

## **IMMIGRATION WEBINAR ALERT: How School Districts Are Combating Teacher Shortages Through International Hires**

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It is no secret that teacher shortages are proving to be a significant challenge for school districts across the country. The Learning Policy Institute estimates the country-wide shortage was at as many as 110,000 teachers by the end of the 2017-2018 school year. In its annual report on the number of teachers leaving the classroom in South Carolina, the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment Retention and Advancement (“CERRA”) confirmed more than 6,500 teachers left their positions during the 2018-2019 school year. While the number of teachers leaving the profession in South Carolina remains high, districts reported an 11% decrease in teaching vacancies compared to the prior year. So, what explains the discrepancy?

In part, South Carolina districts have found innovative ways to more effectively identify, recruit, and hire teachers. One effective strategy districts are using is visa sponsorship of international hires to expand their hiring pools. The CERRA’s report notes international teachers accounted for 5% of new hires last year, and the total number of international teachers in South Carolina schools has increased significantly since the 2015-2016 school year.

The recent rise in international teaching hires should not be surprising. We have written multiple articles on a special H-1B visa rule that is available to many public school districts ([available here](#)). The rule went into effect in 2017, which coincides closely with the rise in international hires. The rule essentially allows school districts to obtain an unlimited number of H-1B visas for international teachers as long as the district has a qualifying affiliation agreement with an institution of higher education. The most common affiliation agreements are “Dual-Enrollment Agreements”, in which an institution of higher education agrees to accept courses completed by the district’s high school students as credit towards a college-level degree.

Due to the influx in interest related to international teaching hires, Burr & Forman LLP conducted a free webinar for school districts on February 26, 2020 that were interested in learning more about

hiring international teachers. During the webinar, we discussed the benefits of the H-1B visa over other visas for teachers as well as the process districts need to follow to obtain an H-1B visa for teachers under the special H-1B rule. We also discussed green card strategies for teachers and tips for immigration compliance.

Burr & Forman's immigration team routinely handles immigration filings for school districts and other industries. For questions on H-1B visas and other immigration-related issues, contact Melissa Azallion ([MAzallion@burr.com](mailto:MAzallion@burr.com)); Anna Scully ([AScully@burr.com](mailto:AScully@burr.com)); or Jon Eggert ([JEggert@burr.com](mailto:JEggert@burr.com)).

## Authors



**Melissa L. Azallion**

Partner

Hilton Head Is., SC



**Anna L. Scully**

Partner

Mobile, AL



**Jonathan C. Eggert**

Associate

Hilton Head Is., SC

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