

# Binational Teacher Exchange Program

## Binational Initiative – Migrant Education Program



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

### Binational Teacher Exchange

The primary goal of Binational Migrant Initiative (BMEP) is to improve the education of migrant children who travel between the U.S. and Mexico. One of the principal program components designed to improve educational continuity for binational students is the Binational Teacher Exchange Program.

### Objectives

- To reinforce knowledge about the history, culture, values, and national traditions of Mexican origin students who live in the U.S., strengthening their identity and improving their education.
- To encourage ongoing communication between U.S. and Mexican teachers in order to share educational experiences that promote continuity of educational practices.
- To improve the educational services offered to the Mexican and Mexican-descent school population living in the U.S. through the Binational Teacher Exchange Program.

### Teacher Participation Requirements

- In the “Invitation to Participate”, Mexican binational administrators state that, to ensure a positive and successful experience, they select only teachers that meet the following requirements:
- Bachelor’s degree in the area of pedagogy or certificate-diploma from the Normal School or Upper Normal School (equivalent to BA or BS in Education)
- Minimum of three years’ experience as a classroom teacher
- Mastery of verbal communication in English
- Willingness to participate in community or extracurricular activities
- Knowledge of the educational issues of the Mexican rural environment
- General knowledge of the Mexican school system
- Knowledge of Mexico’s history, traditions, and culture
- Experience in designing educational programs and materials
- Ability to integrate Mexican art, music, and dance into lesson plans

### Resources

#### U.S. Department of Education

<https://www2.ed.gov/admins/tchrqual/learn/binational.html>

#### Colorado Binational Migrant Initiative

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/migrant/binationalinitiative>

## Selection Procedure

To promote consistency and equal access to the selection process, it is recommended that MEP administrators adhere to the timeline to facilitate the timely selection, placement, and preparation of participating teachers. The application process for interested Mexican teachers requires several months. Teachers are interviewed for possible participation in the program between February and March. Prior to this, positions are advertised and interested teachers submit their resumes to the binational coordinator in their state.

Some ways MEP directors have been involved in teacher selection:

- By attending the “Capacitacion Nacional”, where teachers attend to be interviewed by MEP director.
- Phone interview to prospective teachers.

To participate in the interview and selection process, directors should contact the U.S. Mexican Consulate assigned to their area or the binational contacts in the Mexican states from which the teachers are being requested.

## Program Logistics

Expenses for preparing exchange teachers to participate in the Binational Teacher Exchange Program prior to their arrival in the U.S. are covered by the Mexican government. This includes the application, selection and placement process, as well as intensive orientation and training in Mexico for selected teachers. Mexico also covers the cost of round-trip transportation to the airport closest to the receiving MEP site.

- Sites hosting exchange teachers are responsible for the remainder of costs associated with the program listed below:
- Ground transportation once teachers arrive in the U.S. (airport to program site, daily transportation to and from work site and all social and cultural activities, car or van rental, staff driver, gas)
- Lodging (apartment rent, hotel bills, dormitory costs, stipends to host families, etc.)
- Meals (money for groceries eating in restaurants, meal plans at universities, lunches at work sites, stipends to host families food purchases for parties, staff hosted activities etc.)
- Stipend in lieu of a salary (this is in addition to monies for lodging, meals, and transportation and may be saved by teachers, sent home, or used for leisure activities)
- Materials and supplies needed for classroom and community projects and activities beyond what teachers bring (art supplies, specialty books, ingredients for ethnic meals, musical scores, etc.)
- Insurance requirements beyond what teachers have in their personal policies (automobile, health, life, etc.)
- Emergency medical procedures (medical procedures on pre-existing conditions would not be covered)
- Miscellaneous items such as internet access, phone calling cards, as determined by MEP administrators.

## Required Documentation – Visas

To enable Binational Exchange Teachers to enter the U.S. legally and without incident, work in summer schools and migrant education programs for a predetermined length of time, and receive a financial stipend for their



contributions, the “J-1” visa is considered to be appropriate for use in program sites implementing the Binational Teacher Exchange Program.

The “J” visa is a non-immigrant visa category established by the Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation and the Immigration and Nationality Act enabling persons to participate in visitor-exchange programs designated by the U.S. Department of State. The “J” exchange visitor program is designed to promote the interchange of persons, knowledge, and skills in the fields of education, arts, and sciences.

Program regulations can be viewed on the web at <https://exchanges.state.gov/>

## **Binational Travel: Arrival and Departures**

MEP directors should receive a list of selected teachers from the Mexican binational program between March and April. No later than one month prior to the teacher’s arrival, the migrant program site director should ensure that details on the following issues are clearly understood on both sides of the border:

- When and where teacher (s) will arrive in the U.S.
- Person assigned to meet and transport them to lodging or program site (s)
- Arrangements for housing and meals
- Location of teacher’s work site (s)
- Expected work schedule and duties
- Provision of daily transportation
- Date and location of teacher’s departure from the U.S.

These details should be communicate to the Mexican binational coordinator in the teacher’s Mexican state so the flights can be arranged. Due to considerations of cost, payment, ground transportation, and distance to airports, flight arrangements will be made in Mexico.