

Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

New York State Education Department

Albany office: 89 Washington Avenue – 301EB, Albany, NY 12234, (518) 474-8775

Batavia office: 2A Richmond Avenue, Park Lewis Hall, Batavia, NY 14020, (585) 344-2002

Brooklyn office: 55 Hanson Place, Rm 594, Brooklyn, NY 11217, (718) 722-2445

[OBEWL website](#)

February 2025 Newsletter



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Greetings from Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez

The most powerful tool we possess to change the future is not wealth, nor status, nor luck; it is education. Education opens minds, bridges divides and builds a world where every individual has an opportunity to rise.

In our shared mission to provide an inclusive and equitable education for all students, we are reminded of the profound words of Julia de Burgos, who once said:

“La educación es la nueva aurora que alumbra los senderos de los pueblos. Es la salvación contra la opresión y la miseria [Education is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is about illuminating paths, creating opportunities, and breaking the cycles of oppression and poverty].”

This sentiment resonates deeply as we reflect on the recent [joint statement](#) issued by Commissioner Betty A. Rosa, Attorney General Letitia James, and Governor Kathy Hochul, which underscores our collective commitment to safeguarding the rights of immigrant students in New York State. This guidance reaffirms that every child, regardless of immigration status, is entitled to a free public education. It emphasizes that school districts must not inquire about or require documentation of a student's or parent's immigration status during the enrollment process. This ensures that our schools remain welcoming sanctuaries for learning, free from fear or discrimination.

In alignment with this guidance, the New York State Education Department's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages has established the [English Language Learner \(ELL\) Parents' Bill of Rights](#). This vital document ensures that parents of ELLs are informed of their civil rights and empowered to invoke them. Key rights described in the document include:

- *Access to Bilingual Education:* If there are 20 or more students of the same grade level who speak the same home language within a district, parents have the right to enroll their children in a Bilingual Education program.
- *Enrollment Without Immigration Status Disclosure:* Parents can enroll their children in school without being asked to provide information that may reveal their or their children's immigration status.
- *Language Support:* Under federal law, parents are entitled to a qualified interpreter or translator in their preferred language for critical interactions with the school district.

As educators, parents, and community members, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that these rights are not only acknowledged but actively upheld. By fostering an environment of inclusivity and respect, we empower our students to reach their fullest potential. Let us remain vigilant and proactive in our efforts, ensuring that every child feels valued, supported, and inspired to learn. Together, we can build a future where education serves as the cornerstone of opportunity for all. Our students cannot wait for tomorrow; they need all of us today!

In Unity,

Elisa Alvarez



PR/HYLI Syracuse Delegation: Cultivating Leadership, Advocacy, and Identity

The Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (PR/HYLI) is a transformative program that empowers Hispanic and Puerto Rican high school students by helping them develop the skills to lead, advocate, and engage in civic action. In partnership with the New York State Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force, the program aligns with the annual SOMOS, Inc. conference, offering students hands-on experiences in leadership, public policy, and civic engagement. With seven regional delegations—Capital Region, Hudson Valley, Long Island, Monroe, New York City, Syracuse, and Western NY—PR/HYLI provides an opportunity for students across the state to understand government operations, participate in legislative processes, and develop leadership skills. The program’s core mission includes fostering youth leadership, connecting students with positive role models, and encouraging conversations between educators, business leaders, and policymakers to address critical issues affecting Hispanic communities.

Each delegation creates a unique learning experience for students. The Syracuse Delegation, led by Mid-State Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) at OCM BOCES, consists of between 40-60 high school juniors and seniors annually, with 44 delegates participating this year. Delegates engage in an eight-day leadership development program focused on public service, policymaking, and the role of civic engagement in creating meaningful change.

Through regional study sessions, workshops, and interactive experiences, delegates explore:

- Leadership development and advocacy
- The New York State legislative process and parliamentary procedures
- Public speaking, debating, and civic engagement
- Cultural identity and the power of representation

In addition, some participants may qualify for the New York State Seal of Biliteracy and the Seal of Civic Readiness on their diplomas, and some may earn college credits in public speaking through partnerships with local colleges.

Each delegation of students receives a unique learning experience. To support the Syracuse Delegation, the Mid-State RBERN integrates experiential learning activities that enhance critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving. Key components include:

- Team-building exercises using manipulatives like LEGOs and Jenga to reinforce communication, active listening, and teamwork.
- Workshops on exploratory and presentational communication to refine delegates’ public speaking and advocacy skills.
- Identity exploration activities to encourage students to embrace their heritage and recognize the importance of representation.

A defining feature of the PR/HYLI-Syracuse Delegation experience is its commitment to connecting students with prominent leaders. Events like Speed Leading and leadership roundtables provide direct access to government officials, educators, and business leaders.

PR/HYLI Syracuse Delegation: Cultivating Leadership, Advocacy, and Identity (cont'd)

This year, delegates participated in Speed Leading, engaging with leaders including:

- Rita Paniagua – Councilor At-Large Syracuse City Common Council and Cross-Cultural Strategies
- Hugo Acosta – Founder, CNY Latino
- Pamela J. Hunter – NYS Assemblywoman, District 128
- Rachel May – NYS Senator, Senate District 48
- Agnes McCray – Special Education Advocate
- Bethaida Carmen "Bea" González – Governor Appointed Board Member
- Marisol Hernandez – Editor-in-Chief, CNY Latino
- Dr. Eliezer Hernández – Founder & CEO, Authentic Leadershift, LLC.
- Francisco Suarez - Professor, SUNY Oswego
- Jesus Rolon, Executive Director of the Puerto Rican Festival
- Zaida Morell, Board Member of SOMOS, Inc.
- Nodesia Hernandez, Minority Leader, Onondaga County Legislature, 17th District
- Palmer Harvey, Onondaga County Legislator, 9th District

Through fast-paced discussions, student delegates gained insight into advocacy, leadership, and overcoming barriers. These interactions foster mentorship and inspiration, encouraging students to become active community changemakers.

PR/HYLI's three-day statewide conference in Albany will unite 275 delegates for team-building activities, a Mock Assembly session in the NYS Assembly Chamber, a student recognition dinner, and networking opportunities with state policymakers. Outstanding Student Delegates may also visit Washington, D.C., or Puerto Rico to meet with national leaders.

As PR/HYLI continues to grow, it remains a beacon of empowerment for Hispanic and Puerto Rican youth. With mentorship, education, and advocacy tools, students are prepared to lead purposefully and drive meaningful change—one conversation, one decision, and one step at a time.



Syracuse PR/HYLI student delegates engaged in Speed Leading session with regional leaders.

New York State Joint Statement: *Safeguarding the Rights of Immigrant Students*

Recently New York State Governor Kathy Hochul, Attorney General Letitia James, and Commissioner Betty Rosa issued a [Joint Statement](#) published to highlight and clarify relevant resources for school districts regarding their obligations under state and federal law in light of recent threats of increased federal immigration actions in our communities.

This statement also reinforced and clarified specific rights available to immigrant students and their families. To further support this information, OBEWL has developed the one page flyer titled “Safeguarding the Rights of New York State Immigrant Students” which highlights these protections within New York State law to ensure that immigrant children have the right to a public education regardless of their US resident status.

The flyer can be accessed [here](#) and through the image below. Additionally OBEWL has posted links to 12 translated versions of this document on [our website](#).




SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHTS OF NEW YORK STATE IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

- All students ages 5 to 21 have the right to a free public education regardless of nationality, country of origin, or immigration status.
- Schools must immediately enroll migrant students or those living in shelters. Schools must accept a variety of proofs of residency.
- Schools must be a safe space. Law enforcement may not remove a student from school or interrogate a student without parental consent.
- NYS and federal law prohibit bullying by students or employees based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin or citizenship status.
- Refugees and other immigrants who are considered homeless (including living in temporary housing or with another family) must be enrolled in school even if they do not have immunization records. Students must receive the first dose of all required vaccines within the first 14 days of attending school.

NYS ELL PARENT HOTLINE
1-800-469-8224

Visit **OBEWL** Online
obewl@nysed.gov
(518) 474-8775



Celebrating Multilingualism and Equity: A Collaborative Event Supporting ELLs Across New York State

On January 15, 2025, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) at NYSED, in partnership with the CUNY Initiative on Immigration and Education (CUNY-IIE), proudly welcomed representatives from the US Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) for an inspiring event dedicated to advancing support for English Language Learners (ELLs), immigrant communities, and Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs across New York State. The event took place at CUNY City College in New York City.

A key feature of the event was the collaborative sharing from representatives of our three DLI Consortium school districts. These districts are New York City Public Schools – District 14, Ossining Union Free School District, and North Rockland Central School District. Educators from these districts presented forward-thinking strategies designed to empower teachers and strengthen family engagement, emphasizing the importance of community partnerships in enhancing student success.

This dynamic gathering also provided the opportunity for all to learn about the impactful work of CUNY-IIE to ensure that all immigrant students within New York State have equitable opportunity to pursue their education. Their dedication to fostering inclusive educational environments for immigrant students was a central theme, showcasing innovative initiatives that address the unique needs of diverse communities.

The event served as a powerful reminder of New York State’s leadership role in promoting multilingualism, ensuring equity for ELLs, and steadfastly upholding the civil rights of all students. It reflected a shared commitment to creating educational spaces where linguistic and cultural diversity are celebrated as strengths.

OBEWL extends our heartfelt gratitude to CUNY-IIE, our dedicated DLI Consortium partners, OELA, and all participants whose passion and hard work continue to drive positive change. Together, we move forward—stronger than ever—in our mission to support and uplift every learner across New York State.



Representatives from OBEWL, OEWL, CUNY-IIE, and the NYS DLI Consortium met at CUNY City College to share lessons in supporting immigrants and multilingual learners in Dual Language Immersion programs.

ENL and Bilngual Teacher Leadership Consortium

On January 30, OBEWL hosted the inaugural session of the ELL Teacher Leadership Consortium (TLC), and the turnout was incredible! Nearly 200 educators from across the state gathered for a dynamic and informative one-hour virtual meeting led by Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez, Associate of Bilingual Education Carissa Zuniga, and other OBEWL staff.

The session covered a range of timely and essential topics, including updates on proposed changes at the federal level, exciting new resources for teachers, and practical tips for managing schedules and co-teaching. Special thanks to Susan Lafond of NYSUT whose support helped to make this initiative a great success.

We were thrilled to see such a positive response and the deep engagement from our educator community. It's clear that now more than ever, educators are seeking professional development opportunities and resources to help them navigate the challenges of the classroom. We are proud to be able to provide these platforms for growth and connection.

As part of OBEWL's ongoing commitment to supporting educators, we're excited to announce two additional TLC sessions this spring. Mark your calendars for Thursday, March 6th and Thursday, May 1st, both of which will be held virtually via Zoom from 3:30-4:30 PM. These sessions will continue to focus on key issues impacting educators and will offer valuable strategies and tools to enhance teaching practices.


We hope to reach even more educators through these upcoming sessions and provide the support that teachers need to thrive in today's ever-changing educational landscape. Your participation and enthusiasm are crucial in the success of our students, and we are committed to building a strong, collaborative community of teachers. Click [here](#) to register for upcoming meetings.

Federal Department of Education - Office of English Language Acquisition	New York State Education Department- Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages	School Districts
Sets Federal Policy	Sets Statewide Policy	Sets School District Policy
Provides Funding	Disburses Funding	Disburses Funding
Collects Data	Collects Data	Collects Data
Enforcement of Non-Discrimination	Enforcement and Monitoring	Monitors the Efficacy of Programs
Provides Guidance	Sets Standards	Develops and Implements Curriculum
	Sets Teacher Certification Requirements	Hires teachers Performs teacher observations Negotiates teacher contracts with unions Sets hours and schedules

ELL Teacher Leadership Consortium meeting in progress


**Registration Flyer: ENL and Bilingual
Teacher Leadership Consortium**


ENL & BILINGUAL TEACHER LEADERSHIP CONSORTIUM





This is an opportunity for ENL and Bilingual Education Teachers to learn from one another, discuss best practices, and hear about the latest updates from OBEWL and NYSED. There will be opportunities to ask questions of Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez.

CTLE Credit to meet the language acquisition requirement will be awarded. For questions please email obewl@nysed.gov.

 Thurs. March 6, 2025
Thurs. May 1, 2025

 3:30 PM - 4:30 PM

 **REGISTER NOW**

 www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed

**Save the Date Flyer: New York City Association
for Language Teachers Spring Professional
Workshop Day**



SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025

**NYCAFLT:
SPRING PROFESSIONAL
WORKSHOP DAY**

 **JILL SCHIMMEL**
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

SAVE THE DATE

 NYCAFLT.ORG

Trauma and Resilience: A Community of Practice for Educators

"Trauma is real. Trauma is prevalent. Trauma can be toxic to the brain and can affect development and learning in a multitude of ways. Schools need to be prepared to support students who have experienced trauma"

(Souers & Hall, 2019)



Back by popular demand, Mid-West RBERN specialists Cori Smith and Jennifer Raponi offered a community of practice series focused on the effects of trauma with a lens on English Language Learners (ELLs) and newly arrived immigrants. The flexible five-session professional workshop series began by exploring trauma and resilience to lay the foundation for building authentic relationships, creating routines, and fostering emotional regulation. Fifty educators met both in person and online to gain knowledge about how tending to one's own socialemotional wellness prepares them to better support and guide students.

Cori and Jen shared resources, used trauma-informed practices, and discussed the impact that trauma has on learning for linguistically diverse backgrounds. Participants engaged in meaningful practices and co-created a space for building community and resilience.

Participants shared sentiments such as "This PD helped me develop compassion for what my ELL students have been through," and "I have strategies to build resilience in myself and students."

Sometimes fear itself can be the trauma that impacts our students. As we move forward through these challenging times, we invite educators to take care of themselves so they can care for the students in their classrooms.

Souers, K., & Hall, P. A. (2016). *Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom*. ASCD.



Teachers participate in the Mid-West RBERN PLC.



Resources shared at the Mid-West RBERN PLC.

Upcoming Webinars for World Language Educators

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) welcomes Modern and Classical Language educators to take advantage of the first two world language webinars of 2025. These professional learning webinars are held from 4:00-5:00 pm and are free for NYS educators. Attendees can earn a certificate of attendance or CTLE. All 1-hour webinars are recorded for on-demand viewing at a later date.



[Administering the Interpersonal and Presentational Assessment Tasks at Checkpoint A](#)

by Dr. Joanne O'Toole, Bill Heller, and Dr. Lori Langer de Ramirez (Tuesday, March 11th, 2025, 4:00-5:00 pm via Zoom)

Successful administration of Interpersonal Speaking and Presentational Writing tasks comes from knowing and consistently applying proficiency-based scoring criteria. In this webinar, participants will review the relevant sections of the Principles and Guidelines for Adopting or Creating Locally Developed Benchmark Assessments for Checkpoint A (Modern Languages) and sample scoring guides aligned to the NYS WL Master Rubrics. Participants will examine a variety of tasks and observe how to apply the scoring guides to assess student proficiency at the Checkpoint A level. Click [here](#) to register.



[Creating Meaningful Communicative Contexts](#)

by Michael Travers (Tuesday, April 8th, 2025, 4:00-5:00 pm via Zoom)

In teaching, we talk about how everything we do in our classrooms needs to have a purpose. But is that purpose to practice language or to really get our students communicating about something that interests them? In this webinar, we will look at ways to transform lessons in the 3 modes of communication into tasks that compel students to learn and communicate in the target language. We will examine ways to construct prompts and scenarios to engage our learners and also simple changes that can be made to existing lessons to provide meaningful contexts that allow our students to communicate in the target language. Click [here](#) to register.

For more information on professional learning webinars for world language educators, please visit [our website](#).

New York Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) 2023-24 Infographics Released

Each year since 2018-19, the New York State Education Department has released a statewide infographic on the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB or “the Seal”). These two-page documents summarize in graphic format facts and figures, such as the number of students who have earned the Seal and the number of schools that have offered it.

The [2023-24 NYSSB infographic](#) is now available on our [NYSSB Annual Reports website](#). The following highlights are noted in the infographic for the NYSSB program in 2023-24:

- 499 schools offered the NYSSB.
- 10,591 students earned the NYSSB.
- 328 students earned the NYSSB in two or more world languages in addition to English.
- 1 in every 4 Seal earners was a Current or Ever English Language Learner (ELL).
- Students earned the NYSSB in 81 different languages.

Regional infographics on the NYSSB for 2023-24 are also available.

- [Capital District Region Infographic](#)
- [Hudson Valley Region Infographic](#)
- [Long Island Region Infographic](#)
- [Mid-State Region Infographic](#)
- [Mid-West Region Infographic](#)
- [New York City Region Infographic](#)
- [Western Region Infographic](#)

For more information on the NYSSB, please visit our [website](#).

Immigrant Student Needs Assessment Survey

OBEWL collaborates with the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs) through strategic planning workgroups to develop initiatives that better support our diverse student population. One of the current groups is focused on addressing the unique needs of our immigrant students.

We understand that newly arrived students face a variety of challenges, and we are committed to providing the support they need to succeed. Considering these challenges, we are conducting a [survey](#) to gain insight into how school districts are supporting immigrant students and what obstacles they encounter while engaged in this work. As the political landscape evolves, it is more important than ever that our educational systems are prepared.

We want to hear from you! This [survey](#) is designed to collect valuable feedback from educators, administrators, and support staff to better understand the specific challenges your district faces in offering equitable educational opportunities, resources, and services for immigrant students and their families. Your input will be instrumental in shaping future programs and initiatives that aim to improve support for this vital and growing student population.

Thank you for your participation and for helping us strengthen our efforts to support all students.

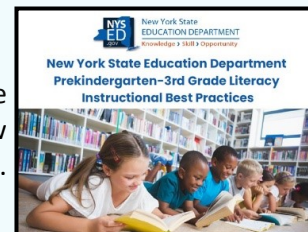
NEWS

FROM other DEPARTMENTS



Sign up for the [New York State Museum's monthly newsletter](#) and be the first to discover the upcoming family-friendly events and children's activities at the Museum. From story time and creative crafts to school break week programs and year-round adventures, there's always something fun and educational happening.

The Office of Early Learning debuted the [P-3 Literacy Best Practices](#) in a statewide webinar event. The recorded webinar, as well as [slides](#) from the presentation, are now available on the [Office of Early Learning website](#).



The [PreK to Third Grade Learning Continuum webpage](#) provides access to various resources, including: [The P-3 Instructional Guidance Toolkitm P-3 Instructional Guidance Toolkit – Collected Tools](#). Please reach out to the Office of Early Learning at OEL@nysed.gov with any questions.

The New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) has launched the [NYS FAFSA Ready Training Program](#), which is designed to equip counselors, educators, and support professionals with the resources, tools, and expertise they need to help NYS students navigate the financial aid process. For more information and to register for upcoming training sessions, visit the [FAFSA Ready Training Program](#).



Applications are now open for the [2025 Empire State Arts Scholarship Program](#), providing need-based financial assistance for middle and high school students across New York State to participate in after-school and summer arts programs. Scholarships will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until funding is fully allocated.

The newly released [Cultural Connections Framework](#) recommends ways that P-3 classrooms can connect with cultural institutions for class trips and learning experiences. The Cultural Connections Framework and Resource Kit can be found on the [Cultural Connections](#) webpage.



Black History Month affords the opportunity to honor the rich history, culture, and contributions of the African American community. NYSED's Office of Cultural Education presents an exceptional lineup of exhibits and events for [Black History Month 2025](#).

Need local support? Contact your local RBERN!

The RBERNs support OBEWL's mission to ensure that all students' individual educational paths and socio-economical needs are met in multiple languages leading them to college, career, and civic readiness. They are NYSED's key providers of guidance, technical assistance, and support to New York State Districts, Charter Schools, Non-public Schools, and other organizations in the development of programs for MLs.

- [New York State Language RBERN \(statewide\)](#)
- [Capital District Region RBERN at Questar III BOCES](#)
- [Hudson Valley RBERN at SW BOCES](#)
- [Long Island RBERN at Eastern Suffolk BOCES](#)
- [Mid-State RBERN at OCM BOCES](#)
- [Mid-West RBERN at Monroe 2 - Orleans BOCES](#)
- [New York City RBERN at Fordham University](#)
- [West Region RBERN at Erie 1 BOCES](#)

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[OBEWL Home Page](#)

[Bilingual Education website](#)

[World Languages website](#)

[NYS Seal of Biliteracy website](#)



The mission of the New York State Education Department's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages is to ensure that all New York State English Language Learners (ELLs) attain the highest level of academic success and that all Multilingual Learners (MLs) – which include ELLs, Former/Ever ELLs, World Languages students, and heritage speakers of World Languages – achieve the highest level of language proficiency in English and in one or more other languages.

