July before arrival in the United States).
- \* Visiting teacher orientation in the recipient state upon arrival organized by the sponsor.
- \* New teacher orientation provided by the host school or district.

### **Mentoring Program**

- ⇒ Schools should allow for a period of intensive and guided orientation before teaching responsibilities begin. This should include time for the visiting teacher to observe, for the first few days of class if not the entire first week, in order to focus on establishing rapport and setting up routines.
- ⇒ Schools should provide an intensive, yearlong, mentoring program by a highly qualified mentor, that will include at least the following items:
  - \* Specific policy information on attendance, leave, grading, discipline, record-keeping, dress code, safety procedures...
  - \* Information on school culture, extracurricular activities and school calendar.
  - \* Additional classroom management training.
  - \* Financial explanations (e.g., pay, insurance, other benefits).
  - \* Explanation about teachers' union.
  - \* Use of district technology and related policies, training on grading and attendance platforms, etc.
  - \* Introduction to district curriculum, teaching materials and tools.



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### **Expectations**

- ⇒ Visiting teachers initially will be challenged to understand the feedback that they receive from their mentors and other administrators and how to apply their suggestions for improvement.
- ⇒ Visiting teachers will need to be shown how things are done.
- ⇒ Visiting teachers' performance will improve slowly at first and faster after the first few weeks. By November it should resemble that of an American colleague.
- ⇒ Many visiting teachers will reach a breaking point about 8-10 weeks into the program when they feel so overwhelmed and ineffective that they question why they ever gave up their job, family and friends, and the comforts of home to have this experience. Due to the different organization of school daily routines in Spain, they might find difficulty with the following:
  - \* Frequent in-class observations.
  - \* Classroom management (there are significant cultural differences regarding discipline, orders, consequences, referrals, tone of voice, body language, personal space, ...).
  - \* Grading (there might be a conflict with parents' high expectations).
  - \* Understanding students culturally and establishing a solid rapport with them.
  - \* Functioning in a very urban or very rural American environment.
  - \* Planning more (and different kinds of) lessons.
  - \* Completing more paperwork.
  - \* Contacting and working with parents (very intimidating for them especially at the beginning).
  - \* Dealing with all of the tasks, duties and responsibilities required: open house, conferences, IEP meetings, team meetings, record-keeping, extracurricular activities, etc.

### **How to request visiting teachers from Spain**

- ⇒ You can always contact the Education Advisor at your nearest Education Office of Spain, who will help you with your request.
- ⇒ You can also contact the Department of Education in many of the participating states.
- ⇒ Schools districts and charter schools need to be specific regarding the type of teachers they need so the Education Advisor identifies the most suitable candidates for the teaching positions they want to fill.



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### **Timeline**

#### **October - December**

- ⇒ The Spanish Ministry of Education publishes the call for teachers and accepts applications.
- ⇒ Departments of Education/school districts/charter schools inform Education Advisors of the number of visiting teachers from Spain they are requesting for the following school year, as well as the nature of the positions available.

#### **December - February**

- ⇒ The Education Office of Spain pre-screens applications according to the eligibility criteria set by the Departments of Education of the participating states, the school districts and charter schools and the nature of the positions available.
- ⇒ School districts/charter schools confirm their interest in hiring visiting teachers.

#### **March - June**

- ⇒ Representatives from school districts, charter schools and Departments of Education participate in the recruitment week to interview prospective candidates in Madrid or on-line.
- ⇒ The selected teachers have their credential evaluations processed.
- ⇒ School districts/charter schools provide selected visiting teachers with a “letter of intent to hire”.
- ⇒ Visa sponsors (Responsible Officers) initiate the process for teachers to apply for their J-1 visa and J-2 visas for their dependents (if applicable).
- ⇒ After making an appointment with the United States Embassy in Madrid, visiting teachers are interviewed in order to have their visas approved.

#### **July - August**

- ⇒ Visiting teachers participate in the orientation workshop organized by the Spanish Ministry of Education in Madrid or on-line.
- ⇒ Visiting Teachers participate in orientation workshops provided by the Departments of Education or school districts once they are in the United States.