

# Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

New York State Education Department

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January 2025 Newsletter



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## Greetings from Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez

Dear Esteemed Educators and Administrators,

As we embark on another year of growth, learning, and opportunity, I want to take a moment to celebrate and thank each of you for your unwavering dedication to education. Your work does more than impart knowledge—it shapes the hearts and minds of our future leaders. Each lesson you teach, every challenge you pose, and every encouragement you offer contributes to the development of individuals who will one day lead our communities, drive innovation, and build a more inclusive world.



This year, let us continue to inspire our students with **engaging and culturally relevant curricula**. Our classrooms should reflect the rich tapestry of our students' lives and the diverse perspectives that make learning meaningful and transformative. By connecting their learning to their experiences, we empower our students to see their own value in the larger narrative of our society.

In today’s interconnected world, **bilingualism and multilingualism** are no longer just assets, but necessities. Encouraging students to embrace and master multiple languages not only opens doors to countless opportunities but also fosters a deeper appreciation of other cultures. Let us ensure that our schools are environments where linguistic diversity is celebrated and nurtured.

Most importantly, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the **civil rights of all students**, particularly those who are linguistically diverse and newly arrived immigrant children. These young minds come to us filled with promise, potential, and the hope of a better future. It is our duty to advocate for their access to equitable education, ensure they feel seen and valued, and provide them with the tools they need to thrive. In light of this commitment to our students, **NYSED Commissioner Betty Rosa, Governor Kathy Hochul, and Attorney General Letitia James** issued a joint memo which provides guidance on **safeguarding the rights of our immigrant students**. The memo is described in greater detail later in this newsletter. Please know that OBEWL and the RBERNs are here to support you in these efforts.

Let this year be one of bold action, compassionate teaching, and unyielding commitment to the success of every child in our care. Together, we can continue to build schools and communities where every student feels empowered to dream, learn, and achieve.

Thank you for all that you do. Here’s to a transformative 2025!

In Unity,

*Elisa Alvarez*

# New York State Guidance on Safeguarding the Rights of Immigrant Students

This month, the Office of the New York State Attorney General (OAG), the Office of New York Governor Kathy Hochul, and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) issued a [joint guidance document](#) that reaffirms our state’s commitment to ensure that New York’s immigrant students have equal access to education and that schools should remain a safe haven where all students are welcomed and provided a free public education. This document highlights and clarifies relevant resources for school districts regarding their obligations under state and federal law.

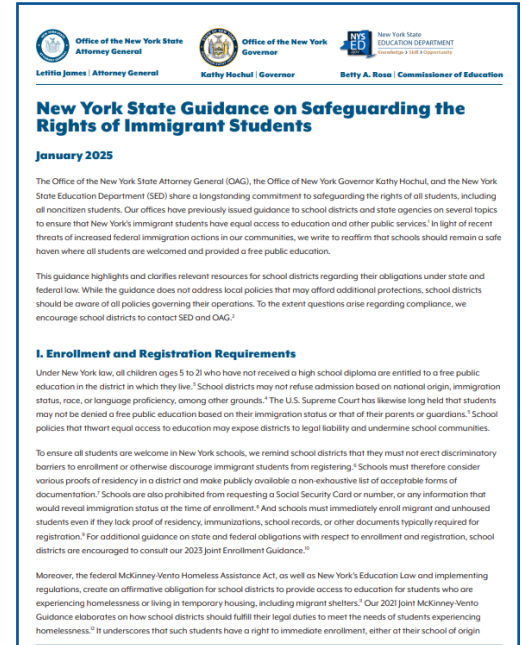
Guidance is provided to address the following areas:

- Enrollment and Registration Requirements
- Collecting Student Information and Accessing Student Records
- Law Enforcement’s Detention, Interrogation, or Remove of Students from School Property
- Bullying and Harassment
- Detention or Deportation of Student Family Members

The guidance also includes sources available from all three offices. These include information on the Office for New Americans which assists immigrants in accessing and navigating free services and support through its statewide network of community-based providers, resources for immigrants experiencing homelessness or discrimination, and links to submit complaints for violations of student privacy, civil rights, or hate crimes.

With regard to Detention, Interrogation, or Removal of Students from School Property, the guidance states the following:

- “We reaffirm [NYSED]’s longstanding position that law enforcement officers **may not** remove a student from school property or interrogate a student without the consent of the student’s parent or person in parental relation, except in the limited circumstances” explained in the document.
- “New York State Executive Order 170.1 provides that civil arrests by federal immigration authorities may only be executed within **state facilities, such as schools**, when accompanied by a judicial warrant or order authorizing the custody unless the civil arrest is related to a proceeding within the facility.”
- “**Do not allow officers inside school property** to access a student, except to address an imminent safety situation or where required by law due to a judicial warrant or order.”
- “SROs **shall not** detain or interrogate students to determine their immigration status.”
- “A student’s **immigration status** does not implicate school safety or school policy, and **will never justify** a detention or interrogation on school grounds.”



## Strengthening Cross-Cultural Collaboration in Bilingual Education

On Friday, November 15th, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) had the privilege of participating in a seminar at the China Institute in America. This event served as an important platform for dialogue with representatives from various Chinese schools, as we work toward fostering stronger partnerships in bilingual education and promoting cross-cultural connections.

A special acknowledgment goes to two staff members from our New York State Language RBERN (Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network), former superintendent Alicja Winnicki and former school and district administrator, Elsa Nunez, who contributed invaluable insights. Having recently returned from an educational trip to China, they shared firsthand experiences of China's innovative educational systems and successful dual-language programs. Ms. Winnicki's and Ms. Nunez's reflections provide meaningful perspectives to shape and enhance bilingual initiatives across New York State.

The seminar underscored the importance of collaboration in addressing the evolving needs of our globalized classrooms. By learning from international best practices and strengthening ties with partners abroad, OBEWL is committed to creating opportunities for students to thrive in bilingual and multicultural environments. We look forward to building on these conversations and continuing this vital work to support New York State's educators and students in achieving excellence in bilingual education.



Austin Nojaim, Associate in Bilingual Education for OBEWL and Fu Bo, Deputy Secretary General, China Education Association for International Exchange



Alicja Winnicki, Former Superintendent for NYCPS, Elsa Nunez, Former District Administrator NYCPS, and Fu Bo, Deputy Secretary General, China Education Association for International Exchange



Attendees at the China Institute in America Educational Exchange event

## **OBEWL - Looking Back at 2024**

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) has worked hard over the past year in focusing our work around **four key priorities**: Standards and Instructional Support, Enforcement and Monitoring, Building Professional Capacity, and Policy. These priorities support OBEWL's efforts to increase the academic success and language proficiency of all students within New York State.

OBEWL accomplishments in the last year include the release of the [Academic and Linguistic Demands \(ALDs\)](#). This set of tools helps teachers identify the words, phrases, and language structures embedded in the Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards, so they are able to provide standards-aligned, grade-level instruction to English Language Learners (ELLs).

Our office successfully presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual **Voices United Annual Conference** at Fordham University. This event provided 73 New York State educators and administrators with professional learning to strengthen theoretical and practical knowledge to implement high-quality, academically rigorous instruction for ELLs.

In 2024, OBEWL partnered with the US Education Department's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) to promote awareness and understanding of former Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona's *Raise the Bar: Pathways to Multilingualism for ALL* initiative, with a priority on **Dual Language Immersion (DLI)**. New York was one of five states selected to serve as a model for delivery of DLI. Lessons learned from district visits were incorporated into the [Dual Language Immersion Project - Playbook](#), which was published in December 2024.

In response to the increased enrollment of students who are refugees or asylum seekers, OBEWL allocated available **supplementary Title III Part A Immigrant funds** to more than 60 districts that reported the most significant changes in enrollment of recently arrived, asylum-seeking students during the 2023-2024 school year.

In 2024, OBEWL continued to support instruction of **Indigenous Languages**. A steering committee comprised of Indigenous language educators, community members, and Indigenous Nation Representatives was formed to advise NYSED on strategies to support and promote Indigenous language programs in NYS. Additionally, OBEWL continued to award supplementary funding for all NYS schools that offer programs in Indigenous languages.

OBEWL continued to address improving the ESOL/BE Teacher Pipeline by sponsoring [Clinically Rich-Intensive Teacher Institutes \(CR-ITI\)](#). CR-ITIs offer teachers a pathway to additional certification in English to Speakers of Other Languages or Bilingual Education.

One of this year's contribution to ELL instructional support is the publishing of four new [OBEWL topic briefs supporting co-teaching](#) within Integrated English as a New Language classes. These briefs include topics on administering programs, incorporating technology into the classroom, and aligning instruction with the New York State Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework.

In 2024, we experienced an increase of more than 1,800 students earning the **NY State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB)**. Numerous resources have been made available including a webinar series and the [NYSSB Guidance Toolkit](#) to guide schools through their first year of offering the NYSSB.

In 2025, OBEWL will continue to work on new initiatives, including:

- International partnerships to support increasing the teacher pipeline
- Continuation of Strategic Planning Groups for Career and Technical Education (CTE), Co-Teaching, Digital-Age Teaching, Project-Based Learning, Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE), Graduation and Dropout, ELLs with Disabilities, and Immigrant Students.
- Cross-collaborative within NYSED to foster teacher, principal, and overall school development on the utilization of Multi-Tiered System of Supports – Integrated (MTSS-I).
- Development of new Clinically Rich-Intensive Teacher Institutes (CR-ITIs).
- Release of additional Topic Briefs for the Bilingual Toolkit including Dual Language and Transitional Bilingual Education

## Advancing Dual-Language Immersion: New York State Featured in OELA’s DLI Playbooks



Former U. S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona welcomes educators from New York State.

OBEWL participated in “Creating Pathways for Multilingualism for All,” an event sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) to commemorate the December release of the [Dual Language Immersion \(DLI\) Playbooks](#). These resources represent a significant step forward in promoting educational equity and multilingualism across the nation. The playbooks focus on expanding DLI programs in which English Language Learners (ELLs) and English dominant students learn academic content side-by-side in both English and another language.

The playbooks are a series of four documents which highlight the innovative and impactful work being done in five states with high numbers of DLI programs. New York State is proud to be among these five states selected for this spotlight. The playbooks emphasize the contributions of four New York State public school districts, the dedicated efforts of our Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs), and the groundbreaking Initiative on Immigration and Education at City College (CUNY-IIE).

Dual Language Immersion programs have proven to be a promising model for boosting the academic achievement for ELLs while fostering bilingualism and biliteracy for all students. New York’s inclusion in this initiative reflects the state’s commitment to educational excellence and innovation in multilingual education.

The DLI Playbooks provide valuable insights and practical strategies for districts and educators looking to establish or enhance Dual Language Immersion programs. They serve as a testament to the collaborative efforts of educators, administrators, and community partners who strive to create inclusive and linguistically rich learning environments.

Additionally, OBEWL has convened the New York State DLI Consortium, a commitment to supporting our school districts in growing and sustaining dual-language immersion programs. Together, we will continue to advocate for programs that empower students, honor their linguistic heritage, and prepare them for a global society.

We encourage all educators and stakeholders to explore the [OELA DLI Playbooks](#) and join us in championing the benefits of multilingual education. Let’s build on this momentum and work together to expand opportunities for all students in New York State.



OBEWL Associate Commissioner, Elisa Alvarez, participates in a panel discussion with Julie Lara of the Texas Education Agency and Ann Marie Gunter of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

## Partnership with the Consulate General of Poland in New York City

Last May, in the spirit of bridging opportunities for multilingual students and creating career pathways for bilingual teachers, Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez signed a Letter of Intent with Poland’s Consul General, Adrian Kubicki, in New York. Through this initial agreement, the Polish Consulate will facilitate efforts between OBEWL, the Institute for the Polish Language Development in Warsaw, and the Polish Deputy Minister of Education to provide supports for Polish language teachers and Polish language programs.

One of the goals of this new and robust collaboration is to embrace bilingual Polish students from public and nonpublic schools and to support these students’ ability to earn the New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) upon graduation. Many Polish-American children and youth regularly receive instruction in the Polish language through extracurricular programs throughout state (including “Saturday schools”). Some of these programs coordinate with Polish Dual Language Programs in elementary public schools in New York City to expand upon their learning, and others are fully bilingual due to the efforts of the member families.

Associate Commissioner Alvarez expressed how much she values opportunities for the children to retain and reclaim their cultural identity through learning their Heritage Language. This practice is valued in Polish American communities in New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, Buffalo, and other cities, where the ancestral language is returning after having been lost over the generations.

OBEWL staff are partnering with districts in these communities to identify opportunities for students enrolled in these programs to earn the NYSSB from their home schools. These organizations are working together to develop an action plan for this and other priorities, such as expanding on the pool of teachers who how a Bilingual Extension in Polish, which would support the opening of more Dual Language Immersion programs in communities where families expressed a desire to open them.

In recognition of this partnership, Associate Commissioner Alvarez will join Poland’s Ambassador to the UN and Consul General at the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the Polish Consular School. This school provides instruction on Polish literacy, culture and history to more than 260 students every Friday night and Saturday. Instruction at the Consular School is based on the official curriculum from public schools in Poland, thus cultivating and nurturing bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate New Yorkers.

We look forward to advancing this valuable partnership to support our students and our communities.



After signing the Letter of Intent (right), Consul General Kubicki and Associate Commissioner Alvarez are joined by NYS Language RBERN Executive Director Ron Woo and RBERN specialist and former NYC superintendent, Alicja Winnicki.

## 2024 New York State Association of Women in Administration (NYSAWA) Conference

Led by the mission, to provide valuable support for educators and aspiring instructional leaders, the New York State Association of Women in Administration (NYSAWA) organized the *NY Women Who Lead, Encourage, and Empower* event last November. This networking event was filled with inspiration and meaningful interactions with women in leadership roles across our state.



NYSAWA event poster

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) was honored to participate in the keynote panel presentation. Dr. Mariana A. Gil, OBEWL Associate in Instructional Services, represented the New York State Education Department (NYSED) as a panel member alongside inspirational leaders, including the newly appointed Chancellor of New York City Public Schools, Ms. Aviles-Ramos. Speaking to a full-capacity audience, the panelists shared their professional journeys, offering stories of resilience and unwavering commitment to creating opportunities of success for our children, families, communities, and one another.

OBEWL extends its heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Aurelia Henriquez, Superintendent of Port Chester Schools, for the opportunity to contribute to NYSAWA's vision of elevating leadership through collective effort. A

dedicated advocate for aspiring teachers and instructional leaders, Dr. Henriquez has spent over five years fostering collaboration among experienced and emerging educators to cultivate authentic professional partnerships and mentorships. This NYSAWA conference stands as a testament to her vision: creating a platform where leaders and aspiring leaders uplift, elevate, and affirm one another while advancing equitable educational organizations and reshaping the narrative for a brighter future.


As a transformational district leader, Dr. Henriquez exemplifies commitment, innovation, and integrity. Leading a diverse school community where 85% of students identify as Hispanic or Latino, she works closely with parents, school staff, and community members to champion essential federal and statewide initiatives. Notable efforts include My Brother's Keeper and NYSED's Portrait of a Graduate, programs designed to provide students with meaningful mentorship opportunities and robust support as they prepare for college and career success.



Speakers at the NYSAWA conference panel

## NYS Seal of Biliteracy Webinar Recordings Available

Did you know that there are recorded webinars available on all major aspects of the NYS Seal of Biliteracy? Educators can access these recordings on demand and earn a certificate (attendance or CTLE) by achieving a score of at least 7 out of 10 on an online post assessment.

 <p>Starting an NYSSB Program</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	 <p>Growing Your NYSSB Program</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	 <p>Completing the School Notification Form</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	 <p>Promoting the Seal &amp; Recruiting Students</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>
 <p>Supporting Students through the Culminating Project</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	 <p>Preparing for the Culminating Project Visit</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	 <p>Training the Project Evaluators</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	 <p>Evaluating Culminating Projects</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>
 <p>Demystifying the EOY Data Form</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	 <p>NYSSB Culminating Project: A Yearlong Process</p> <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar</p>	<p>The NYSSB Forum is a monthly meeting offering guidance and support on the NYSSB, as well as the opportunity for participants to ask questions, discuss, and network with other coordinators.</p> <p><a href="#">Join the NYSSB Forum!</a></p> 	

For more information on professional learning webinars for the NYS Seal of Biliteracy, please visit our [NYSSB professional learning page](#) or contact OBEWL at [nyssb@nysed.gov](mailto:nyssb@nysed.gov).



## 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 final two world language webinars of 2024. 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.



### [Spiraling Instruction for Continued Proficiency Growth through Checkpoint B](#)

by Bill Heller, Dr. Joanne O'Toole, and Dr. Lori Langer de Ramirez (Tuesday, February 25th, 2025, 4:00-5:00 pm via Zoom)

Checkpoint B builds on proficiency attained in Checkpoint A and establishes a foundation for continued proficiency development. In this session, participants will examine ways to spiral instruction through Checkpoint B. The workshop will provide a brief overview of the performance indicators for Intermediate proficiency targets and consider themes that incorporate the four new Checkpoint B topics to provide additional cultural contexts. Attendees will also look at key curriculum elements including authentic text types appropriate for enacting Interpretive tasks and the language toolbox needed to carry out Interpersonal and Presentational language functions. Click [here](#) to register.



### [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](#).

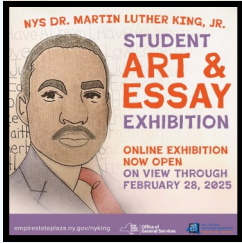
## World Language Webinar Recordings Available

Did you know that there are over 50 recorded webinars available on all major aspects of the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages? Educators can access these recordings on demand and earn a certificate (attendance or CTLE) by achieving a score of at least 7 out of 10 on an online post assessment. Listed below are the most recent webinars.

 <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar.</p>	 <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar.</p>	 <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar.</p>	 <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar.</p>
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 <p>Click <a href="#">here</a> to access this webinar.</p>	<p>The World Language Leadership Council was created to provide a regular forum for world language educators and administrators to discuss and share their questions, concerns, and suggestions with NYSED. <a href="#">Join the World Leadership Council!</a></p> 		

# NEWS

## FROM other DEPARTMENTS and AGENCIES



Each year, NYSED invites schools to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s memory by submitting original student artworks and essays that reflect his teaching. The [2025 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Student Art and Essay Exhibition](#) is now open!

It's National Mentoring Month! Join us this January to help raise awareness of empowering young people through supportive relationships. Find resources [here](#).



The [Albert Shanker Grant](#) defrays the costs of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification for eligible New York State public school teachers who seek their first National Board Certification, Maintenance of Certification (MOC), or those retaking one component of the NBPTS.

Applications are now open for the [2025 New York State Summer School of the Arts \(NYSSSA\) In-Residency program](#). This program will provide students with the opportunity to study alongside professional artists in a competitive, yet nurturing environment. Students can choose from one of the following program options: Media Arts, Theater, or Visual Arts. Each program culminates in a public showcase or exhibition. The four-week programs will be held on the SUNY Fredonia campus and will run from July 6 – August 2, 2025.



The NYSED Office of Early Learning understands the importance of play across the early elementary grades. The following resources are available to assist districts in implementing play-based learning in the classroom: [The Value of Play: Play-Based Learning for P-3 Students webinar](#); [Play-Based Learning Webpage](#); and the [NYSED Office of Early Learning Video Series](#).

## 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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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.

